

MINUTES

AMITY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John A. Grasso, Jr., James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

AMITY BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Julie Altman

Staff Members Present: Charles Britton, Richard Dellinger, Shawn DeRosa, Vi Gibbons, Jack Levine, Marianne Lippard, Marie McPadden, Michael Nast, Mary Raiola

Also Present: Patrick Dudley; other members of the Public

A regular meeting of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Monday, November 11, 2013, at 6:30 p.m., in the cafeteria at Amity Regional High School.

- 1. Call to Order:** William Blake called the meeting to order at
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by those present.
- 3. Recognition of CAPSS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents) Award Recipients**

The Board recognized recipients of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents Award from each school.

At Amity Middle School in Bethany, Morgan Meehan and Andrew Burford received awards.

The recipients at Amity Middle School in Orange were Isobel Browe and Jeremy Gustafson.

At the High School, Eleanor Handler, Daniel Centore, Jeffrey Curtin, Brent Marieb, Tess Osinski, and Kira Saunders received awards.

- 4. Recognition of National Merit Scholar Program Semi-Finalists and Commended Students**

The Board recognized the National Merit Scholar Program Semi-Finalists and Commended Students.

Semi-Finalists included Haneesh Anumolu, Kathleen Feng, Eleanor Handler, David Lassila, Eyal Minsky-Fenick, Emily Presseller, Jeremy Wolin, Michael Yuan, and Michael Zuo.

Commended Students included Yiwen Bao, Harold Brownfield, Daniel Centore, Arlo Eitzer, Jonathan Gelernter, Elizabeth Giovanniello, Scott Grubman, Lamisa Mannan, Madeline Molot, Scott Saffran, Joshua Schaperow, Kavita Sinha, Alexander Slanski, David Sokolowski, Andrew Su, Lillian Sun, Lindsay Weiner, Ashley Wu, Paul Yoo, and Sikai Yu.

5. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular BOE Meeting, October 21, 2013

Motion to approve the minutes as presented (Ms. Gedansky, 2d Mr. Hurley).

Discussion: Ms. Cohen noted corrections needed on page 2 and 5.

Vote in favor: Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Rita Gedansky, James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

Vote opposed: none

Abstain: Diane Crocco, John A. Grasso, Jr., Steven DeMaio

Motion passed.

6. Public Comment

No members of the public addressed the Board.

7. Student Report

Patrick Dudley, student government representative, reported that Music in Motion took place recently and this year's event continued Amity's tradition of success. The Fall Festival and a blood drive are coming up soon. These two events are run by the National Honor Society. Today was Veterans' Day and students were encouraged to wear red, white and blue. Veterans talked to students about their experiences and the students learned a great deal by listening to these stories. An upcoming presentation about texting and driving is planned to take place soon. The presentation has been described as emotionally jarring, but it is expected to provide a realistic view of this issue. The Homecoming Dance will take place soon and this event serves as a Student Government fundraiser.

8. Superintendent's Report

a. **Personnel Report**

Mr. Nast noted that there have been two new hires at the coaching level.

b. **Other**

1. **Budget**

Mr. Nast said that he is providing a monthly update on the budget to give the Board a sense of where the District is with the finances and to provide a smooth transition for the new superintendent. The District is looking at a contracted salary increase of approximately four percent. After Thanksgiving, he would like to talk to some of the subcommittees. By

early January, he expects to have some rough figures to present to the Board. He noted that we are at the starting point in the budget process, where non-negotiable items are included.

2. Evaluation

Dr. McPadden said that the Amity evaluation plan is set to go to the State Department of Education. Some amendments have been made. Non-tenured teachers have more formal evaluations than tenured teachers. The evaluation plan states that we will have nine evaluators at the High School and four at each middle school. The evaluators will conduct informal walkthroughs. Dr. McPadden attended a workshop at ACES and we will use complementary observers.

