

Amherst School Committee
December 16, 2014
Library, Amherst Regional High School

In Attendance:

Katherine Appy, Chair
Lawrence O'Brien
Rick Hood
Kathleen Traphagen
Amilcar Shabazz (departed at 7:47pm)

Maria Geryk, Superintendent of Schools
Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Kimberly Stender, Recorder
Sean Mangano, Director of Finance
Bobbie Finocchio, Principal Fort River Elementary School
Derek Shea, Principal Crocker Farm Elementary School
Nick Yaffe, Principal Wildwood Elementary School

1. Welcome

6:00 p.m.

- A. **Call to Order**—Ms. Appy called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and informed the group that the agenda order must change because a principal would be late to present.
- B. **Minutes**—Mr. Shabazz moved to approve the minutes of October 21, 2014 and November 25, 2014. Mr. Hood seconded the motion and it was approved. Ms. Traphagen abstained.

2. Public Comment

6:03 p.m.

Marylou Tielman and Janet McGowen spoke to the committee regarding regionalization and the need for public information forums in the four towns.

3. Amherst Subcommittee Reports/Updates

6:10 p.m.

- A. **Amherst Education Foundation**—Mr. Hood reported that \$9,000.00 was raised through the Valley Gives online campaign. Staff from all Amherst, Pelham and Regional Public Schools received information on grant applications in late November. AEF Co-Presidents Amy Brodigan and Clare Bertrand will present at the principals' meeting on January 7, 2015.
- B. **Audit Committee**—Mr. Hood reported that the Audit Committee has not yet met.
- C. **Amherst Media Community Television**—Mr. Hood reported that general fundraising efforts are underway and an informational booklet was mailed to community members. The date to vacate the 246 College Street location has yet to be determined.
- D. **Budget Coordinating Group**—Ms. Appy reported this group has not yet met.
- E. **Joint Capital Planning Committee**—Ms. Appy reported that this group has not yet met.
- F. **Collaborative for Education**—Mr. O'Brien reported that the next meeting is in January 2015 and the annual audit will be presented.

4. Calendar

6:15 p.m.

Ms. Geryk reported that the next ARHS Math Sequence meeting is on December 17, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. in the ARHS library. All parents/guardians are invited to attend. She also announced the next SEPAC meeting and workshop will be on December 17, 2014 in the PD Center at ARMS. All parents/guardians are invited to attend. Professor Max Page will present at the January 20 Amherst School Committee meeting regarding advocacy and high stakes testing. Ms. Appy reported the follow-up for the Kindergarten grant Gold requirements. She and Mike Morris drafted a letter and invited Hadley and Northampton to join in the advocacy. Mr. O'Brien will inquire about Belchertown's participation. Representative Ellen Story, Senator Stan Rosenberg and Representative Steve Kulik will receive a letter as well.

5. New & Continuing Business

6:20 p.m.

- A. **MSBA**—Ms. Appy moved to approve the members of the Wildwood School Building owner's project manager selection committee, the request for services (RFS) document, and the selection committee's request to advertise the RFS. Mr. Mangano explained the process and noted that a selection committee and feasibility committee have been established. Mr. Morris advised that the process move forward in order to maintain the timeline, which is on page six of the RFS document. Ms. Traphagen asked who is on the Selection Committees. Members include Sean Mangano, Sandy Pooler, Michael Morris, Ron Bohonowicz, Ludmilla Pavlova, Katherine Appy, Sonia Aldrich and Holly Bowser. Mr. Mangano and Mr. Morris explained that the role of the OPM is to represent Amherst and use funds efficiently and effectively as this protects the district and town during construction. The same is true for the selected architect. After discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.
- B. **School Improvement Plans (SIPs) & District Improvement Plan (DIP)**—Superintendent Geryk began the presentation by explaining the DIP statement and the overarching strategic plan consistent with the district's mission

statement. She also explained best practices and school effectiveness in relation to research and Dr. Ron Ferguson's model. There are three areas of focus: inclusive instructional model, standard-based curriculum and improvement of school climate. Mr. Morris explained baseline data, individual strategies, and evidence-based research in preparation for the SIP presentations. He then invited the principals of the three elementary schools to present. Mr. Yaffe provided highlights unique to Wildwood and shared the vision and collective commitments of students, staff and families as well as the very diverse student population. He presented the Wildwood goals which are growth mindset, effective learning strategies, and addressing executive and functioning skills in relation to zones of regulation to maintain focus and perseverance. Ms. Finocchio presented the Fort River SIP, speaking about the Superkids program, the importance of meeting students' social/emotional needs, PBIS for a safe learning environment and equity. She recognized the Fort River PGO for fostering a strong, inclusive school community. Mr. Shea presented the Crocker Farm PGO, commenting on the Superkids program and the unique learning strategies, lessons and opportunities students experience each day. He recognized the Crocker staff and parents for their commitment and support of all students. Ms. Appy thanked the principals and opened the floor for questions. Ms. Traphagen expressed concern that all of the SIPS lack quantitative outcomes based on data and true indicators. Ms. Geryk responded that this work is difficult to quantify as data, noting that data is used primarily for internal growth so school committee members do not see this. Ms. Traphagen asked about the programs designed for high-achieving students. Mr. Morris replied that high-achieving students need consistent and challenging high standard-based curriculum with specific goals. Mr. O'Brien asked what strategies are in place to get 100% of staff on board with the SIP. Mr. Yaffe replied that because there is a strong and intentional emphasis on collaboration in all schools, norms of communication and high expectations for ARPS educators are understood. He said that staff members are excited about a shared vision and having structures in place that promote and support shared ideas. Ms. Finocchio commented that leadership and data are great methods to drive the work and encourage staff to look within to identify where problems may exist. Mr. Morris stated that stipends may be proposed to encourage staff to participate on SILTs, leadership and school climate groups. These staff members would then be integral players to create and sustain structures. Mr. O'Brien asked how school committee members can help principals and staff succeed. Mr. Shea responded that staff wants an active role in leadership. Mr. Shabazz suggested that the Educators Handbook be used as a strategy and was curious to know if it was used in other schools. Ms. Geryk responded that Educators Handbook is being used in all schools and that it is being used in the climate advisory work with Dr. Chris Overtree (UMASS). She noted that some strategies are aligned with restorative practices and professional development is provided for staff who may need help to integrate the process. Mr. Shabazz asked how teaching and learning could support all students currently on free/reduced lunch and cited the work of Dr. Ron Ferguson and pre-natal performance/achievement gap data. Mr. Morris replied that he appreciated Mr. Shabazz's observations and provided the ARPS Family Center as an example of how the district is supporting struggling students and families. Mr. Shea added that his staff is acutely aware of struggling families. Mr. Yaffe added that all members of the school community can be a part of this movement.

- C. **MCAS Report**—Mr. Morris presented a Powerpoint which contained data pertaining to demographic changes and achievement trends. Ms. Appy thanked him for his work and opened the floor to questions. Mr. Hood requested clarification on CPI and growth. Mr. Morris responded that CPI is the measurement of achievement and growth compares students' scores with those of students in other districts. Ms. Appy asked if room for growth will become smaller if schools/districts improve over time. Mr. Morris replied that good schools continue to improve and grow. Ms. Traphagen commented that free/reduced students still show the greatest percentage of low proficiency in all subjects locally, statewide and nationally. Mr. Morris replied that achievement gaps exist in Amherst and reflect race, disability and income. Educator Handbook and AIMSWeb help track these numbers and the district still has work to do to improve these outcomes. Ms. Geryk added that focus on early childhood is critical, noting that the instructional model will shift as free/reduced elementary students move into middle and high school. This will result in a cultural shift and academic and instructional improvements.

6. Adjournment

8:16 p.m.

Mr. O'Brien moved to adjourn at 8:16 p.m. and Mr. Hood seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Stender