

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman James Stirling, Mr. John Belfonti, Ms. Pat Cardozo, Mr. John Grabowski and Mr. Joseph Nuzzo.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Matt Giglietti

Staff members present: Dr. Charles Dumais, Mr. Jack Levine, Ms. Terry Lumas and Ms. Marie McPaddon.

Also present: Mrs. Ruth Natzel, Mr. Jim Leahy, Ms. Sue Cohen, Ms. Sheila McCreven, Ms. Amy Esposito, Ms. Diane Urbano, Mr. Tom Hurley and Mr. Bill Blake.

A meeting of the Finance Committee of the Amity Regional Board of Education (BOE) was held on Monday, March 14, 2016 at 5:30 pm in the Presentation Room at the Amity District Offices.

1. **Call to Order:** Mr. Stirling called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Mr. Stirling handed out a copy of Amity Board of Education bylaw, 9132.6(c) (attachment) to the Finance Committee members with one portion highlighted as a reminder to the Committee regarding the procedure for approving a budget.

2. **Discussion and possible action on minutes.**
 - A. **Finance Committee meeting - February 29, 2016**

Motion by Mr. Nuzzo,, 2nd by Ms. Cardozo to accept the minutes as submitted.

Two corrections were noted – Mr. Leahy is the vice-chair (not the chair) of the Orange Finance Committee and Mr. Belfonti's name needs to be added to the list of those present.

Vote unanimous to accept the minutes with corrections

Motion carried

(Corrections were made and the minutes were re-submitted)

3. **Public comment**

Mr. Leahy from Orange gave the members of the Committee a handout and asked if he could have more information regarding the figures in the 3 right-hand columns in that document. As a point of order, questions are not usually taken and answered during public comment; however, Mr. Stirling as a member of the Committee, asked the question of Dr. Dumais. Dr. Dumais explained the differences between open choice, actual student population and average daily membership.

4. **Discussion and possible action on proposed 2016-2017 budget (attachment)**

Dr. Dumais gave the Committee a revised budget with the increase now at 2.56%

Motion by Ms. Cardozo to accept the budget as presented; there was no 2nd, therefore the motion died.

Motion by Mr. Grabowski, 2nd by Mr. Belfonti to reduce the budget increase to 2%.

There was discussion by the members of the Committee regarding the budget increase and statements from the Committee members from Orange and Bethany regarding the budget increase.

Motion by Mr. Nuzzo, 2nd by Mr. Grabowski to amend the motion on the budget and make the increase 1.99% or less.

There was further discussion among the Committee members and the Board of Education members present regarding the budget increase and the reduction in State funding to the towns causing shortfalls in the town budgets.

There was lengthy discussion regarding this motion. Comments are summarized as follows:

Ms. Cardozo stated that she is concerned about the lack of a safety net with the proposed increase of only 1.99%.

Mr. Stirling commented that the people in Bethany have a perception that Amity does not follow the same budget guidelines as the town of Bethany must. By reducing the 2.56% to 1.99% the town will get the message that Amity is being a good steward and the administration will need to make hard decisions and be more creative.

Mr. Belfonti agreed with Mr. Stirling.

Mr. Blake commented that the proposed budget is one that will maintain and preserve the quality of education in Amity. The Board has, per requests from the member towns, funded OPEB and created a \$100,000 contingency for facilities and eliminated rollover funds, for a total of \$400,000.

Mr. Hurley stated that the Committee and the Board have been extremely responsive to the member towns as has previously been stated by others. This is a responsible budget as presented. The only places left to cut are programs or staff.

Ms. Cohen heard at the ACES meeting that there will cuts in special education.

Ms. McCreven commented that balancing risk is something we should do, especially regarding the timing of rebates.

Ms. Urbano does not feel that this budget is sustainable and that really hard decisions must be made.

Dr. Dumais stated that the budget process has changed; there is more transparency and the budget itself has been evened out (including a contingency fund in place and not rolling money over from year to year). Dr. Dumais noted that State statute does not allow a 15% surplus in the BOE budget, although this is permissible in the town budgets. He stated that at 2.56% Amity is close to taking on unreasonable risk and that he disagrees in principle that reducing the budget will foster more creativity.

Mr. Levine commented that Amity has been lucky in terms of medical claims and other variables such as special education needs. He stated that certainly there are things that could be cut, but what is left in the budget as presented are only needs; nothing is left that is a "want". Any cut made will have consequences, either affecting programs or the inability to pay for an emergency expense.

The chairman called the question.

Vote in favor, 4 (Opposed Ms. Cardozo)

Motion carried

5. Report on awarding of extension of electricity rate and term

Mr. Levine reported that Dr. Dumais approved a 1-year term extension at a rate of 7.5 cents.

6. Update on District lighting project (enclosure)

Mr. Levine reported that the bid opening for this project was on February 12, 2016. Eight vendors submitted proposals. Mr. Saisa will be taking the bid information and his recommendations to the Facilities Committee for discussion; if the Facilities Committee agrees, the final recommendation will come to the Finance Committee and the Board at the April meetings.

7. Discussion of monthly financial statements – no questions.

8. Director of Finance and Administration-approved transfers under \$3,000 – no questions

9. Discussion and possible action on budget transfers of \$3,000 or more (enclosure)

Motion by Mr. Belfonti, 2nd by Mr. Grabowski to make the following budget transfers detailed in the enclosed memo from Mr. Levine to Dr. Dumais dated March 09, 2016:

For special education

The amount of \$18,000 from account 04-12-6111-5560 tuition expense, to account 04-13-2130-5330 other professional and technical service.

The amount of \$126,500 from accounts 04-12-6117-5560 tuition expense and 04-12-6110-5560 tuition expense, to account 04-12-6130-5560 tuition expense.

For facilities

The amount of \$25,000 from account 03-14-2600-5420 repairs, maintenance and cleaning, to account 03-14-2600-5731 equipment replacement

For athletics

The amount of \$5,945 from account 03-11-3202-5420 repairs, maintenance and cleaning to 03-11-3202-5731 equipment replacement

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

10. Other – none.

11. Adjourn

Motion by Ms. Cardozo, 2nd by Mr. Nuzzo to adjourn.

Motion by Ms. Cardozo, 2nd by Mr. Nuzzo to adjourn at 6:26 p.m.

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth E. Natzel, Recording Clerk