

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5

*Bethany Orange Woodbridge
25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525*

*Dr. Jennifer P. Byars
Superintendent of Schools*

AMITY REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 12 2024, 6:30 pm

25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, CT

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Cathy Bradley, Paul Davis, Carla Eichler, Sean Hartshorn, Christina Levere-D’Addio, Dana Lombardi, Michael McDonough, Dr. Carol Oladele, Patrick Reed and Donna Schlank, Dr. Karunakaran (*arrived at 6:43p.m.*), Donna Schuster (*arrived at 6:48p.m.*).

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Andrea Hubbard

STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sophia Messina

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Jennifer Byars, Theresa Lumas, Frank Purcaro

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Davis called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Board of Education Meeting – January 08, 2024

MOTION by Sean Hartshorn, *SECOND* by Patrick Reed to approve January 08, 2024 minutes as submitted.

VOTES IN FAVOR, 9 (Bradley, Davis, Eichler, Hartshorn, Levere-D’Addio, Lombardi, McDonough, Dr. Oladele, Reed)

ABSTAIN, 1 (Schlank)

MOTION CARRIES

4. STUDENT REPORT

a. **Monthly Report**

Middle School Report Presented by Student Representative Sophia Messina

5. 3 A’s (Academics, Arts, Athletics) AND POG (Portrait of the Graduate) FOCUS PRESENTATION

Chairperson Mr. Davis calls a short intermission from 6:55p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT [021224 BOE Meeting Video](#)

Bethany student:

Amity student spoke about the protest that took place on February 02, 2024, the administrative response, the on campus and social media response, military recruiters at Amity and transgender policy at Amity.

Bethany student:

Amity student spoke about the protest that took place on F February 02, 2024, the administrative response, on campus and social media response, transgender policy at Amity, bullying and threats that transgender students face.

Woodbridge student:

Amity student spoke about the impact and dangers of military recruiters at Amity.

Student letter read by a Parent (town not stated)

Amity student wrote in opposition to the protest that took place on February 02, 2024, the administrative response, and the impact of the protest on the learning environment for the vast majority of the Amity student body.

Woodbridge student:

Amity student spoke out against the school newspaper *The Trident*. Student states their belief that the newspaper is heavily censored, edited and biased and infringes on the freedom of speech and press of the student body. The student referenced several articles as evidence of her claims.

Woodbridge student:

Amity student spoke about the protest that took place on February 02, 2024 and the administrative response. Student speaker stressed frustration that no public comment has been made regarding the nature of the protest or dispelling rumors circulating regarding the protest, concern over social media postings, and the lack of administrative response to threats being made on social media and on campus.

Woodbridge student:

Amity student spoke about the protest that took place on February 02, 2024, their frustration at the lack of administrative response to dispel rumors about the protesters, the punishment handed down, and the social media impact of spreading rumors to surrounding schools.

Woodbridge student:

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Amity student states their belief that rules are being made to specifically target transgender students following the February 02, 2024 protest. Student stated examples of rules that they believe have been created to target particular students.

Woodbridge student:

Amity student requests that Amity issue a public statement to clarify the nature of the protest and suggests that Amity should clarify the general guidelines relating to the presence and actions of military recruiters on campus.

Woodbridge resident:

Resident speaks on the topic of Parental Rights. Speaker provides examples of parental rights from newborns, toddlers, children and teenagers. Speaker urges Amity to respect parental boundaries. Speaker urges Amity to focus on academics.

Orange parent:

Recites the Pledge of Allegiance and suggest that it is a huge contradiction to the board meetings that are held. Speaker goes on to analyze the language of the Pledge with particular attention to "under God". Speaker discussed the Bible with attention to passages about gender and parenting. Speaker stated that the job of educators is to teach kids how to think for themselves, not to tell them what to think.

