

**Amherst School Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, December 20, 2016  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Katherine Appy, Chair  
Phoebe Hazzard  
Eric Nakajima  
Vira Douangmany-Cage  
Anastasia Ordonez

Mike Morris, Interim Superintendent  
Faye Brady, Student Services Director  
Derek Shea, Crocker Farm Principal  
Nick Yaffe, Wildwood Principal  
Elizabeth Pretel, Math Coach  
Mary Lambert, Math Coach  
Public and Press  
Sasha Figueroa, Recorder

**1. Call to Order and Approve Minutes**

**6:02 p.m.**

Ms. Appy called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Ms. Hazzard moved to approve the minutes of November 15, 2016. Mr. Nakajima seconded and the motion was unanimously approved, with Ms. Ordonez abstaining.

**2. Mathematics Presentation**

Dr. Morris introduced the district's Math Coaches, explaining that they perform a variety of services and duties that adjust every year according to the needs of the district. Math Coaches Mary Lambert and Elizabeth Pretel gave a presentation of their duties for the 2016-2017 school year and some information on the previous year. Primary goals of the Math Coaches are to provide data analysis at each school and to provide professional development and advice for math instruction to teachers. They introduced Math Recovery to the district this year, which helps students become flexible in numeracy early. The coaches also thanked the School Committee for allowing the district to use the Literacy Math Substitutes that leave classrooms in capable hands while teachers are taking courses/trainings. There was a question on whether this information pertains to PreK students/teachers as well. Dr. Morris explained that as this was the first year of Math Recovery implementation, but it is something that will be considered in the future. There was another question on how children are measured as to where there are in mathematics ability. One-on-one interviews are helpful in assessing students' confidence and ability. There was question on outreach and how work was being done for ELL students. The coaches explained that there is a limit to how many teachers can sign up due to the follow-up work that happens after the training, and there are goals to continue to work with ELL students as well as special education. There is a five-year plan for more of this work.

**3. Announcements and Public Comment**

There were no announcements or public comments.

**4. Interim Superintendent's Update**

Dr. Morris reported that a Fort River and ARHS alumnus is hosting an event regarding immigrant populations and resources available to the public and immigrants. He thanked the School Committee for their support to the district, which enables Math Recovery and other programs to happen. Dr. Morris also noted that ARPS bumper stickers have been created and provided to families and staff to show that support to our district.

**4. New and Continuing Business**

**A. Elementary Building Project Update**

Dr. Morris reviewed new information regarding the elementary building project, noting that a letter was written to the MSBA asking if the project design could be changed and, if not, whether there is any flexibility in the timeframe for a possible revote. The response was no, with MSBA noting that the reimbursement was only guaranteed for the design that was submitted. There was a question on how much time there is for a new

proposal should the vote remain the same. Dr. Morris explained that the priority for a school may change, but both schools would be submitted. It is unknown when a school will be re-invited to the MSBA process. There was extensive discussion regarding possible designs and time frames should renovation be chosen rather than building a new school. There was also clarification that the MSBA is an open process and there will be no priority what so ever. The first week of April 2017 would be the earliest possible date for the next submission should Town Meeting not pass the vote.

### **B. Homework Discussion**

Dr. Morris noted that the current homework model is for students to receive an amount of homework based on their grade. This is a difficult model as it assumes that students work at the same level and that students have the same amount of support at home. There is also a question as to what happens if the homework is not done. There is no clear solution for this currently. Mr. Shea expressed concern that students are sometimes stressed about homework and there are social justice issues since not all parents can assist their children with homework. Mr. Yaffe also commented, noting that research and projects are all done at school. There was discussion regarding how homework is received as well as regarding the homework standards between teachers. Ms. Ordoñez asked to have pros and cons of homework presented to the community. Mr. Nakajima asked to have the conversation focus on what is more valuable developmentally for students instead of whether they should have homework. Possible next steps will be to gather the information and hold a joint Amherst and Pelham School Committee meeting to present the information and gather feedback to move forward.

### **C. Approve Policy**

#### ***DOCUMENT: Policy JKAA: Physical Restraint and Behavior Support***

Ms. Appy asked for a motion to approve Policy JKAA: Physical Restraint and Behavioral Support. Mr. Nakajima so moved, Ms. Hazzard seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **5. School Committee Planning**

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Ms. Appy and Ms. Hazzard volunteered to serve on the Sabbatical Request subcommittee. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked when in their career teachers can apply. Dr. Morris noted that he does not believe there is a requirement for number of years in the profession, they just have to be a Unit A professional.

### **6. Adjourn**

**7:46 p.m.**

Mr. Ordonez moved to adjourn at 7:46 p.m. Ms. Hazzard seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sasha Figueroa

Nov. 15, 2016

Dear School Committee, Acting Superintendent Michael Morris, and the Amherst community,

We members of **Save Amherst's Small Schools (SASS)** want to recognize all the hard work and passion that people on both sides of the recent proposal contributed to our schools. We look forward to working together with our neighbors, on our community schools. We urge immediate action on the following three points of concern:

1. Public dissemination of existing air quality testing and remediation efforts at Fort River and Wildwood, up-to-date testing, and immediate efforts to improve air quality by using programs such as the EPA's "Tools for Schools" Indoor Air Quality toolkit and the MSBA's "accelerated repair" program.
2. Begin the process of **inclusionary planning** by surveying the community at large and especially teachers and staff about their values, concerns, and *ideas*. This survey should be developed in an open fashion by a third party with input from teachers and parents, and should be broadly disseminated.
3. Work with SASS and other key constituencies -- for instance, the teacher's union, the School Equity Task Force, SEPAC, SASS, BOLD, the PGOs, and others -- to reconstitute a School Building Committee that is truly open. We will help disseminate an open call THIS WEEK and begin taking volunteers.

We have already begun gathering the names of parents, educators, and community members who would be interested in working in an open, creative process on a new "Educational Program" and "Statement of Interest" for the MSBA's "Model Schools" program.

We recommend moving quickly toward submitting a new Statement of Interest before June 30, 2017, that has the participation and support of the community.

Respectfully,

The members of Save Amherst's Small Schools