

Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, February 11, 2014
Library, Amherst Regional High School

In Attendance:

Kip Fonsh, Chair
Trevor Baptiste
Lawrence O'Brien
Debbie Gould
Rick Hood
Katherine Appy
Amilcar Shabazz

Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Faye Brady, Student Services Director
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal
Betsy Dinger, ARMS Principal
Kathryn Mazur, Human Resources Director
Rhonda Cohen, Director of Teaching and Learning
Jerry Champagne, Information Systems Director
Michael Morris, Director of Assessment and Evaluation
Miki Lee Gromacki, ARHS Assistant Principal
Ian Stith, K-8 Math Coordinator
Jane Mudie, Math Department Chair
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder
Public and Press

Absent:

Kathleen Traphagen
Michael DeChiara

1. Welcome and Agenda Review

7:00 PM

A. Call to Order and Agenda Review

Mr. Fonsh called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reviewed the agenda and asked if there needs to be any changes to the time allotted to each item. There were no changes. Mr. Fonsh noted that he will remind the committee when there is five minutes left on a topic and ask for a vote of the committee if they wish to continue the discussion. This is a measure to manage time more effectively in the meetings.

B. Approve Minutes—Ms. Gould moved to approve the minutes of January 28, 2014 with a minor correction. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. Public Comments

7:05 p.m.

There were no public comments.

3. Superintendent's Update

7:05 p.m.

Ms. Geryk distributed and briefly reviewed recent and upcoming events, including:

- The deadline for applications for the ARMS principal position is February 21. A number of parents and guardians have expressed interest in serving on the Principal Screening Committee and will be notified regarding their selection by February 18. Ms. Geryk reviewed the interview process, noting that she hopes to announce a new principal by April 11.
- This week is the first annual Warrior Week at ARHS, which gives the entire school community the opportunity to participate in social justice, equity and anti-bullying activities inspired by Calvin Terrell's *Coward to Warrior: The Courage to Act* presentation in September.

Ms. Geryk and Ms. Mazur answered clarifying questions from the committee regarding the principal search.

3. Subcommittee Updates

7:15 PM

- **AEF**—Mr. Hood noted that the Spring Sprint scheduled for May 3 is now open for registration on the AEF website.
- **Budget Subcommittee**—Mr. Hood noted that the Budget Subcommittee is scheduled to meet on February 25 with capital budget on the agenda.
- **The Collaborative**—Mr. Fonsh reported that the Board of Directors will begin contract negotiations with the new Executive Director on Feb 26th.
- **RSDPB**—Mr. Fonsh noted that the officers are trying to identify a meeting date that will maximize attendance, which may be early March.
- **Policy Subcommittee**—Due to scheduling conflicts, the February 13 meeting has been postponed until February 24 at 5:00 p.m. in the ARMS cafeteria.

5. New and Continuing Business

7:17 p.m.

A. FY14 Second Quarter Budget Update

DOCUMENT: Amherst-Pelham Regional School District Fiscal Year 2014 Second Quarter Report

Mr. Mangano distributed and briefly reviewed the highlights of the Fiscal Year 2014 Second Quarter Budget Report. He concluded that the district budget is projected to finish on track as of now. Mr. O'Brien asked why the ARHS locker room and classroom build-out project were over budget. Mr. Mangano explained that the projects were funded through a bond,

which requires submission of projected costs. The actual costs came in higher than projected and those overages cannot be charged to the bond. Mr. Baptiste asked for information about plans to move the Fort River Principal to a role in Central Office at a slightly higher salary than she currently earns. He said he would like to hear the rationale for how moving her further away from students at a higher salary will benefit students. Ms. Geryk acknowledged his concern. She noted that the change will not impact the current year budget, and she has planned to bring forward next month a revised organizational chart outlining the reasons for all of the proposed changes and roles. Mr. Baptiste said he is comfortable waiting for that presentation to get an answer to his question. After Mr. Mangano answered a few other clarifying questions about the figures in the report, Mr. Fonsh thanked him for the update.

B. FY15 Regional Budget Public Hearing

DOCUMENTS: Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools 2015 Budget Additions/Reductions; Revised Binder Pgs 31/32, 35/ 36

Ms. Geryk distributed updated pages for the School Committee's budget information binders from the last meeting. Mr. Morris then reviewed the proposed additions and reductions to the FY15 budget, which were distributed to the School Committee and posted on the district website in advance of the meeting. Ms. Geryk noted that there is currently a gap of \$47,000 that is likely to be addressed by staff turnover or changes in Chapter 70 funding. Mr. Shabazz asked what the means will be to improve the outcomes for the African-American student group. Ms. Geryk noted that after school and summer support will be provided in English language arts, in conjunction with focused instruction in the classrooms. Ms. Dinger noted that targeted student support based on district data will also be an important component. Mr. Morris stated his belief that the districts' work on school climate is also an important component. Mr. Shabazz asked how the buildings will be able to be maintained with a reduction in the custodial staff. Ms. Mazur explained that the position will be a 0.5 FTE cut at ARMS and a 0.5 cut at ARHS which should allow the work to be maintained. Ms. Geryk noted that if it becomes clear that the change is having a negative impact, the position will be revisited. Mr. Baptiste asked how many Central Office positions are necessary for addressing the necessary climate changes in our schools. He asked if the change is reflected in the proposed budget. Ms. Geryk explained that the position is reflected in the budget document as a 1.0 FTE; however, it is not reflected in higher costs because it is being funded through a retirement, a partial Central Office position reduction and a back-of-budget position in the Amherst budget that did not have to be filled. Ms. Gould noted that she heard that there were some unavoidable technology issues this year and asked if the proposed 0.5 reduction in Information Systems will be problematic. Ms. Geryk explained that most of the technology issues this year were based on issues unrelated to the number of staff available. Dr. Brady provided background information about the BRYT program that is proposed as an addition in the FY15 budget. Mr. Fonsh stated that he believes the BRYT program may be the most potentially beneficial program to be added since he has been on the School Committee. He thanked Dr. Brady for her efforts in making it happen. Mr. Shabazz asked for clarification of the E & D reduction. Mr. Mangano reviewed the history of E & D on page 35 of the information binder, and Ms. Geryk noted that we do not anticipate a large surplus at the end of this year as has happened in past years. She said we anticipate being able to put \$100,000 back into E & D at the end of FY14. Mr. Fonsh thanked Mr. Mangano for the report. He asked for public comment on the budget. Ms. Sherlock noted that she is concerned about the funds for professional development and whether they are going to be used for training in the Common Core. Dr. Cohen explained that Massachusetts public school curriculum is guided by the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks which have been in place for about 20 years. She noted that the frameworks are informed by The Common Core.

C. School Choice Public Hearing

DOCUMENT: Memo to the Regional School Committee from Kathryn Mazur regarding School Choice Public Forum of February 11, 2014

Ms. Mazur distributed and reviewed the highlights of a memo recommending that the Regional School District remain a school choice district in 2014-2015. She explained that the recommendation is informed by a study of our enrollments by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). Mr. Fonsh noted that a vote will be required at the next Regional School Committee meeting. Mr. Shabazz asked if our district is a NESDEC affiliate and asked what recommends them to provide an analysis for the district regarding school choice. Ms. Mazur explained that NESDEC is an organization staffed by former superintendents that does analysis work for districts and superintendent searches. She noted that NESDEC conducts enrollment projections for districts at no charge and has done so for our district in the past. Mr. Shabazz asked how much the dues are for a NESDEC affiliated district. Ms. Westmoreland will look into his question and provide the information.

D. Teaching & Learning Update—Mathematics

DOCUMENTS: Slides from Mathematics Powerpoint Presentation "Grade 8 Math Program Ideas" dated February 11, 2014; Frequently Asked Questions: 8th Grade Math Program Ideas; Proposed ARMS and ARHS Math Course Sequence (6-12)

Dr. Cohen, Dr. Stith and Ms. Mudie utilized a Powerpoint presentation to give an overview of the proposed Middle School mathematics program, including the possible courses and sequencing through high school. Dr. Cohen noted that the options proposed include a portfolio pathway through which students could take calculus in 11th grade since that has been identified as important to many families in Amherst. Additionally, any student can participate with no entrance requirements. Mr.

Hood noted that this math proposal gives every possible option to students and said he believes it is a great proposal. Mr. Shabazz asked how students who may not have family to advocate for them, or know how to advocate for themselves, will be sufficiently supported in the process to move through the math program at the highest level. Dr. Cohen noted that the district will be very thoughtful about not only using data, but will be working to establish a district culture in which teachers develop relationships with students that help them understand the importance of math as a gatekeeper. Ms. Dinger spoke about the work being done with staff to teach them to understand privilege, the ways in which they do not see students well, and an understanding of how to change that. Mr. Baptiste asked if the way in which a program such as the proposed mathematics program is implemented can be established as school committee policy. Ms. Geryk explained that she sees the day-to-day implementation of a new program curriculum as part of the Superintendent's work, and the role of the School Committee is to provide input and to hold her accountable for the success or failure of the program. Ms. Appy noted that she hopes the district will utilize a variety of methods to both communicate with and get input from parents regarding the new program. After further clarifying questions, Mr. Fonsh suggested that the committee send any additional questions to Superintendent Geryk and thanked Dr. Cohen for the presentation.

E. 2014-2014 School Calendar Drafts

DOCUMENTS: 2014-2015 Pre-Labor Day Start Draft; 2014-2015 Post-Labor Day Student Start Draft; 2014-2015 Post-Labor Day Faculty/Student Start Draft

Ms. Westmoreland reviewed the three calendar drafts, noting that both the Superintendent's Planning Council and the APEA Executive Board recommend the Pre-Labor Day start calendar. Mr. Fonsh noted that the committee will be asked to vote at the next meeting.

6. School Committee Planning

9:28 p.m.

A. Calendar—March 11 is the next meeting. Agenda topics include budget; choice and calendar vote; teaching and learning update, including PARCC and Standards at end of March; Family Center update in April

7. Adjournment

9:30 p.m.

Mr. O'Brien moved to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. Mr. Shabazz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland