

**AMESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
AMESBURY HIGH SCHOOL
October 5, 2020**

Present were Mayor Gove, Chair; Peter Hoyt, Mel Webster, Kate Currie, Abigail Jurist Levy, Maryann Welch, Elaine Bucher, Jared Fulgoni, and Joan Liporto

This meeting was conducted under the ‘Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, §20’, signed on March 12, 2020.

A video recording of this meeting can be viewed here: <https://amesbury-school.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=349c0051-ace4-4639-8fe3-0185900e3923>

I. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Mission Statement (1:55)

II. Comments by Visitors and Delegations (2:45)

- A letter from Sal Begis, 25 Whittier St was read (attached)
- A letter from Maggie Dylewski Begis, 25 Whittier St was read (attached)
- A letter from Olivia Levasseur, a AHS student was read (attached)
- A letter from Sarah McDavitt was read (attached)
- A letter from Joanna Kimball, 4 Moody St was read (attached)
- A Facebook comment from Cindy Yetman was read
- A Facebook comment from Susan Woodsom was read
- Facebook comments from the livestream are attached

III. Executive Session (17:32)

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21 (a) (3) for the purpose of discussing strategy as it relates to collective bargaining with the Amesbury Federation of Teachers as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee, as declared by the Chair.

Mr. Hoyt moved to enter executive session, second by Ms. Bucher. Vote: Yes, unanimous.

Mr. Webster moved to take it section “V. Communications” out of order, second by Mr. Hoyt. Vote: Yes, unanimous.

IV. Communications (20:15)

- A. Student Rep. Tim Gilleo gave a report to the committee on behalf of the Student Advisory Council.
- B. The SEPAC report was read into the record

V. Presentations and Administrative Reports

A. Superintendent's Report (26:20) –

- 1. The Superintendent gave a report to the committee on the progress made so far in achieving his goals. The committee asked questions and there was a discussion on communication.
- 2. Superintendent Fulgoni provided an update to the committee on various COVID-19 updates, including an update from Lynn Catarius on the return of special education students to in-person learning, enrollment numbers, and current staffing challenges as reported by Joan Liporto.

-Return to School Discussion- (1:12:12)

The committee held a discussion on the planned move to hybrid learning.

- Superintendent Fulgoni opened the discussion by recommending the district begin a transition into a hybrid learning model.
- Fire Chief/Acting Health Director Ken Berkenbush provided an update to the committee on the state and local public health response. Followed by questions and discussion from the committee.
- It Director Tim McCue provided an update to the committee on the district's technology infrastructure followed by question and discussion by the committee.
- A discussion on the reopening plans continued, including input from building principals, Joan Liporto, Lyn Jacques and Matt Bennett.

Mr. Hoyt moved that the district move towards a hybrid model with the details to be decided by the administration beginning with implementation on October 19th, seconded by Ms. Currie. The committee held discussion on the motion.

After discussion Ms. Currie rescinded her second, Mr. Hoyt rescinded his motion.

Mr. Webster moved that the district move to a hybrid model on October 19th pending approval by the committee of the revised detailed hybrid plan by the end of the day on October 9th with the goal of increased frequency of student interaction with teachers and presence in the school buildings, second by Ms. Bucher. Vote: Yes, unanimous.

B. Director of Business Operations Report (3:01:10)

Ms. Liporto gave a brief report to the committee relating to COVID expenses and the restoration of positions.

VI. Items for Approval (3:03:25)

A. Minutes

- *Ms. Welch moved to approve the minutes from 9/10/20, second by Mr. Hoyt. Approved without objection.*

B. Warrants

- *Mr. Webster moved to approve the warrant from 8/28/20 in the amount of \$564,648.85, second by Ms. Welch. Approved without objection.*
- *Mr. Hoyt moved to approve the warrant from 9/10/20 in the amount of \$205,058.06, second by Dr. Jurist Levy. Approved without objection.*
- *Ms. Bucher moved to approve the warrant from 9/11/20 in the amount of \$540,719.36, second by Ms. Welch. Approved without objection.*
- *Ms. Welch moved to approve the warrant from 9/24/20 in the amount of \$406,050.48, second by Mr. Hoyt. Approved without objection.*

C. Capital Budget – City Overlay Funded

1. AHS Boiler Repair (approx. \$15k)
2. AHS Sewer Line Repair (approx. \$13,000)
3. AMS Hot Water Tank Replacement x2 (approx. \$120k)

Ms. Bucher moved to direct Matt Bennett to solicit quotes on the 3 items listed, second by Mr. Webster. Approved without objection.

D. Acceptance of \$12,000 donation to be used for Lexia Core 5 licenses at CES & AES

Mr. Hoyt moved to accept the donation, seconded by Mr. Webster. Approved without objection.

E. Approval of three year lease with Apple Financial Services for 327 iPads at a total cost of \$100,892.28 with three annual payments of \$33,630.76. A discussion on the item took place.

Mr. Hoyt moved to approved, second by Ms. Welch. Approved without objection.

F. Approval of three year lease with Ford Motor Credit Company for one 2020 Ford Transit T-150 Van at a total cost of \$34,232.50 with three annual payments of \$12,098.23. A discussion on the item took place.

Mr. Webster moved to approve, second by Dr. Jurist Levy. Approved without objection.

G. Covid-19 Response Plan

Mr. Hoyt moved to approve the plan, second by Dr. Jurist Levy. After discussion, motion was approved without objection.

H. Policies

1. AGA – Ms. Currie gave a summary of the policy and changes made and a discussion took place.

Mr. Hoyt moved to approve, second by Ms. Bucher. Approved without objection.

2. JICA - Ms. Currie gave a summary of the policy and changes made and a discussion took place.
Mr. Hoyt moved to waive a second reading and approve the policy, second by Ms. Welch. Approved without objection.
3. EBC-S - Ms. Currie gave a summary of the policy and changes made and a discussion took place.
Ms. Bucher moved to approve, second by Mr. Hoyt. Approved without objection.

VII. Information Items (3:14:20)

A. Subcommittee Reports

1. Mr. Webster gave a report to the committee from the finance subcommittee.
2. Ms. Currie gave a report to the committee on the Personnel subcommittee.
3. Ms. Bucher gave a report to the committee on the building and grounds subcommittee.
4. Ms. Currie updated the committee on the Policy subcommittee.
5. Ms. Welch updated the committee on the Teaching and Learning subcommittee.

B. Mr. Hoyt updated the committee on the AES School Building Committee.

VIII. Future Meetings (3:22:00)

The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on November 2, 2020 at 7:00pm. Subcommittees and other meetings will be held on the following dates:

1. AES School Building Committee – October 22, 2020 at 6:00pm
2. Finance Subcommittee – TBD
3. Personnel Subcommittee – TBD
4. Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee – October 14, 2020 at 4:00pm
5. Policy Subcommittee – October 20, 2020 at 4pm
6. Teaching and Learning Subcommittee – October 19, 2020 at 5:00pm
7. MASC Workshop – November 7, 2020

The committee decided to meet on October 9th at 3:00pm for the purpose of approving the revised hybrid plan.

Ms. Currie moved to adjourn, second by Mr. Hoyt. Approved without objection.

Public Comment

- Dear Amesbury School Committee and Superintendent Fulgoni,

I am in full support of transitioning to a hybrid model that includes allowing Pre-K, kindergarten and first grade students to attend school in-person 4 days a week for half days.

We as a community, have come together and followed the prescribed protocols and have stayed below key metrics for some time (Percent Positivity: 0.35% and less than 5 cases within 2 weeks).

Now we ask our community leaders to do the same. Come together and give the parents of Amesbury a **choice** to send their children back to in-person learning. Though great efforts were made by all teachers, our children now in Kindergarten, have no connection with the teacher nor fellow schoolmates. They are not learning through an iPad and they are losing out on creating a foundation for their education. They need and deserve the choice to go back.