Orange resident:

Speaker states that his son is a 2017 ARHS graduate and graduate of West Point 2022. Speaker states that his son served the country for five years. Speaker shares his son's military career and record. Speaker shares that his son's picture has been added to the Wall of Freedom joining other Amity graduates. Speaker states that freedom is not given, it is fought for by brave Americans. Speaker shares the characteristics that men and women who enlist in the military share. Speaker concludes with comments on behalf of military recruiters in the school system.

Woodbridge parent:

Speaks on the topic of accountability. Speaker addresses a personnel matter. Speaker goes on to address the February 02, 2024 protest and his belief that there were several infractions of the student handbook. Speaker lists classes skipped, sit in held, faculty harassed, and property defaced. Speaker states that there is a difference between freedom of speech and hate speech. Speaker expresses his gratitude for the military.

Woodbridge Parent:

Speaker offers praise to the students who presented and asked for the respect and attention of the board. Resident speaks on gender bathroom issues, mental health issues and the need to educate children in science, math and reading. Speaker provided examples of gender issues in class and policies built to accommodate a few students at the expense of the vast majority of students at Amity.

Woodbridge student:

Stated their belief that if you don't like the military you can just walk away and the importance of standing for the Pledge. Student goes on to state their belief that it's ridiculous and disrespectful for the audience

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members to laugh, especially the adults.

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Woodbridge parent:

Speaker states that rainbow flags should not be allowed in classrooms. Speaker address her beliefs on the sexualization of school and the dangers of normalizing what is a mental health issue. Speaker urges the board to visit classrooms to hear and see for themselves what is being taught.

Orange parent:

Speaker addresses freedom of speech, the February 02, 2024 protest, the impact on the school day and the social media impact. Speaker goes on to address their feelings on tampon dispensers in the boy's bathroom, the bathroom incident, and concludes by calling for the resignation of any administrators who support that behavior.

Orange parent:

Speaker commends the students who spoke up and voices her concern over the amount of access military recruiter have in comparison to college recruiters. Requests the option for families to opt out of military contact. Speaks on the benefits of peaceful protest.

Woodbridge resident:

Angry about the level of disrespect shown to the military by students. Speaks in defense of the respect for the military. Shares family experience and history of military service. Speaker states the military is the reason why people have freedom of speech. Suggests a school wide assembly educating the study body regarding freedom of speech.

Woodbridge resident:

Passes out handouts on a lesson from middle school and asks if these lessons are approved by the board and if the board is aware of such lessons. Speaker states that "We trust you with our kids and that you are teaching them the core basics". Speaker states her belief that the particular lesson shared in not necessary and not an appropriate use of school time.

Parent (town not stated):

Speaker identifies herself as a parent of one of the protesters, identifies herself as a military veteran and a board certified OB GYN. Speaker clarifies that the protest had nothing to do with bunnies. Parent speaks out against military recruiters and how they mislead potential recruits.

7. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON AUDITED 2022-2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Presented by Michael J. VanDeventer, CPA, Partner Mahoney Sabol CPAs and Advisors

a. Possible Action on Audited 2022-2023 Financial Statements

MOTION BY, Patrick Reed, SECOND BY Carla Eichler to accept the Annual Finacial Statements for the period ending June 30, 2023.

VOTES IN FAVOR, 12 (UNANIMOUS)

MOTION CARRIES

b. Discussion and Possible Action on Reducing Member Towns Payments for the 2023-2024 School Year

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MOTION BY, Dr. Karunakaran SECOND BY Donna Schlank to accept the Annual Financial Statements for the period ending June 30, 2023, and authorize the Superintendent of Schools to reduce the March payment of the member towns by a total amount of \$1,420,395.99, as follows:

<i>Town of Bethany</i>	<i>\$ 242,337.43</i>
<i>Town of Orange</i>	<i>\$ 715,252.99</i>
<i>Town of Woodbridge</i>	<i>\$ 462,805.58</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i><u>\$1,420,396.00</u></i>

VOTES IN FAVOR, 12 (UNANIMOUS)

MOTION CARRIES

8. PRESENTATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT’S PROPOSED 2024-2025 BUDGET

Presented by Amity Region 5 Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jennifer Byars

[PRESENTATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT’S PROPOSED 2024-2025 BUDGET](#)

9. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

- a. **Personnel Report**
- b. **Superintendent Report**

10. CORRESPONDENCE

Presented by Amity Region 5 Board of Education Secretary Cathy Bradley

11. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

a. Committee Reports

- 1. **ACES**
- 2. **CABE**
- 3. **Communications**
- 4. **Curriculum**

a. Discussion and Possible Action on Approval of the Grade 7 and Grade 8 English Language Arts Curriculum

Presented by Presented by Amity Region 5 Assistant Superintendent of Schools Frank Purcaro and Amity Region 5 District Instructional Coach Andrea Drewry

[7th Grade ELA Curriculum.pdf](#)

[8th Grade ELA Curriculum.pdf](#)

MOTION BY, Dr. Karunakaran, SECOND BY Donna Schlank to approve the 7th AND 8TH GRADE ELA CURRICULUM

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (Bradley, Davis, Eichler, Hartshorn, Dr. Karunakaran, Levere-D’Addio, McDonough, Dr. Oladele , Patrick Reed, Donna Schlank, Donna Schuster)

ABSTAINED, 1 (Lombardi)

MOTION CARRIES

- 5. **District Health and Safety**
- 6. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Executive Committee**
- 7. **District Technology**
 - a. **Monthly Report**
- 8. **Facilities**
 - a. **Monthly Report**

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9. Finance

a. Discussion and Possible Action on Designation of HVAC Reimbursement Grant Funds

MOTION BY, Carla Eichler, SECOND BY Michael McDonough to approve the designation of HVAC grant funds for renovations of the library media centers at all three schools with the high school project slated first.

ITEM	PARTIAL COST
Library Media Center Projects – all 3 schools	766,741.00

VOTES IN FAVOR, 11 (Davis, Eichler, Hartshorn, Dr. Karunakaran, Levere-D’Addio, Lombardi, McDonough, Dr. Oladele, Patrick Reed, Donna Schlank, Donna Schuster

ABSTAINED, 1 (Bradley)

MOTION CARRIES

b. Discussion of Monthly Financial Statements

Presented by Amity Region 5 Director of Finance Theresa Lumas

c. Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfers Under \$3,000

Presented by Amity Region 5 Director of Finance Theresa Lumas

d. Discussion and Possible Action on Transfers over \$3,000

MOTION BY, Sean Hartshorn, SECOND BY Donna Schuster to approve the following budget transfer for the cost of literacy consultant and homebound tutoring services.

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT NAME	FROM	TO
04-12-2151-5330	Prof Technical Services - Hearing	\$15,000	
04-12-1208-5330	Prof Technical Services - Reading		\$15,000
04-15-1204-5111	Salaries - Certified	\$5,000	
04-13-2130-5330	Prof Technical Services – Homebound		\$5,000

VOTES IN FAVOR, 12 (UNANIMOUS)

MOTION CARRIES

e. Other

a. Lunch Negative Balance Update

Presented by Amity Region 5 Director of Finance Theresa Lumas

10. Policy

a. First Read

1. Policy 5141.6 - Crisis Prevention/Response
2. Policy 5142.1 - Relations with Non-Custodial Parents
3. Policy 5142.2 - Safety: Student Dismissal Precautions

b. Second Read

1. Policy 5141.5 Suicide Prevention/ Suicide Attempts
2. Policy 1180 Community Relations Memorials for Deceased Students or Staff

MOTION BY, Sean Hartshorn, SECOND BY Donna Schuster to approve Policy 5141.5 Suicide Prevention/ Suicide Attempts and Policy 1180 Community Relations Memorials for Deceased Students or Staff

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VOTES IN FAVOR, 12 (UNANIMOUS)

MOTION CARRIES

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11. **Personnel**

12. **NEW BUSINESS**

13. **ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA – Due to Chairperson by February 29, 2024**

14. **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned, without objection, at 10:40 p.m by Chairperson Davis.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Zaleski

Lisa Zaleski

BOE Recording Secretary