

Pelham School Committee Meeting
Wednesday, January 4, 2017
Community Room, Pelham Library

IN ATTENDANCE

Cara Castenson, Chair

Ron Mannino

Emily Marriott

Trevor Baptiste

Tara Luce (arrived at 6:34 p.m.)

Mike Morris, Interim Superintendent

Sean Mangano, Finance Director

Lisa Desjarlais, Principal

Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

1. Call to Order and Approve Minutes

6:31 p.m.

Ms. Castenson called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. Ms. Marriott moved to approve the minutes of December 7, 2016. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. Announcements and Public Comment

6:32 p.m.

There were no announcements or public comments.

3. Interim Superintendent's Update

6:32 p.m.

Dr. Morris reported on the ARPS bumper stickers that have been distributed to all district families as a way to express pride in our schools and our students. He also noted that the Four Towns meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 7. The start time is one-hour later than usual to allow Pelham town officials to attend an earlier meeting they have scheduled for other business. Ms. Desjarlais reported that last Friday was Mr. Graiff's last day, noting that he has been working with the new custodian to get her settled. Parents and staff held a gathering to honor and thank him for his service. Ms. Desjarlais reported that the Bomba dancers from ARHS came to Pelham to dance for and with the students, which was a nice event and opportunity to have the older students visit Pelham students.

4. New and Continuing Business

6:37 p.m.

A. FY18 Budget Update

DOCUMENT: Pelham Elementary School FY2018 Proposed Budget dated Wednesday, January 4, 2017

Dr. Morris reviewed the schedule for the budget process, noting that the School Committee vote will be requested in March. He noted that there has been some positive news regarding the budget since the last School Committee meeting. Mr. Mangano distributed and reviewed highlights of the proposed budget, noting that one of the strategies used to get to the 2.5% increase was to ask the town to pay for some one-time retirement benefits. One item of note in the current FY17 budget is that there is a deficit of \$46,555 in the control accounts due to unanticipated expenses. Mr. Mangano noted that the town has \$21,000 earmarked for unexpected special education costs, and the district will be asking the town to release those funds to help offset the deficit. Mr. Mangano noted that a change that has positively impacted the FY18 budget since the last School Committee meeting is that Pelham School no longer has the two charter school students that were anticipated for next year. Mr. Mangano answered clarifying questions from committee members throughout his review of the budget document. The total proposed budget is \$2,020,267, which is a \$32,008 increase over FY17.

B. School Choice Hearing

DOCUMENT: Pelham School Enrollment 2016-2017 dated January 4, 2017

Ms. Desjarlais distributed a current enrollment update for Pelham School. There are currently 55 school choice students and six unfilled choice slots. Dr. Morris noted that his recommendation is that Pelham School remain a choice school for FY2018. The committee will vote on the issue at their next meeting in February.

C. Homework Discussion

Dr. Morris noted that a survey will be distributed to families, staff and students to gather feedback about the decision not to have homework assignments over the winter break. The Amherst School Committee will be discussing homework at their January 17 meeting and they are interested in having a joint meeting with Pelham for that topic if the Pelham committee is amenable to that. The other option would be to have a separate discussion at the February Pelham meeting. Dr. Morris said he is preparing a presentation regarding the research around homework that is intended to be a way to start the broader conversation around homework in all of the schools. After discussion, it was agreed that Pelham will just have the presentation and discussion separately at their February meeting. Dr. Morris invited the members to send him any specific questions they would like him to address in his presentation.

D. Join Massachusetts Association of Rural Schools

DOCUMENT: Local Schools to Form Rural Association; Rural Public School Aid Proposal (flyer)

Dr. Morris explained that Michael Buoniconti, the Mohawk, Gill and Hawlemont School District Superintendent, is Chairman of the Massachusetts Rural Schools Coalition whose goal is to “represent interests peculiar to rural districts.” Pelham has been invited to join, which would mean that Dr. Morris will attend meetings of the coalition. Mr. Baptiste moved that Superintendent Morris join the coalition. Ms. Luce seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

E. Accept Gifts

Ms. Castenson moved to accept \$25 from Alissa Lange for the Pelham preschool. Ms. Luce seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

5. School Committee Planning

8:00 p.m.

February topics will include the Superintendent’s goals, budget hearing, surplus materials disposal, school choice vote, fees vote, special education funding request and homework discussion. Ms. Luce requested that the Superintendent’s goals be last on the agenda since she will be recusing herself from the discussion. The school improvement plan will be in March instead of February.

6. Adjourn

8:07 p.m.

Ms. Luce moved to adjourn at 8:07 p.m. Mr. Marriott seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland