

## MEETING MINUTES

### AMESBURY MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING



Wednesday, November 13, 2024  
5:00 p.m.  
AMS Main Conference Room (“The Bubble”)

- Meeting came to order at 5:00 pm.
  - Present: Doug Nebel, Sean Toomey, Olivia Anderson, Jim Queenan, Alicia Linsey, Jim Sweeney
  - Not Present: Pat Flaherty
- Mr. Nebel welcomes the attendees and leads a short round of reintroductions with some background information provided by each member. Pat Flaherty was unable to attend from the staff group. We are looking for 1 community member to join the Council, so all members are asked to think about potential additions.
- Mr. Nebel reviewed the general purpose and goals of the School Council. This information has also been printed and organized in a folder for each member (those unable to attend today will receive these folders for the next meeting). This information has also already been provided to the Council members electronically prior to this meeting.
- Mr. Nebel suggests that Jim Sweeney be the Co-Chair of the Council. He has previous experience and has a 7th grade student, so he will be with the Council for the next two years. Alicia Linsey has the most Council experience, but has an 8th grader, so this will be her final year on the Council. Council members agree unanimously and Jim Sweeney is appointed as Co-Chair.
- The Council reviewed the general information on the goals and responsibilities of School Councils, from the documents provided by Mr. Nebel. It was noted that the Council is meant to assist in identifying the educational needs of the AMS students, to make recommendations to the principal in the development and implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and to assist in reviewing the annual school budget in the areas of improving student performance. Mr. Nebel describes this group as an “advisory committee” for the school administration.
- With a quick review of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) that was developed last year by the interim principal and School Council (this was established as a two-year plan, covering 2023 - 2025), Mr. Nebel drew attention to one main area on which the Council should focus in the short term:
  - Enhancement of parent/family involvement in the life of the school
- Discussion of other parent/family groups that are active within APS: the AMS Parent Advisory Group (PAG), the Amesbury Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC), and the School Committee. These groups could be partners in our efforts to engage more families in the school.
  - Jim and Alicia asked about previous successes with the AMS School Council.

- Jim suggests that Principals attend the School Committee meetings regularly and report the good things going on in the schools. Putting a face to the name and the school will lead to more parent connection to the school and to Doug.
- Sean recommended Doug move out to the community and visit different events, gatherings, restaurants, to meet families outside of the school environment. Some find the school environment intimidating and meeting outside of the school day and the school parameters, to have discussions that don't necessarily involve the school at all, is a great way to put folks at ease and bring more willingness to get involved. Reduce barriers between the school and families - build relationships.
  - Principal coffee, outside of the school, for example.
  - Superintendent McAndrews (joined the meeting at 5:25 pm) has experimented with this and has found that off-site gatherings change the dynamic in a positive way - fosters more conversation.
- Creating an environment in which families feel welcome, feel comfortable asking questions and feel excited to get involved.
- Alicia suggests previous success with family members/parents coming into the school to present to and/or work with students directly in their areas of expertise. Events similar to Career Days can bring folks from all areas of the City to teach students about their professions and about career opportunities in Amesbury.
  - Career Interest inventory through the Guidance Dept.
  - Parent/Career mentors
- Conversation tangents into additional reflections on past Council ideas and goals:
  - Transparent conversations and working with the annual school budget
  - Working on the school master schedule
  - Vertical alignment between AHS and AMS
  - Focus on advanced curriculum for students excelling at AMS to set them on the right path at AHS.
- Doug addresses some of the points and questions being brought up as the conversation continues:
  - The accelerated Math program at AMS had a false start last year and AMS is working to relaunch the program next year, with collaboration/alignment with AHS.
  - The Superintendent, Doug and Dr. Ricci (AHS) had a meeting this morning to plan for more vertical alignment opportunities for the Content Leads (AMS) and the Curriculum Heads (AHS) in the coming weeks/months.
  - School leaders are also planning out the rest of the Professional Development calendar for this year to continue our work on Understanding by Design (UbD) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - both are designed to allow all students to demonstrate their knowledge in the way that works best for them. These also help ensure that all students receive the instruction they need and are challenged with high-quality curriculum and instruction.
- Jim questions if the previous end of the year awards will be happening this year, as these were missed by families last year. Doug says these are being discussed, but will be a topic for another time as the meeting time has run out. AMS has restarted the Redhawk of the Month awards.
- Doug suggests the Council look at the School Improvement Plan and start crafting a 4th strategic objective that focuses on increasing family engagement for the next meeting.
- Meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm.

**Next Meeting:** December 11, 2024, at 5:00 pm, at AMS.