Amity has requested a waiver that would allow for the administration of a test other than the CAPT and CMT. We will be giving the SBAC in the spring, which won't be tied into the teacher evaluation this spring. The new test will be given between March 18th and April 4th. There are four two-hour sessions that must be scheduled. Everything, with the exception of science, will be taken completely online. An integrated keyboard can't be used, according to a mandate, but the students may use a mouse. We have also been informed that proctors should be renamed "test administrators." This year's test will not be adaptive. This is very different from a paper test. If the only time students see this is when they take a test, it is a disservice to the student. We will have a training module to support the students.

Mr. Nast said that while there has been a great deal of anxiety about the new evaluation model, he has been pleased to witness exceptional dialogue between teachers and administrators as a result of the changes. He sees positives coming out of these changes.

Dr. Britton said that we are all learning through this process. The evaluations will take a lot of time. He believes the outcomes will be good and tangible. The new evaluation model has a good purpose, but we have had to move quickly.

Mr. Stirling noted that Dr. McPadden indicated that more staff applied to be evaluators than there were openings.

It was noted that most of the applicants went through the cohort program.

Mr. Nast said that he doesn't see any harm in allowing teachers with an interest in administration to go through the training.

3. Power School

Shawn DeRosa said that the transition from iPass to PowerSchool is going well. At this point, all the data has been extracted from iPass. We need to

ensure that the data is ready to input into PowerSchool. The target date to have PowerSchool up and running is December 2nd. Parents would be able to use the new system at the end of December.

Mr. Blake noted that there will need to be a lot of communication with parents.

Mr. DeRosa said that PowerSchool is intuitive and easier to use than iPass. He added that parents having difficulty with PowerSchool can email him at any time day or night.

Mr. Grasso questioned whether a demonstration could be offered to a large group so that parents could get a visual sense of how the program works.

Mr. DeRosa said that he could provide a demonstration in the auditorium or by webinar. Parents will still be able to access iPass. By September of next year, the full version of PowerSchool will be available.

Dr. Dellinger noted that PowerSchool can be addressed during orientation next year.

Ms. Russo said that she doesn't believe that there will be many parents who aren't aware of how to navigate through PowerSchool. The town of Orange is already using the program at the elementary level.

It was noted that Bethany also uses PowerSchool.

4. Black Box Theater

Mr. Nast said that the Black Box Theater is complete and students are using it. He would like to formally dedicate the space in January. He is considering using the theater for the Board's January meeting. If anyone is interested in seeing the theater after tonight's meeting, he will be happy to offer a short tour.

c. Discussion on Parent/Teacher Conferences

Mr. Nast said that he is concerned because parents have only a limited amount of time to sign up for Parent/Teacher Conferences. He would like to form a committee to look into how to rectify this situation. Between 70 and 80 parents won't be able to schedule a conference. This has been a frustration for parents. There are options for these parents, such as calling a guidance counselor to make a special appointment to see a teacher.

Dr. Dellinger mentioned that the administration has discussed offering a student-led conference, but training would be needed.

Mr. Nast said that the student-led conference generally results in 100% parent attendance. If a parent can't attend, someone else, such as a coach, can be present. Mr. Nast said that he will provide more information at a future meeting.

Ms. Russo said that she feels that it is unacceptable that parents aren't getting an opportunity to meet teachers.

Mr. Nast said that the administration agrees.

Dr. Dellinger said that the current system needs to change. We have to find a better way.

Dr. Britton said that this has been a recurring problem in the seven years that he has worked in the District. It's a problem, unless more parent nights are added. Parents of students who achieve straight As are often the ones who are coming in to meet with teachers. It would be helpful for the parents of students achieving Cs or lower to get priority. We need to think about different options.

Dr. Dellinger noted that giving preference to the parents of struggling students has been tried and resulted in some no-shows.

Mr. Browe said that the District has an active and engaged parent population.

d. MicroGrid Project

Mr. Blake noted that since losing power in various parts of the District during recent storms, there has been some discussion of MicroGrids. The discussion has focused on the possibility of building a small electrical hub to serve certain vital parts of Woodbridge. Part of the MicroGrid Project would involve the Amity property. The project isn't ready for public discussion. Those working on the project will bring answers. This may eventually go to the Facilities Committee. Once more information is available, we will discuss this further.

9. Chairman's Report

a. Committee Reports

1. ACES – There was no report.
2. CABE – Mr. Stirling noted that there is an upcoming event that provides excellent networking opportunities and the chance to learn more about what other districts are doing with respect to teacher evaluations. Four Board members are already planning to represent the District, but it is not too late to sign up.
3. Curriculum – Dr. McPadden said that there was a meeting last week and proposals for course name changes were presented. There were no budgetary implications. The Committee approved the name changes in

the World Language and Strings program. A new English elective was also approved. The new course will allow students to learn to be peer tutors in the Writing Center.

Mr. Hurley, who serves on the Curriculum Committee, said that with respect to the course name changes, only numbers were taken off of courses because the numbering was causing problems during scheduling for some students.

Dr. McPadden noted that two researchers from Yale also presented information to the Curriculum Committee about a survey that they would like to give to students. Board members have been provided with a list of the survey questions. A variety of questions relate to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. The researchers are flexible about changing some of the questions. For example, questions about a belief in God would need to be changed. Dr. McPadden noted that Mr. Browe, a member of the Committee, asked the researchers about whether students might begin thinking more about psychological issues after seeing these types of questions. The Committee did not make a decision about survey participation by Amity students.

Mr. Hurley noted that the superintendent makes an evaluation and the Board would have the final say before a survey such as this would be administered.

Mr. Nast said that he isn't prepared to make a recommendation regarding the survey at this time.

Dr. McPadden noted that the Yale researchers maintain that the survey will be confidential, but it has been acknowledged that there will still be areas where students might be identified. One benefit to Amity is that the researchers have offered to speak to psychology students about their work. A review of the survey questions raised questions for administrators. The issue has been tabled for the time being.

4. Facilities – There was no discussion.

5. Finance

a. Update on 2014-2015 Budget

Mr. Levine noted that the insurance figure is preliminary. Claims have been higher than expected, but we are hopeful that the number will come down.

Mr. Hurley questioned the special education figure.

Mr. Levine said that the special education figure is subject to change.

b. Discussion and Possible Action on Contract of \$35,000 or More

In a memo from Mr. Levine to Mr. Nast dated October 16, 2013, a copier proposal is detailed.

In fall 2009, the District and Xerox Corp. entered into a 60-month lease agreement utilizing the CREC/PEPPM Bid Contract Award to procure its current copier fleet. The CREC/PEPPM Bid Contract Award continues to be available to all school districts in the State and the Xerox proposal was developed using the pricing from that award. This would meet the Board's purchasing policy.

As of December 31, 2013, the District will be at month 48 of its 60 month lease plan for 25 Xerox copiers. These units are on an all-inclusive pool plan. The current cost for all 25 Xerox copiers is \$140,315.52 per year. The District has the opportunity to take advantage of a Xerox yearend sales promotion in which we can upgrade all 25 of the existing Xerox fleet copiers at an annual cost of \$139,762.56 per year, or \$552.96 less than we are currently paying.

The Xerox proposal requires the installation of the Xerox equipment on or before December 31, 2013. The implementation includes Xerox picking up in trade all the existing Xerox equipment. All equipment will be delivered free of charge, excluding excess rigging, if necessary. All equipment is covered by the Xerox Total Satisfaction Guarantee.

The upgrade will provide the following highlights:

1. The current five-year lease agreement will be extended from the remaining one year to five-years. The total annual cost of the new lease would be \$552.96 less than the current lease.
2. The current pool plan includes 641,389 copies/prints per month and the excess is \$0.0066 per copy/print. The proposed new plan will include 648,886 copies/prints per month and the excess rate will be reduced to \$0.0049 per copy/print.
3. All the equipment will be new and each location's machine will be configured the same or with additional capabilities as what they now have.
4. The proposal provides the opportunity for paper cost savings, as all units will be equipped with two sided copying and printing in order to maximize paper usage. Also, the networking allows for desktop computers to print to a Xerox copier, which can save on toner cartridges.

Mr. Levine noted that we still have one year remaining on a five-year contract, but there is a tremendous opportunity here to replace the current machines with copiers offering greater capability. There are a

higher maximum number of copies and the District would not be charged extra money.

Motion to authorize the Superintendent of Schools or Director of Finance and Administration to sign a 60 month lease agreement with Xerox Corporation for \$11,646.88 per month, or \$139,762.56 per year, for 25 copiers (Mr. Stirling, 2d Ms. Cardozo).

Mr. Hurley noted that we are in year four of the contract now.

Mr. Levine said that the new contract will start on January 1, 2014 and every machine will be replaced.

Vote in favor unanimous.

Motion passed.

c. Discussion of Monthly Financial Statements

Mr. Levine noted that the cost of special education transportation can change from month to month. We are still considerably over budget with the self-insurance. The good news is that the costs are going down somewhat.

Mr. Hurley said that if the trend of high claims continues, there will be a major deficit in this account.

It was noted previously that the voluntary retirement plan can be taken from the OPEB Trust, rather than the insurance fund.

Mr. Hurley questioned when the voluntary retirement plan would be taken from the OPEB Trust.

Mr. Levine said that he is closely monitoring the self-insurance. The OPEB would not be used until June, if at all.

Mr. Nast said nothing would be done at least until the spring because the self-insurance account fluctuates significantly.

Mr. Hurley said that he has concerns about the budget being \$200,000 short. We are holding money for one purpose and possibly using it for another.

Mr. Levine said that the OPEB Trust hasn't been touched.

Mr. Blake said that we are in month five of a year and we have more time to see what the results are. We also have a stop loss policy.

- d. Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfers Under \$3,000
There was no discussion.
- e. Discussion and Possible Action on Budget Transfers of \$3,000 or More
In a memo to Mr. Nast dated October 28, 2013, Mr. Levine recommends a balance transfer to pay for special education tuition expenditures out of the proper account.

Move to make the following budget transfer to pay for special education tuition expenditures (Ms. Cardozo, 2d Ms. Cohen):

<u>Account Number</u>	<u>Account Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
04-12-6110-5560	Tuition Expense	\$115,000	
04-12-6113-5560	Tuition Expense	\$9,000	
04-12-6111-5560	Tuition Expense	\$21,000	
04-12-6130-5560	Tuition Expense		\$145,000

Vote in favor unanimous.

Motion passed.

- f. Presentation of Amity Audit Status Report
Mr. Levine reported that the audit is coming along well and everything related to the audit is currently ahead of schedule.
6. Policy – There was no discussion.
7. Personnel – Mr. Blake said that applications are being evaluated by the Personnel Committee. We are moving forward to find a new superintendent.

10. Items for the Next Agenda

Ms. Russo said that she would like to make corrections and bring consistency to the Mission Statement, which she has seen presented differently in different publications.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m. (Mr. Stirling, 2d Ms. Gedansky)
Motion passed; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Lippard, recording clerk
Rita Gedansky, secretary

References/Attachments:

Minutes:

Amity Finance Committee, October 21, 2013
Board of Education, October 21, 2013

Memos:

Jack B. Levine to Michael Nast (10/16/13) re: Contract of \$35,000
or More – Copier Proposal
Jack B. Levine to Michael R. Nast (10/28/13) re: Budget Transfers
of \$3,000 or More for Fiscal Year 2013-2014
Michael R. Nast to Members of the Amity Finance Committee and
Board of Education (11/4/13) re: Update on 2014-2015 Budget

Reports:

Amity Regional School District No. 5 Year-to-Date Budget Report
(11/5/13)
Amity Regional School District No. 5 Budget Transfers 2013-2014
Amity Regional School District No. 5 Revenues and Expenditures
for FY 2013-2014

Misc.

Amanda L. Backhaus to Jack Levine (11/4/13) re: Update Amity
Audit Status