

**MINUTES**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mr. John Grabowski, Mr. James Horwitz, Mr. Joseph Nuzzo and Mr. James Stirling, Mr. William Blake (ex officio)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ms. Diane Crocco, Mr. Matt Giglietti and Mr. John Grasso, Jr.

**Staff members present:** Mr. Charles Dumais, Mr. Jack Levine, Ms. Terry Lumas, Dr. Marie McPadden, Dr. Charles Britton, Dr. Richard Dellinger, Ms. Mary Raiola, Mr. Jim Saisa, Mr. Sean DeRosa, Mr. Ernie Goodwin, Ms. Kathleen Fuller-Cutler and audio-visual technical staff.

**Also present:** Ms. Sue Cohen, Mr. Christopher Browe, Mr. Tom Hurley, Mr. Steve Demaio, Ms. Tracy Lane-Russo (all board members), Mr. James Leahy and Mrs. Ruth Natzel.

A meeting of the Finance Committee of the Amity Regional Board of Education (BOE) was held on Monday, December 08, 2014 at 5:30 pm in the cafeteria at Amity High School.

**1. Call to Order:** Chairman Jim Stirling called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

**2. Presentation and discussion of Superintendent's 2015-2016 recommended budget.** Mr. Dumais presented the proposed budget for 2015-2016 (see presentation document included in the packet). Mr. Dumais spoke about all aspects of Amity High School and the many areas of success. He spoke about the challenge of predicting expenses and hitting the "sweet spot" where the dollars are best utilized and necessary items are properly funded. This budget has attempted to address items that can have a more fixed cost versus being variability. In the preparation of the budget, Mr. Dumais requested that he see all items requested so that opportunities could be sought to share resources and include everything possible to benefit the region. The budget is being presented about 3 weeks ahead of schedule to give every time to look at the budget and digest the information. Mr. Dumais also explained details of line item changes in the budget regarding staffing, facilities, funding of medical accounts, etc. Large expenditure items that are capital improvements should not be part of an operating budget; therefore, included in the budget are facilities and technology capital improvement plans (planning for the next three to five years). In 2016-2017 and 2019-2020 we've proposed a facilities bonding plan.

Mr. Leahy from Orange thanked Mr. Dumais, Mr. Levine and Ms. Lumas for their work in the budget preparation. He requested native files that make up the presentation data as well as the data that made up the Power Point charts. There was discussion regarding balancing risks within the budget.

Mr. Browe asked about bonding placeholder for the year when a facilities project is not done. Mr. Levine explained that this is included in the debt service and the total cost has been built in and shown in the 20-year bond. Mr. Stirling mentioned the heat capture system as being a bonded item.

Mr. Hurley requested the list of what was cut out of the budget. Mr. Dumais stated they are on page 30 but details are not there since much of this happened in conversation; questions could be asked of the staff. Mr. Hurley is concerned about aging textbooks and lack of a plan to replace the books. Mr. Blake suggested that the Curriculum Committee tackle a comprehensive textbook inventory. Mr. Browe agreed and asked that a breakdown of textbooks be pursued by the Curriculum Committee. Ms. McPaddon stated that some of the difficulty in purchasing textbooks lies with the changing State standards for certain subjects and therefore hesitancy to purchase new texts until the standards are received.

Mr. DeMaio and Mr. Grabowski spoke about the importance of the return of surplus money to the towns, Bethany in particular. Mr. Grabowski spoke about Bethany's town budget difficulty this past year and services that had to be cut so it would pass in referendum; he stated that he thinks this budget will face very close scrutiny and will not pass in Bethany.

Mr. Leahy asked about the per pupil expenditure calculation on page 7 of budget. Mr. Levine answered that debt service and transportation are removed in the State formula calculation; he explained that the calculation for the charge for tuition for outside students is according to the State formula.

Mr. Stirling commented on the self-insurance reserve fund, and that we do not want to impact future years with budget overages. Three high school staff positions have been eliminated and Mr. Levine asked if staff reduction at the middle school was considered. Mr. Dumais answered that this was not considered because of the very large impact it would have on the current team arrangement at both middle schools.

Mr. Stirling commended the staff present for all the work that is done to prepare and support the budget.

Mr. Leahy asked what the path forward will be. Mr. Stirling stated that there will be a full board meeting next Monday and the budget will be presented. The Board will be looking for community feedback. Mr. Blake stated that full Board will adopt the budget sometime after the budget presentation next Monday, perhaps at the March Board meeting.

### **3. Adjourn**

*Motion by Mr Grabowski, second by Mr. Nuzzo to adjourn at 7:00 p.m.*

*Vote unanimous*

*Motion carried*

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth E. Natzel, Recording Clerk