The time is now to move forward.

Thank you.

Sal Begis 25 Whittier St, Amesbury MA 01913

- Dear Amesbury School Committee,

I am in full support of transitioning to a hybrid model that includes allowing Pre-K, kindergarten and first grade students to attend school in-person 4 days a week for half days.

I have two kindergarten students at Cashman. Although their teacher is amazing, online learning is not effective or appropriate for my young children. It is time to move forward.

Please consider voting in favor of this hybrid plan.

Maggie Dylewski Begis

25 Whittier Street

- Hello!

I hope you are doing well. I just wanted to email you with my concerns on the amount of work that I am getting for school. I have talked to other students about the matter and came to inform you that the amount of homework and work that we are getting in the four days we have remote schooling is overwhelming. I will attach the amount of assignments I have done so far in the three weeks of remote schooling, but it has come to the point where I am doing homework and assignments between classes, during lunch break, and very late every night. I also play field hockey, and we have six classes this year instead of four as well. If we had four classes and no fall sports, I would think that the school workload would be somewhat acceptable, but sadly this is not the case. Teachers know that students are getting swamped with homework and work during the week, and still pack on more school work. I haven't been able to catch up

on Wednesdays, Saturdays or Sundays, which are the days we can do homework and get a break from online school. Homework takes all day Wednesday and all day Saturdays to complete the assignments due the next day. I haven't taken my eyes off a computer screen in three weeks, other than being outside for field hockey, which goes until 5:30PM every day. I also get notifications from google classroom all weekend long of assignments due during the week or on that Sunday. As I have tried to work ahead and get assignments done ahead of time, more and more assignments pop up before the class and during the night. Most nights I stay up until 1AM doing school work that is due very early in the morning. Lack of sleep has been a huge problem as well because of how much school work that I have gotten and is due shortly after. I have talked to other students as well about this matter and some have stayed up longer than I have during the night, some teachers give us a smaller workload knowing we are swamped with work, while others pack it on, knowing that other teachers are not giving us as much work. One of my classes so far has given me 40 assignments in the past three weeks (may I remind you that's only 12 classes in three weeks). And that is only one class, in the past three weeks for all of my assignments I have gotten over **132** assignments that I have completed. And, there is still more that I haven't done yet. This is most stressful and the most work I have ever gotten in my life. I know you are doing your best efforts in making remote learning as normal as possible, but I just wanted you to have some feedback from someone who usually never complains about their school work. I'm so sorry that you had to get one of these emails, but I hope this helps sway the decision of going back to school or not-whatever that looks like. And if we do stay remote, hopefully the teachers will help students have a better experience.

Thank you! :)

Sincerely,

A student at AHS

- To whom it may concern,

I would like to offer the school committee my hope (and opinion) for the return to school for our elementary children, grades pre-K through 4. I am an Amesbury resident and mother of two children in public school; a 3rd grader at AES and a Freshman in high school. Since March 2020, I have seen my, then 2nd grader, struggle with online learning. Initially, it was a total "free for all" with zero direction, zero guidance and zero learning. My child was miserable and began to loathe school. My older child was doing just fine, having already learned the essentials of reading, writing and arithmetic plus understanding how to navigate online platforms (all of which was taught IN SCHOOL). My older child was already using Google Classroom. My younger child had never seen this platform before and neither had I. We basically learned together, on our own, and continue to learn together. As a parent, I am okay learning together. What I am not okay with is pausing my always crazy, busy and hectic work schedule multiple times during the day to assist with online learning needs. Let's face it, once the teacher is done with face to face Google meets, these younger kids are on their own, trying to navigate the best they can. They are checked out before 10am. Zombies by 3pm. It is just too much.

The amount of "screentime" is not okay! I see firsthand how it's affecting our younger population of kids. A perfect example from today; my 3rd grader's technology teacher wasn't able to teach the lesson

via Google meet. Which means my child had to locate the work, read the directions, watch pointless Youtube videos, figure out how to create a slide, add title, fonts... Do you see where I am going with this? How the heck is a 3rd grader supposed to be doing these things independently? Is it now MY responsibility to be the teacher? How is this okay?

I am a Registered Nurse case manager, dealing with a HUGE population of patients all over the state of Massachusetts. I am well aware of how covid works, how it spreads, who it mainly affects and how to now to deal with it. I am not afraid of this virus coming into my home just like I understand that the likeliness of children under the age of 14 to contract and/or spread it is slim to none. So why are we telling our children they cannot attend school? Why are we (as a community) still arguing over remote vs hybrid? We should have better options in place. A better plan in place. Based on the current covid data we have, compared with what other communities/school districts are doing, why is Amesbury so behind with having a plan in place? We are wearing our masks. We are staying socially distant or 6 ft apart. We are washing our hands repeatedly. We should NOT be fully remote at this point. At least not all grade levels. I am not saying hybrid for all is a better option either. What would initially make sense to me, speaking as a healthcare professional, let's get pre-K through 4th graders back in school. Amesbury has four buildings to utilize; AES, CES, AMS and AHS. There is plenty of space per these 4 buildings to accommodate the pre-k-4th grade children, keeping the suggested 6 feet apart, etc. These children need the in person learning to build on their social, emotional and intellectual skills. It is nearly impossible to learn this at home. The majority of our homes are not set up for homeschooling nor does a working parent have the time to be the teacher on a daily basis. Grades 5 and above have already been taught (and hopefully retained) the tools needed to be successful in a remote learning environment. Choosing the proposed hybrid model of learning will not be feasible for our community, our children. We can do better, we need to do better. Give pre-K through 4th graders the opportunity to be back in school with the most days and time possible for learning. 5th through 12th graders can continue with their remote studies for now. There shouldn't be an issue with technology, wifi, bandwidth, whatever the excuse may be, if we start out this way. I am hoping this makes sense. Time to stop agreeing on a plan that does not work for our children.

Thank you,

Sarah McDavitt

- Good evening members of the School Committee, Mayor Gove and Superintendent Fulgoni,

Thank you all so much for your continued time and thoughtful work on behalf of the Amesbury Public Schools. I am writing tonight to urge that you consider a hybrid learning plan option at this checkpoint, especially for our youngest learners.

I would like to applaud the students and families in Amesbury who have risen to the challenges of remote learning. As a middle school teacher, I have been so impressed with the hard work and positive outlook of our students. Families have been asked to do the impossible- balancing work and home when both feel at an imbalance. Personally, I have left my own home and children each day to go and teach- I wish them "good luck," and know that when I come home there will usually be tales of technology challenges as they have been "kicked off" a google

meet, or experienced substantial lags in instruction. None of these challenges have to do with the teachers or the students, and in fact I feel the students have really enjoyed making connections even in a Google Meet.

I may be partial, but I also feel that the teachers in Amesbury have absolutely knocked it out of the park with the work they have done, are doing, and will do for our kids. We have quickly added new "teacher speak" to our vocabularies; "laggy, glitchy, chat box etiquette, asynchronous, synchronous," just to name a few. We have all made so many improvements to instruction, communication, and rigor since the spring, and I am confident that students will continue to be in good hands if instruction remains remote.

However, I am writing not only to share my own opinion, but that of my three children. Bailey tells me daily, "I know that they are probably not going to let us go hybrid, Mom, but I really miss my school and my teachers. I don't know if I can do this remote- thing all year!" From my high school-age twins, "We feel totally disconnected from our class (of 2023) and school spirit" and "I am so tired from staring at this screen."

I cannot even imagine what this has been like for our youngest students and their families navigating kindergarten and first grade. Simply put, it is time to give families the choice- understandably not everyone will be comfortable with a hybrid situation, and there should continue to be plans in place for those students. For many of us, remote learning is exactly how it feels- distant and disconnected. With the appropriate safety protocols in place a phased-in hybrid plan would be something to celebrate, so I hope that both the administration and your committee will explore every option.

Thank you for your time,
Johanna Kimball
4 Moody Street

Dan McQueen

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1:15:56

Public Comment: I have two children enrolled in Amesbury Public Schools this year. Yes this is a new challenge for all of us; however, I do feel that some parents and children are better equipped to manage this than others. My high schooler is thriving in this environment. Grades are up and selective social interactions are managed in a safe and controlled way. My Kindergarten student is also managing and engaging with his teacher and peers and, although this is not ideal, Low risk is not the same as no risk. I appreciate the parents wanting to get back to normal; however, I do ask that you consider to continue offering the remote model for those of us who are personally not ready to resume in person classes. Thank you.

Cindy Collins

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1:29:08

Public Comment. Please respond to criteria used to direct instruction for children with special needs. I'm interested in the data used qualifying based on iep and high needs. I sent letters to the director and superintendent asking about the process but they have not responded. The children with high needs that are at home are falling greater behind either social emotional or academically. This vulnerable population needs to be in school and it's a disservice they weren't recognized in September. My concern for my child and other children moving forward that aren't qualified for "tier one" will be left behind again. The remote hybrid model I believe was meant to be a fluid model based on scientific data. In the current plan many high need children's needs aren't being met.

Sharon Nash

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1:27:16

Public Comment: Our technology teacher assigned asynchronous work today because he was put in charge of doing an administrative job for a major tech platform that teachers will be using. This teacher does not typically assign asynchronous work on remote learning days. The public comment made earlier was a very poor example of the daily instruction that is happening.

Lindsay Pappas

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3:12:13

Public comment: why is there no urgency to get the network where it needs to be??

Chris Leary

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3:08:09

Public comment: If I am recording my lesson while I'm teaching in school I can't leave my desk where the camera is.

Angela Berg

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3:28:18

Public Comment: We should not be making decisions regarding access to education based on the availability of bussing. It is only mandatory to transport K-2 living more than 2 miles from their "home" school. EDUCATION needs the priority here.

Renee Chapdelaine Smyth

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2:08:23

Public Comment: 10 Whitewood Circle - the survey was inadequate. Clearly it did not meet School Committee expectations. Please redo it. Ms. Elaine Bucher is spot on. The District is is higher level strategy with schools more day-to-day.

Alissa Cronin

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3:56:29

Public Comment : the volunteer school committee members trying to hash out a plan that should be put in place by the Superintendent and the principals - kudos to our committee but this is a fail for the district

Jennifer Whalen Nash

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2:04:25

Public comment: The district is NOT communicating



Sharer

Cindy Yetman

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1:03:15

PUBLIC COMMENT:I sincerely hope the Amesbury School Committee votes in the next phase of Amesbury Public Schools reopening with the collaborative, cooperative approach that have proven so far to be a success in keeping our transmission rate of Covid 19 being in check for our students and our community and keeping in mind a gradual sustainable model based upon Rt factors and resources both in physical plant and public service staff that will ensure continued success and safety for our community.

Susan Wagner

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1:18:11

Public Comment: I'd like to comment on the lack of communication from the superintendent. There is so much angry discussion and speculation within the community about upcoming changes to the school schedule that could be dispelled with more communication from the school administration. I'd like to thank those SC members who respond to many of these comments on FB, but I find it so very disappointing that we have not been kept better informed by the superintendent. Even the surveys have been disturbingly vague. We can't answer many of the survey questions until we know more details about the district's plan. I thought the Superintendent's Sept 10 letter before school began was wonderful but there has been nothing substantial since then. I would like to see him step up and communicate with our community better. We need better leadership than this, especially right now in the midst of an educational crisis of this magnitude. Thankyou, Susan Wagner 15 Gardner St

Amanda Renee

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3:46:06

Public Comment: Other districts in the area are making it work. Look at their models, consult their administrators and bussing. How is it possible that there is no solid plan ready to go at this time, when this day had been coming. Almost every other district and bussing company in this area has made it work and put in countless hours to develop a plan, and make it work for students and staff. Very disheartening.

Jonathan Brisebois Sherwood

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4:03:48

Public Comment: The School Committee was presented with a paragraph of a recommendation with no analysis presented on all the many key issues raised by the School Committee at this meeting. There was no groundwork laid for the SC to be able to make an informed decision tonight by the APS administration. Based on the what they were presented tonight (very little), there's no basis for moving to hybrid until that analysis is done (transportation, technology, etc).

Cindy Collins

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1:29:08

Public Comment. Please respond to criteria used to direct instruction for children with special needs. I'm interested in the data used qualifying based on iep and high needs. I sent letters to the director and superintendent asking about the process but they have not responded. The children with high needs that are at home are falling greater behind either social emotional or academically. This vulnerable population needs to be in school and it's a disservice they weren't recognized in September. My concern for my child and other children moving forward that aren't qualified for "tier one" will be left behind again. The remote hybrid model I believe was meant to be a fluid model based on scientific data. In the current plan many high need children's needs aren't being met.

Renee Chapdelaine Smyth

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3:02:02

public comment: 10 whitewood circle: why do we not have a strategic plan to upgrade the IT, which has been stated to be inadequate earlier this summer? have we sought emergency grants? or solicit private entities? We need to make the investment ASAP. It's embarrassing that we still don't have pricing and/or implementation.

Jennifer Whalen Nash

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1:30:57

Public comment... Dear School Committee Members and Superintendent Fulgoni,
First I know you all have a difficult decision to make this week and you cannot make everyone happy, but I wouldn't be doing my job as a parent if I didn't advocate for my children and my family. I am writing to express my concerns about the information I have heard/read on social media about the hybrid plan. My concern is the different hybrid plan for the students at AES. I have a 2nd grader, a 4th grader and an 8th grader. I am a Kindergarten teacher in another district who has started teaching with the hybrid model in place, so I understand the complexity of the planning involved. Even now, we are still working out all the moving parts involved. Both my husband and I work full time so I am well aware of how to be flexible and manage our

children's remote schedule. Hearing that AES may decide on a half day schedule 4 days a week for only PreK-2 is a great option for our students to be in person with their teachers and classmates but also very concerning for me that it would leave the other 2 elementary grades still on a 2 day in-person and 3 asynchronous day model. One of my struggles with this is they are not given the same option of being in front of their teacher for 4 days and the second is my older student helps her younger sibling. If this is a mute point, I will not have as much of a concern...however, I ask that you cannot possibly support this decision unless you can offer this option to the rest of the elementary school including the 3rd and 4th grades. To have 3 children on 3 different hybrid models, as a working parent, is nearly impossible to manage in more ways than one. I rely on my older children to help their younger siblings get on and off the bus and walk to and from home as well.

In addition, I would hope this is an obvious part of the plan but I cannot assume so I would like to mention it. The families with multiple children should have the same Cohort schedule, which is what is already in place in the community that I work in as for scheduling and child care purposes. As well as the option to request morning or afternoon sessions, if space is available for working families to be able to manage transportation plans.

Lastly, I understand there are more moving parts to get the middle school and high school back in person. But many towns and cities have figured it out already. Please consider using the successful models they have used and continue to figure out how to get these students back in person in front of their teachers and with their peers as soon as possible. Our teachers are doing a great job with the remote model but these students should not be on screen for 6 hours a day every day if you can figure out a way they can be in person some of those days, especially when other communities that are larger than ours, with more students in the schools, have figured it out.

Please take all things considered especially knowing that I am one of many that are in the same situation as I am. Thank you for your time and dedication to the students and families of Amesbury.

Sincerely,
Jen Nash