

**Amherst-Pelham Regional and Union 26 School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, May 2, 2017
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

IN ATTENDANCE

Eric Nakajima, Region
Cara Castenson, Union 26
Anastasia Ordonez, Region & Union 26
Emily Marriott, Region
Audra Goscenski, Region
Peter Demling, Region
Phoebe Hazzard, Region & Union 26
Trevor Baptiste, Region & Union 26
Stephen Sullivan, Region (arrived at 6:35 p.m.)
Vira Douangmany-Cage, Region
Ron Mannino, Union 26

Michael Morris, Superintendent
Sean Mangano, Finance Director
Kathryn Mazur, Human Resources Director
Jean Fay, APEA President
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder
Public and Press

1. Welcome and Call to Order 6:31 p.m.

Mr. Nakajima called the Regional School Committee to order and Ms. Ordonez called the Union 26 School Committee to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. Approve Minutes—April 4, 2017; April 12, 2017 6:31 p.m.

Ms. Marriott moved to approve the minutes of April 4 and April 12, 2017 on behalf of the Regional committee. Ms. Hazzard seconded and the motion was approved unanimously. On behalf of Union 26, Mr. Baptiste moved to approve both sets of minutes. Ms. Marriott seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

3. Announcements and Public Comment 6:32 p.m.

There were no public comments. Ms. Marriott noted that tonight is Mr. Baptiste's last meeting after serving for six years, saying that it has been an honor to serve with him. Mr. Baptiste stated that he was very proud to have served on behalf of his children and his neighbor's children. Ms. Ordonez also expressed her appreciation for the honesty and heart Mr. Baptiste brought to his work on the committee. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that she really enjoyed the Day on the Hill with students and thanked Ms. Ordonez for her work in making an interesting, full itinerary for them.

4. Interim Superintendent's Update 6:38 p.m.

DOCUMENT: Update to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee May 2, 2017

Dr. Morris expressed appreciation to Ms. Douangmany Cage, Ms. Ordonez and Ms. Castenson for attending Day on the Hill. He announced that the Black Scholars Rising Celebration is this Friday evening at 6:30 and all school committee members are invited. Dr. Morris also noted that the ARHS Dialogue Day is scheduled for May 1 and acknowledged that a number of ARHS students have recently received awards that have been featured in the weekly ARPS Update. Ms. Ordonez noted that the Latino Student Achievement event is scheduled for May 19. Dr. Morris said that both events are at ARMS.

5. New and Continuing Business 6:42 p.m.

A. Interim Superintendent Contract Vote

Mr. Nakajima noted that at the last meeting the committee discussed the terms of the contract they are offering to Dr. Morris in Executive Session and, understanding that Dr. Morris will accept the contract, a vote is needed tonight. Ms. Ordonez then briefly reviewed the terms of the contract, noting that the salary will be \$148,625 with an additional \$1,150 longevity payment. This represents a salary increase that is in step with the increase given to all staff in recent negotiations. On behalf of the Regional School Committee, Ms. Goscenski moved to approve the contract as presented. Mr. Demling seconded and brief discussion followed. Mr. Baptiste noted that he felt it is important to recognize that Dr. Morris asked for an increase of no more than the faculty and staff will receive, and expressed kudos to Dr. Morris for being a team player. Mr. Demling noted that he appreciates the fact that we have had the opportunity to have Dr. Morris provide stability in leadership during a critical time in the district. Ms. Douangmany Cage thanked Dr. Morris for his willingness to continue to lead the district. Ms. Hazzard stated that she believes Dr. Morris is really building trust with the community and thanked him for that. The motion was then unanimously approved by the Regional committee. Ms. Hazzard then moved to approve the contract on behalf of Union 26. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Dr. Morris expressed his

appreciation, noting that collaboration between the School Committee and the Superintendent is important and he actively feels the collaboration with this School Committee.

B. Permanent Superintendent Search Discussion of Ray & Associates (Vote)

DOCUMENT: Memo to Eric Nakajima, Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee Chair and Anastasia Ordonez, Union 26 School Committee Chair; cc: Kathryn Mazur, Director of Human Resources From Thomas W. Colomb, Esq. Dated April 28, 2017 regarding Ray & Associates Contract Issues

Mr. Nakajima noted that there is a key decision point in re-launching the Superintendent search process, which is to decide whether the committee is comfortable moving forward working with Ray and Associates or would prefer to work with a different search firm. He requested that a motion be made followed by discussion and debate, with the hope that a decision can be made tonight. Depending on the committee's decision, an Executive Session has been posted if needed. Mr. Baptiste moved to continue with Ray and Associates for the search in the fall. Ms. Hazzard seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Baptiste noted that he believes that some of the time needed to begin the search over the summer will be taken up by the unwinding process with Ray and Associates. He spoke about their familiarity with the community, noting that he believes their mistake has been identified and that it will not be repeated. Mr. Mannino asked what assurance the committee has that the mistake will not be repeated. Ms. Ordonez noted that Ray and Associates did what they committed to do initially; however, some of the concerns raised by school committee members were around their recruitment methods to ensure a diverse candidate pool. She also spoke about the delays and unprofessional behavior by some members of the Ray and Associates staff once the mistake was identified, as well as concern about their dismissal of the communication from Ms. Mazur bringing the problem to their attention in the first place. Mr. Nakajima noted that members of Ray and Associates expressed consternation about the Massachusetts CORI law and expressed their belief that following it could potentially cause problems for the district. He stated that they opined about the questionable wisdom of the Massachusetts statute. Mr. Nakajima noted that their response raised concerns for him about their willingness to follow the spirit and letter of other Massachusetts laws and the policies of the district. Ms. Goscenski noted that she had really wanted to continue the process with Ray and Associates; however, she does not feel their letter reflects that they took the committee's concerns seriously. She said she does not want to select from a pool of superintendents from a firm she does not feel confident in. Ms. Douangmany Cage stated that it is sometimes nice to have a clean break and start fresh, providing more oversight. She noted that she is tending to recommend having a fresh start. Mr. Demling said he is not comfortable moving forward with Ray and Associates, noting that it comes down to trust for him. He said he believes trust in Ray and Associates has been damaged beyond repair, and he does not think that the time needed to choose a new firm will unduly inhibit the process. Ms. Marriott stated that she is disinclined to continue with Ray and Associates. Mr. Nakajima stated that he agrees with a number of the sentiments previously stated, noting also that he is not certain that our search is a priority for Ray and Associates as a corporation working with districts such as Detroit. Ms. Ordonez noted that she feels the process Ray and Associates used in seeking candidates leaves a very wide gap in what the district set out for recruiting. She said she is leaning toward terminating the relationship with Ray and Associates and recouping the funds spent. Ms. Hazzard stated that as a member of the subcommittee that looked at the applications of the search firms, she was very impressed with Ray and Associates so this is very disappointing. She noted that she feels the trust and the political question of continuing with Ray and Associates leads her to believe we should not continue with them. Ms. Castenson stated that she would also be disinclined to continue with Ray and Associates, noting that she does not feel the firm took the time to really get to know the community and our priorities. Mr. Baptiste stated that he has been sufficiently persuaded and is willing to withdraw his motion. Ms. Hazzard withdrew her second of the motion. Ms. Goscenski moved to authorize the Chairs to work with the attorney to terminate our contract with Ray and Associates with the request that they come back to the committee with the strategy and process. Ms. Hazzard seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Demling noted that he does not want to tie the hands of the Chairs moving forward and suggested that the motion be amended. Discussion about a possible amendment followed. Mr. Demling then moved to amend the motion by adding language "to direct the Chairs to recoup funds." Ms. Goscenski seconded. Ms. Marriott moved to amend the amendment to include "including advertising costs." Ms. Goscenski seconded and Ms. Marriott's motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Demling's motion to amend was then unanimously approved. The main motion by Ms. Goscenski, as amended to read "move to authorize the Chairs to work with the attorney to terminate our contract with Ray and Associates and to direct the Chairs to recoup funds, including advertising costs, with the request that they come back to the committee with the strategy and process" was then approved by a vote of eight to one with Mr. Baptiste opposed. Mr. Mannino then made the same motion on behalf of Union 26. Mr. Demling seconded and the motion

was approved five to one with Mr. Baptiste opposed. It was agreed that no Executive Session is necessary based on the vote taken.

Mr. Baptiste moved to adjourn Union 26 at 7:44 p.m. Ms. Castenson seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

C. Legal Subcommittee Report and Confirm Interview Questions

Mr. Mangano provided an overview of the process that has been followed to date, noting that interviews will be scheduled for some time from May 8 through May 19, 2017. He reported that the subcommittee ranked the top four applicants as Mirick O'Connell; Morgan, Brown and Joy, LLP; KP Law; and Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane. Mr. Nakajima noted that four firms seems like a lot to interview. Mr. Demling stated that the obvious question is whether we want to include our current law firm (Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane). Ms. Ordonez noted that there is a sense that we have used the current law firm for a long time and they have served us well; however, it seems to be time to move on. She suggested that the committee may not want to include them in the interviews. Dr. Morris noted that KP Law is the counsel for the Town of Amherst. Dr. Baptiste stated that the subcommittee discussed whether to eliminate KP Law due to potential conflict of interest since they serve the town. The subcommittee also discussed whether the full committee would want to exclude Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane and whether the full committee would want to include local firms even though they did not rank as highly based on quantitative data. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that she recommends eliminating KP Law since they represent the town of Amherst and we are a Regional committee. She stated that she also recommends moving to a law firm with which the district has not had a really long relationship. Mr. Demling noted that he sees the general wisdom of moving to a new firm with a clean break. Mr. Sullivan thanked the committee for doing this, noting that he agrees that KP Law and Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane should not be included. Ms. Ordonez said she also shares an unease with regard to KP Law. She said she does not feel having only two firms to interview is enough so she would like to invite the local firm as well. Mr. Nakajima noted that he has heard general agreement to bring in Mirick O'Connell and Morgan, Brown & Joy, LLP for interviews and not to bring in Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane. After discussion, general agreement was that KP Law should also not be brought in due to potential conflict of interest. Ms. Ordonez noted that she is comfortable bringing in just two firms. Mr. Baptiste said he is also comfortable having only two firms interviewed; however, he would also be comfortable inviting Dupere Law Offices (the local firm). The final agreement was that the firms to be interviewed will be Mirick O'Connell; Morgan, Brown & Joy, LLP; and Dupere Law Offices. Ms. Ordonez suggested that we cap the number of representatives from each firm to two, have 45 minute interviews instead of 25 minutes, and limit the firm's presentation to five minutes with the rest of the time devoted to the questions and responses. Discussion turned to the interview questions. Ms. Douangmany Cage suggested asking if the firm has any experience with issues-based bargaining. Ms. Goscenski suggested adding a question about how the firm stays current with education law, particularly related to school unions and regions. Dr. Morris will also submit one or two questions that relate to the needs of the superintendent and district. It was agreed that Mr. Mangano will put together a list of questions to send out to the committee and will conduct a Doodle poll to find a night to do all three interviews.

D. Ratification of APEA Contract Vote

DOCUMENT: Draft Memorandum of Agreement By and Between the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committees and the Amherst-Pelham Education Association dated March 20, 2017

Mr. Demling noted that he will abstain from this discussion/vote since his wife is an employee of the school district. Jean Fay then reported that the APEA ratified the agreement overwhelming this week. Ms. Ordonez moved to accept the agreement by and between the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committees and the Amherst-Pelham Education Association. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was passed eight to one with Mr. Demling abstaining. Mr. Nakajima expressed his appreciation that we have reached this agreement and are moving toward issues-based bargaining.

E. Immigration Policy (Vote)

DOCUMENT: Students--Protection of Undocumented Students (revised)

Ms. Hazzard noted that the changes to the policy are those suggested by the full committee at the last meeting. Ms. Ordonez stated that she is proud of this committee and the town for the message they are sending to our students, families and other communities with this policy. Ms. Goscenski said that she has shared this policy with Leverett and they are looking forward to receiving the final approved policy for consideration. Ms. Hazzard then moved to approve the policy *Students—Protection of Undocumented Students* as presented. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Dr. Morris noted that he will include the passage of this policy in his weekly newsletter and will ask Ms. Westmoreland to write a press release. He reported that he plans to write guidelines over the summer to provide training for staff in the implementation of the policy. Implementation of the policy will be a topic at the next School Committee meeting.

F. Interim Superintendent Evaluation Process

DOCUMENTS: *Evaluation Subcommittee Meeting Notes dated April 26, 2017; Superintendent 360 Survey 2017; 360 Survey Questions; MA DESE Part III: Appendix A. ESE Model Rubric for Superintendents; End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Reports--Superintendent*

Ms. Goscenski reviewed the work of the Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee at their last meeting and the materials they developed, including the 360 Survey questions. Ms. Marriott noted that the survey will ask which district the employee works for so that each committee gets the results only from respondents in their district. Mr. Demling noted that it is important to understand the limits of 360 surveys, which can have answers that are influenced by a number of factors. Ms. Goscenski reported that she reached out to the APAA and received assurance from their President, Ms. Gromacki, that they have no concerns about completing an anonymous 360 survey. Discussion turned to edits/comments on the 360 survey to enable the subcommittee to make any edits and get it out to the faculty and staff as soon as possible. Mr. Demling suggested adding the rating scale at the top of the questions so it is clear to respondents. Mr. Baptiste expressed his sincere thanks for the work the subcommittee has done in developing this survey, noting that he has wanted the district to move in this direction for three years. Dr. Morris noted that he is very pleased with the survey as well. It was agreed that Ms. Westmoreland will format the survey and share it with the Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee and Dr. Morris for review before it goes out to staff and faculty. There was discussion about whether any comments submitted as part of the survey are considered public records. After discussion, it was agreed that there will not be a comment box on this year's survey and it will be revisited for next year. Ms. Goscenski asked the members of the committee to review the evaluation rubric that was developed from the DESE rubric and to send any feedback. It was agreed that Ms. Westmoreland will resend the rubric to the committee with a request for feedback to be sent to her to forward to the subcommittee. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked that the evaluation instrument used have the capacity to go back in to edit and to print a copy. Ms. Westmoreland will explore methods that will support those requests.

G. Accept Gifts

DOCUMENT: *Memo to Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Jill Berry, Amherst-Pelham Regional School District Treasurer dated April 20, 2017*

Mr. Baptiste moved to accept \$2,000 from Andrew Starkweather for the class of 1984 for the ARHS Performing Arts Department and \$1,000 from Catherine Lodge for the PIP classroom. Ms. Ordonez seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

6. School Committee Planning

9:26 p.m.

Ms. Hazzard will serve on the clerical/media award selection committee. Mr. Nakajima and Dr. Morris will draft an agenda for the June 13 meeting and send it out to the full committee for feedback.

Mr. Nakajima expressed his appreciation for Mr. Baptiste's passion and commitment to the committee and his community and said it has been a pleasure to work with him. Dr. Morris said he appreciates that Dr. Baptiste has been an effective advocate for both a small district and a large, four town regional district. Ms. Douangmany Cage said she looks forward to whatever arena Dr. Baptiste will step into next, noting that he has a lot of fans who are grateful for what he has done on the school committee. Ms. Hazzard said she appreciates how much Dr. Baptiste invests in developing and building relationships. Mr. Demling said he appreciates having an opportunity to work at least briefly with Dr. Baptiste and expressed appreciation that he is welcoming of all voices. Mr. Sullivan thanked Mr. Baptiste for his work and his friendship. Mr. Baptiste stated that it does his heart good to know he is leaving the committee when it is in such a good place.

7. Adjourn

9:39 p.m.

Mr. Baptiste moved to adjourn at 9:39 p.m. Ms. Douangmany Cage seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland