

**REGULAR Meeting of the Amherst School Committee
December 22, 2015
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

IN ATTENDANCE

Katherine Appy, Chair
Vira Douangmany-Cage
Phoebe Hazzard
Rich Hood
Kathleen Traphagen (arr. 6:04 p.m.)

Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent
Sean Mangano, Finance Director
Faye Brady, Student Services Director
Derek Shea, Crocker Farm Elem Principal
Jean Fay, APEA President
Laura Kent, SEPAC Co-President
Daniel McMurrer, McBassi & Company, Inc.
Tom Murphy, JLA Project Manager
Jim Hoagland, JCJ Architecture
Doug Roberts, JCJ Architecture
Community members & Press
Kimberly Stender, Recorder

1. Welcome

6:00 p.m.

Ms. Appy called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She reviewed the agenda and requested that the topic of staff surveys be moved to “A” and the Wildwood School Building Project be moved to “B” on the agenda. She explained that Mr. McMurrer was present to speak about the survey process but had to depart shortly. All were in favor of this change. Mr. Hood moved to approve the minutes of November 17, 2015 Ms. Hazzard seconded and the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Announcements & Public Comment

6:01 p.m.

There were no announcements. Vince O’Connor (community member) spoke to a moratorium on charter schools and MCAS testing; the recent agreement between the Town of Amherst and UMASS regarding finances to support first responder services; the responsibility of the Superintendent to request funding from the UMASS Chancellor to support educational services; the importance of sharing the staff survey results with the community; the responsibility of the school committee to authorize the Superintendent to request JCPC funding for a new Fort River School. Katherine Corsun (parent) shared her ideas regarding improved communication between administration and parents/guardians, PGOs and pre-school parents regarding the Wildwood School building Project (fix broken links on district website, calendar updates, and visits to apartment complexes). She suggested that PGOs create a parent survey. She believes that not asking parents, to help with a letter writing campaign to support Senate House Bill 326 was a missed opportunity. Ms. Corsun suggested that results of the McBassi & Company, Inc. staff survey be shared with the ARPS community.

3. Superintendent’s Update

6:12 p.m.

Mr. Morris reported that through the MSBA’s due diligence process and review of the 97 SOIs that were received for consideration ion 2015, the MSBA has determined that the Fort River Elementary School SOI will not be invited into the MSBA’s Eligibility Period at this time.

4. New & Continuing Business

6:13 p.m.

A. Staff Surveys Related to Wildwood School Building Project

DOCUMENT: Draft Contract Between McBassi & Company, Inc. and Amherst School Committee

Mr. McMurrer explained the purpose of his work and the design, process and data pertaining to an elementary staff survey. He stressed the importance of an anonymous and confidential survey which would be completed within the constraints of the Wildwood School Building Project timeline. He informed the committee about methods which would ensure that responses are limited to one per person. He also suggested an open ended section for comments, suggestions

and concerns. He believes that because confidentiality will be stressed to all respondents, honest replies will be generated thus ensuring the integrity of the data. Ms. Traphagen suggested a parallel survey be created for parents/guardians. Ms. Douangmany-Cage inquired as to who would create and approve the survey questions. Mr. McMurrer explained that McBassi & Company, Inc. would create the questions and Ms. Appy and school committee members could edit and approve the survey questions. Ms. Douangmany-Cage suggested that community members, like Ms. Corsun and Ms. Kent, participate in this process. Ms. Appy explained that the community and school committee requested a staff survey because staff does not have the same access to school committee as community members. Staff input is critical at this point in the process and staff asked for the opportunity to express their concerns and opinions. Ms. Appy believes in the integrity of DiBassi & Company, Inc. and is confident they will create an independent survey within the short timeframe which will yield trusted information. She suggested that PGOs could create and administer surveys and provide results to the school committee. Ms. Traphagen stressed the importance of an anonymous parent/guardian survey. Mr. McMurrer explained he could use the same framework for both surveys and create similar questions for each as they pertain to parents or staff. A discussion around confidentiality and limits per household responses was discussed and Mr. McMurrer was confident the issues raised would not pose a problem in the process. Mr. Hood reminded that those involved in crafting the surveys must be available over the holiday break. Ms. Hazzard added that this element would add transparency to the process. Mr. McMurrer reminded the group that both survey drafts must be created by January 1, 2016 so the survey could be administered on Monday, January 4, 2016. After it was suggested that a teacher be included in the group that was going to vet the survey questions. Ms. Geryk and Mr. Morris suggested that Ms. Fay be involved in this decision. Ms. Fay reminded the school committee members that she was not a teacher but rather a paraeducator. Ms. Fay wanted to make sure that the survey was inclusive of everyone in the educational community, which includes teachers, paraeducators, clericals, custodians, food service, and transportation. She reminded the committee that everyone is an educator. Mr. McMurrer stated that although his business partner generally decides financial matters pertaining to contracts, he believed that both surveys could be created, administered and the data analyzed for the \$2,500.00 stated in the draft contract. Ms. Traphagen made a motion to accept the draft contract between McBassi & Company, Inc. and Amherst School Committee exactly as it appears with the exception to the following: WHEREAS both parties hereby agree that ASC shall hire McBassi to conduct two (2) surveys: the first for elementary teachers and school staff and the second for Amherst PreK-6 Grade parents and guardians. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

B. Wildwood Building Committee Update

6:41 p.m.

DOCUMENTS: Implications of Enrollment Options/WWSBP; DRAFT Reconfiguration Maps 12.22.15; Analysis of Pros and Cons of Consolidated Option (PreK-1, 2-6) VERSUS 3x PreK-6

Mr. Murphy presented information from workshop reviews regarding sustainability (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Schools LEEDS) and security. Mr. Hoagland reviewed Wildwood options 1, 2, 5 and 7 and Fort River option 3 in terms of code upgrades, 3-D conceptual designs, transportation/parking logistics, main entrance locations, size of classrooms, locations of gymnasiums, media centers, admin offices, introduction of natural light in classrooms, playground areas, swing space, and flood plain (FR). He explained the purpose of larger spaces (media center, gyms, etc) separating wings of schools. These spaces could be used as community spaces on weekends and evenings while classroom wings were locked and secure. Ms. Hazzard asked to see more information regarding the twin school design and believed the public would as well. Ms. Douangmany-Cage inquired about safety of students, staff and visitors throughout the construction process especially during drop-off and pick-up times. Mr. Morris assured her that safety is paramount and children would be supervised and engaged in organized activities in the gym or other area (Hawthorne Farm) before and after school. Ms. Geryk suggested that perhaps parent volunteers could supervise students at these times during the

construction process. Ms. Douangmany-Cage reminded the group that noise and dust generated by construction could pose a problem for some. Mr. Hoagland explained that construction would most likely be a one year process and oftentimes educators use a construction site as project-based learning involving math, science and writing. Ms. Traphagen inquired if cost estimates for each option will available later in the presentation. Mr. Murphy stated that these would be available at the January 13, 2016 public forum at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Morris suggested that the public forum and the School Building Committee meeting also scheduled for January 13, 2016 at 4pm be posted as a school committee meeting so members can participate without violating quorum. Ms. Traphagen and Mr. Hood expressed the need to meet prior to the January 19, 2016 school committee meeting to discuss all design options and cost estimates. Ms. Appy thought this was a prudent idea. Mr. Morris reviewed the DRAFT Reconfiguration Maps 12.22.15 document and thanked Doug Slaughter for his help. Mr. Murphy presented very preliminary cost estimates for each plan: 1). \$31-\$35 million for complete renovation of existing Wildwood School; 2). \$51-\$53 million for twin building design; 3). \$53-\$57 million for 750 student school. Because Ms. Traphagen could not recall Ms. Geryk's recommendation, Ms. Geryk re-iterated her recommendation which was originally presented at the October 20, 2015 Amherst School Committee meeting.: The Superintendent recommends that the Educational Program be accepted with a reconfiguration of Crocker Farm to be a PreK-Grade 1 school and a new school to educate all Grades 2-6 students. Ms. Geryk offered to provide more details around her recommendation to the school committee in the next ten days and will also share this information with the ARPS community. Ms. Traphagen requested that a complete and detailed timeline be created as soon as possible. Mr. Morris will clarify this schedule and language for the school committee and community members. Ms. Douangmany-Cage requested that the two color block schedule documents be combined into one clarifying document. Mr. Hood presented the Analysis of Pros and Cons of Consolidated Option (PreK-1, 2-6) VERSUS 3x PreK-6 document he created and asked for feedback. A discussion followed regarding educational equity, opportunity and equality for all students. Mr. Morris implored that the district can improve education for all students. Mr. Shea addressed the group and was concerned that the opportunity to expand and improve the PreK program is being overlooked. All children should have a PreK experience as this would be the most equitable opportunity. Mr. Hood inquired about the potential override scenarios attached to each building design option and how the Amherst Select Board and Finance Director will compare the new school to other capital projects. Mr. Morris stated that Mr. Pooler will share taxpayer implications in the very near future. Ms. Traphagen inquired if JCJ factored in demolition costs for a vacant Fort River School. Mr. Murphy explained that this was not a concern because the building is property of the school district. The town and district could decide how this building could be re-purposed. Ms. Douangmany-Cage asked for estimated expenses for all options as well as information pertaining to summer construction schedule, potential trailer classrooms and relocation of students and staff into swing spaces during construction.

A. FY Budget Projections

8:23 p.m.

DOCUMENT: Amherst Public Schools FY17 Summary; Amherst Schools Charter Tuition

Mr. Mangano informed the committee that FY 17 Budget Binders will be available at the January 19, 2016 meeting. He reviewed the documents and asked for questions. There were none. Ms. Appy suggested that the Senate House Bill 326 letter pertaining to charter schools be discussed at the January 12, 2016 Regional School Committee meeting.

B. Field Trips

8:32 p.m.

DOCUMENTS: Crocker Farm Elementary & Pre-K Field trips 2014-2015 school year; Crocker Farm, Fort River and Wildwood Elementary & Pre-K field trips

In respect to time, Ms. Traphagen and Ms. Appy requested that this topic be tabled until the January 19, 2016 meeting. All members agreed.

C. New Restraint Regulations

DOCUMENTS: *The amended regulations set out below were approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on December 16, 2014, and take effect on January 1, 2016; Massachusetts Restraint and Seclusion Regulations and Procedures: General Training for Public School District Employees; Restraint Regulations and Procedures Training questions*

Dr. Brady explained the documents and asked for questions. There were none. She informed the committee that this policy will be reviewed by the Policy Subcommittee on Monday, January 11, 2016 at 5:00 p.m.

D. Wellness Policy

8:36 p.m.

DOCUMENT: *Amherst Public Schools, Pelham Elementary School, and Amherst-Pelham Regional District Policy Manual Policy ADF: Wellness*

Ms. Geryk and Dr. Brady explained the reasoning behind the change in policy language brought forth by the Pelham School Committee at their December 2, 2015 meeting pertaining to food served at classroom celebrations. She made mention of the highlighted sections of the policy in the agenda packet. Pelham School Committee member Ms. Marriott (who also sits on the Wellness Committee) suggested that food no longer be served at classroom celebrations for health/allergy and equity reasons. She proposed alternatives such as extra recess, favorite book reads, etc to this treat-based (cupcakes, cake, candy) tradition. In addition to eliminating unhealthy treats that could also compromise a child's health, she also spoke to the equity issue around classroom celebrations. She stated that not every parent/guardian can provide birthday treats for the entire classroom and this could create an uncomfortable situation for a parent and child. Ms. Appy suggested that the language be changed but be flexible as the policy will be reviewed periodically. Ms. Hazzard stated that food is a source of joy and provides a sense of connectedness amongst cultures and community. She suggested that the policy be flexible enough to support this. Ms. Appy suggested that the group discuss this at the January 19, 2016 meeting and perhaps vote on the language change.

E. Accept Gifts

8:44 p.m.

There were no gifts to accept.

C. School Committee Planning

8:44 p.m.

Ms. Stender will create a Doodle Poll to find a time for school committee members, Ms. Geryk, Mr. Morris, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Hoagland, and Mr. LaPosta to meet on either Thursday, January 14, 2016 or Friday, January 15, 2016 to review the results of the McBossi staff survey and the proposed cost estimates for the Wildwood School Building Project. Once a date and time is confirmed Ms. Stender will post the meeting and invite Amherst Media to film. The January 19, 2016 agenda will include a discussion regarding field trips and a wellness policy vote. Ms. Appy suggested that the Senate House Bill 326 letter pertaining to charter schools be discussed at the January 12, 2016 Regional School Committee meeting.

D. Adjournment

8:46 p.m.

Ms. Traphagen made a motion to adjourn at 8:46 p.m. Ms. Hazzard seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Stender