

MINUTES

**AMITY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John A. Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

**AMITY BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:**

James Horwitz

**Staff Members Present:** John Brady, Jack Levine, Sheila Wycinowski, Mary Raiola, Charles Britton, Kathleen Fuller Cutler, Richard Dellinger, Vicenza Gibbons; Kevin Keller (*Amity AV*), Pua Ford

**Also Present:** Deb DeMeo (AEA), Thomas Falcigno (Student Government), Tom Kenefick (Woodbridge BOS); other members of the Public; member of the Press

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A regular meeting of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Monday, December 12, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. in the Presentation Room at the District Offices.

1. **Call to Order:** Bill Blake called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by those present.

*Motion to move agenda item 4 up so that new Board members may vote in item 3 (Thomas Hurley, 2d Patricia Cardozo)*

*Discussion:* none.

*Vote in favor:* Julie Altman, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, Thomas Hurley, James Stirling

*Vote opposed:* none.

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion passed.***

4. **Swearing-In of New Board Members**

Bill Blake welcomed the three new representatives from Orange, who had all already taken their oath of office in their town hall. They took the oath again as a formal welcome to the Board.

3. **Election of Officers Including Vice Treasurer**

Bill Blake turned the meeting over to John Brady, in accordance with the Bylaws of the Board.

- a. **Chairperson:** John Brady called for nominations for this office; explained the bylaws. Sue Cohen nominated Bill Blake; Rita Gedansky seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations; there was no discussion. Vote in favor of the nomination was unanimous. Bill resumed chairmanship of the meeting.
- b. **Vice-Chairperson:** Bill Blake asked for nominations. Rita Gedansky nominated Sue Cohen for vice-chair; dc seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations; there was no discussion. Vote in favor of the nomination was unanimous.
- c. **Secretary:** Bill Blake asked for nominations. Thomas Hurley nominated Rita Gedansky for secretary; Diane Crocco seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations; there was no discussion. Vote in favor of the nomination was unanimous.
- d. **Treasurer:** Bill Blake referred to Policy/Bylaw 9126 for a description of this office; he asked for nominations. James Stirling nominated James Horwitz for treasurer; Sue Cohen seconded

the nomination. There were no other nominations; there was no discussion. Vote in favor of the nomination was unanimous. Bill Blake noted that Jim Horwitz has been acting as Treasurer over the past month.

- d. Assistant Treasurer: Thomas Hurley nominated Steven DeMaio for Assistant Treasurer; Rita Gedansky seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations; there was no discussion. Vote in favor of the nomination was unanimous.

Bill thanked the elected officers for their willingness to serve.

## 5. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Board of Education Meeting: November 14, 2011

*Motion to approve these minutes as presented (Thomas Hurley, 2d Sue Cohen).*

*Discussion*: Tom Hurley made corrections.

*Vote in favor of approving the minutes as corrected*: Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Thomas Hurley, James Stirling

*Vote opposed*: none

*Abstain*: Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Tracey Lane Russo

*Motion passed.*

- b. Board of Education Retreat: November 16, 2011

*Motion to approve these minutes as presented (Thomas Hurley, 2d Diane Crocco).*

*Discussion*: Tom Hurley offered a correction.

*Vote in favor of approving the minutes as corrected*: Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, James Stirling

*Vote opposed*: none

*Abstain*: Julie Altman, Rita Gedansky, Tracey Lane Russo

*Motion passed.*

## 6. Recognition of Vi Gibbons, Connecticut Assistant Principal of the Year

John Brady described the criteria leading to recognition of Vi Gibbons, assistant principal at Orange MS as CT Asst Principal of the Year. Vi offered remarks, thanked everyone, especially Principal Kathleen Fuller Cutler for nominating her.

## 7. Discussion and Possible Action to Appoint Board of Education as Superintendent Search Committee

*Motion to appoint the entire Board of Education as the Superintendent Search Committee (Thomas Hurley, 2d Christopher Browe).*

*Discussion*: none.

*Vote in favor*: Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Vote opposed*: none.

*Abstain*: none.

*Motion passed.*

## 8. Discussion and Possible Action to Enter into Contract for Superintendent Search Services

Bill Blake described how some Board member had met with several firms who provide assistance to boards of educations in this search process. In a non meeting, they interviewed three organizations last week. All were very professional, and gave much of their time. Sue Cohen said she was impressed with Ms. Jacobi from the CABA search service and thought they would connect well with people in the community. Bill asked for a motion authorizing negotiations and set the cost. John Brady pointed out that a new funding request for \$15,000 appears later in the agenda.

*Motion to enter into negotiations with CAFE search services regarding engagement and the cost of a search for a new Superintendent of Schools (Sue Cohen, 2d Patricia Cardozo).*

*Discussion:* Tom Hurley reported that he was impressed with the top choices among the firms and that he supports this motion.

*Vote in favor:* Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Vote opposed:* none.

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion passed.***

**9. Discussion of District Meeting vs. Referendum for 2012-2013 Budget Vote** (*memorandum dated 11/30/2011*).

The Finance committee tabled this item, pending further information on hourly voter turnout and how other regional districts conduct budget votes. Board member made other requests for data, such as the cost of conducting referenda and the total percentage of turnout. This item was tabled.

**10. Principals' Reports**

- a. Orange middle school: Kathleen Fuller Cutler reported on activity at the Orange campus: writing prompts, parent conferences, a proposed student exchange (together with Bethany middle school students) to China (w/ Bethany campus students), recent staff training, PTSO fundraising, student council talent show and clothing drive, a lock-down drill, after-school book chat café, 8<sup>th</sup> graders attending the high school play *Almost Maine*, a visit from the Chinese Education Delegation of Administrators, and class team efforts raising money for the Hamden Children's Center and for overseas military.
- b. Bethany middle school: Rich Dellinger reported similar activity at the Bethany campus: the student council Toys for Tots drive, Quilts for Healing sent to the Yale Pediatric Hospital, the PTO holiday coffee, holiday concert, the iPad initiative. He described the potential Chinese trip in more detail.
- c. High school: Charles Britton reported to clarify some recent incidents, involving student arrests for marijuana and other drugs. He described how the administration works with Officer Rizutti to enforce the law. He answered questions from the Board; there does not appear to be any increase in drug activity, just better tracking of it. Feedback from students indicates that these problems are no worse here than at other schools. Last year a canine unit was brought into the school for a general search; this may be carried out again. Health education programs and policies regarding student expulsion and reentry are in place.

Charles went on to review seasonal activities at the high school: adjusting the new schedule, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Night (with a PowerPoint describing the high school program of studies posted online for those who could not attend), AP Night with a panel of current AP students informing others about the program, the senior internship program with local and distant businesses (application deadline 12/16), PTSA seeking donations for Families in Need, and the seasonal music concerts.

**11. Student Report**

Thomas Falcigno reported on student activities at the high school: the Homecoming Dance, Spirit Week, the Greater New Haven Math League Competition hosted by Amity (where the home team placed 3<sup>rd</sup> after Choate & Hopkins), the competition to join a regional youth orchestra, a debate tournament hosted by Amity, and the play *Almost Maine*, which was also part of the Guidance Department program.

Rita Gedansky thanked the Superintendent for the Thanksgiving events honoring her husband, Dr. Sim and Mr. Johnson.

**12. Public Comment (7:38 p.m.): none**

**13. Announcements from the Board and Administration**

- a. Amity students take first place in Sikorsky STEM challenge (*Bethwood Patch article*).

**14. Correspondence**

- a. Letter from State Dept. of Education Regarding School Closures and the School Calendar: School districts should expect to fulfill the 180-day minimum year, despite the days lost due to the two storms and subsequent power outages. If necessary, districts should consider using the holidays before cutting their school year short.
- b. Letter from Carol Steiner, Ph.D.: about school start time.

**15. Superintendent's Report**

- a. Personnel Report  
The superintendent reported one new hire at the high school, new coaching appointments, no resignations, and the coming retirement of Carolyn Stanley, the technology teacher at the Bethany campus.
- b. Information on Next Ed – Transforming Connecticut's Education System – John Brady discussed important points in the *Next Ed* document which had been distributed to Board members. These recommendations will be considered by the General Assembly at the upcoming legislative session. John described them as “transformative recommendations” with the potential to improve education even if they were “cherry-picked.” He pointed out particular recommendations on pp. 2-4 in a document distributed to the Board.

[Further information on CAPSS website <http://www.capss.org/page.cfm?p=437>]

**16. Chairman's Report**

- a. Committee Reports
- 1) ACES: no report
  - 2) CAFE: Jamie Stirling described the CAFE/CAPSS convention in November, Governor Malloy's address about the emphasis on education in the coming legislative session, and useful workshops. He referred to the CAPSS website for information on *Next Ed*. He said it would be important for Boards of Education to be heard at the General Assembly this year. Bill Blake noted that the New Commissioner of Education also addressed the convention.
  - 3) Curriculum
- a. Discussion and Possible Action on New Texts and New Course Proposals  
Julie Altman reported on the November committee meeting. Sheila Wycinowski walked the Board through the list of three proposed textbooks.

*Motion to adopt all three textbooks as proposed (Thomas Hurley, 2d John Grasso).*

*Discussion:* Steve DeMaio asked if these books would be available online or as CDs.

Sheila said online texts cost much more, and were available for limited periods.

*Vote to approve:* Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Vote opposed:* none.

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion passed.***

Sheila described the list of course proposals. Responding to questions from the Board, she said that if students don't sign up for any course offering, the class is not scheduled and may be eventually deleted.

*Motion to approve the new courses as recommended (Thomas Hurley, 2d Steven DeMaio).*

*Discussion:* none further.

*Vote to approve:* Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Vote opposed:* none.

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion passed.***

4) Facilities: This committee will meet soon on a number of issues.

5) Finance

a) Discussion and Possible Action on Parking Fee Proposal

John Brady recapped Tom Falcigno's presentation at the Nov. ABOE meeting. Refined proposal before them now may result in better revenue for the district. The Finance committee approved this item.

*Motion that the fee structure for student parking be changed so students are charged \$100 at the start of the academic year; \$75 at the beginning of the second marking period; \$50 at the beginning of the third marking period; and \$25 at the beginning of the fourth marking period. Fees will not be refunded to students for non-use of parking. Parking stickers issued to one student may not be transferred to a different student (Diane Crocco, 2d Christopher Browe).*

*Discussion:* Board members asked questions and discussed details. Refunds on parking fees are not possible but are seldom requested. There have been no comments from the public on this arrangement so far. Tom Hurley wondered if the Board should consider some condition on the proposal, in case it does not result in more revenue; Bill Blake recommended testing this proposal first.

*Vote in favor:* Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Vote opposed:* none.

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion passed.***

b) Discussion of Monthly Financial Statements: Jack Levine highlighted items that would require approval of budget transfers.

c) Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfers under \$3,000

The Board received the two-page list.

d) Discussion and Possible Action on Budget Transfers over \$3,000 (memorandum 11/29/2011)

Bill Blake briefly oriented new board members on customary process for finance business. All of the following items were approved by the Finance committee.

*Motion to make the following budget transfer of \$17,504 to pay the State of Connecticut Department of Labor for unemployment compensation expenses (James Stirling, 2d Patricia Cardozo).*

Account Number	Account Name	From	To
03-14-2600-5410	Utilities, excluding Heat	\$ 17,504.	
05-15-2512-5290	Unemployment Compensation		\$ 17,504.

*Discussion: discussion.*

*Vote in favor:* Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Vote opposed:* none.

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion passed.***

e) Discussion and Possible Action on New Funding Requests

All the recommended motions were approved by the Finance committee. Board members discussed whether the amount for the Superintendent search was sufficient.

a) *Motion to make the following budget transfer of \$20,000 to pay for consulting services to assist the Board of Education in the selection of a new Superintendent of Schools (Thomas Hurley, 2d Rita Gedansky).*

*Discussion:* Tom Hurley’s motion increased the amount approved by the Finance committee in order to provide sufficient funds in case out-of-state travel by a candidate or by Board members making a site visit were required. The cost of advertising the superintendent position was covered in the quotes from candidate search firms; most such online advertising is done online, not in print. Others believe that another funding request or use of other line items would satisfy possible needs. Bill Blake proposed separating amounts discussed by amending the motion.

*Motion to amend the above motion, changing “\$20,000” to “\$15,000” (accepted by Thomas Hurley, Rita Gedansky).*

*Amended motion:* To make the following budget transfer of \$15,000 to pay for consulting services to assist the Board of Education in the selection of a new Superintendent of Schools.

*Vote in favor:* Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Vote opposed:* none.

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion passed.***

Account Number	Account Name	From	To
05-15-0000-5850	Contingency Account	\$ 15,000.	
05-14-2310-5330	Other Profession & Technical Services		\$ 15,000.

b) *Motion to transfer \$5,000 from Contingency to appropriate account to be designated by the Director of Finance and Administration for advertising and travel (Thomas Hurley, 2d Christopher Browe).*

*Discussion:* Board members discussed possible purposes of and need for this money.

*Vote in favor:* Christopher Browe, Diane Crocco, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley

*Vote opposed:* Julie Altman, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Steven DeMaio, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion failed.***

c) *Motion to make the following budget transfer of \$4,218 from the Tuition account to the Contingency account (James Stirling, 2d Thomas Hurley).*

<u>Account Number</u>	<u>Account Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
04-12-6227-5650	Tuition	\$ 4,218.	
05-15-0000-5850	Contingency Account		\$ 4,218.

*Discussion:* Jack explained that since the ACES bill for ECA students was lower than anticipated, some funds should be restored to the Contingency account

*Vote in favor:* Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John A. Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Vote opposed:* none.

*Abstain:* none.

***Motion passed.***

Bill Blake will talk to new members about appointments to committees.

6) Policy: The committee will meet in January

7) Personnel: The committee has worked on negotiations with the teachers.

#### **17. Update on Negotiations – Executive Session**

*Motion to go into Executive Session at 8:40 p.m. in order to discussion negotiations and to invite the Superintendent and Director of Finance and Administration to join the Board. (Thomas Hurley, 2d Diane Crocco).*

*Vote in favor:* Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John Grasso, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

*Opposed:* none

*Abstain:* none

***Motion passed.***

The Board entered Executive Session at 8:40 p.m.

The Board left Executive Session at 9:00 p.m.

**18. Items for Next Agenda:** Board members should notify Bill or John about items they wish to add.

#### **19. Adjournment**

*The Board adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

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Rita Gedansky, secretary  
Pua Ford, recording clerk pro tem

Attachments/References

Bylaws of the Board # 9126 & 9127

Minutes: regular Board meeting (11/14/2011, 12 pp.)  
Board retreat (11/16/2011, 6pp.)

Memo: J.Brady to Finance committee and Board 11/29/2011) [re Amity budget referendum]

News story from *Bethwood Patch* (11/21/2011)

Letters: SDOE to superintendents re School Closures and Calendar (11/15/2011)  
Dr. Steiner to Board (11/18/2011)

Memo: J.Brady to Board (12/14/2011) re Personnel

Textbook approval applications (3)

New/modified course applications (8)

Memo: J.Levine to J.Brady (12/02/2011) re Student Parking Policy

Monthly Financial Statements (12/01/2011)

Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfers under \$3,000

Budget transfers 2011-2012 (nd, 2pp.)

Minutes: Finance committee (11/14/2011, 4 pp.)  
Curriculum committee (11/17/2011, 4 pp.)