

**Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, January 14, 2014  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**In Attendance:**

Kip Fonsh, Chair	Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Kathleen Traphagen	Faye Brady, Student Services Director
Lawrence O'Brien	Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal
Debbie Gould	Betsy Dinger, ARMS Principal
Michael DeChiara	Marta Guevara, Director of Achievement and Equity
Katherine Appy	Mary Custard, ARHS Dean
Amilcar Shabazz (arrived @ 7:07)	Sharri Abbott, MSAN Teacher

Kim Stender, Partnerships & Volunteer Coordinator
Michaela Bowen, ARHS Student
Jocelyn Cruz, ARHS Student
Lanre Thomas, ARHS Students
Catia Rodrigues Correia, ARHS Student
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder
Public and Press

**Absent:**

Trevor Baptiste  
Rick Hood

**1. Welcome and Agenda Review**

**7:05 PM**

**A. Call to Order and Agenda Review**

Mr. Fonsh called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and extended a welcome to the audience. He particularly welcomed the MSAN students in attendance, commending them for their extraordinary leadership and for acting as role models to their peers and the adults in the community. Mr. Fonsh reviewed the agenda and the summary memo and asked if any changes are requested to the time allotted to each item. There were no changes.

**B. Approve Minutes**—Mr. O'Brien moved to approve the minutes of December 3, 2013. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**2. Public Comments**

**7:07 p.m.**

Jeanette Wicks-Lim, third grade parent, spoke in support of the nut restriction in the districts. She read a passage from a letter by Jan Hanson, a food-allergy educator, that stated that 77,000 students per year are seen in emergency rooms nationwide due to food allergies and noted that epinephrine is not fool-proof. The letter applauded the Amherst School District for restricting nut products in the schools.

**3. Superintendent's Update**

**7:13 p.m.**

Ms. Geryk introduced Shari Abbott, Mary Custard, Marta Guevara and Kim Stender who were instrumental in planning and executing the September MSAN Conference. She then introduced the MSAN students and explained that they are in attendance to report on their experience at the conference. Lanre Thomas, ARHS Sophomore, thanked the School Committee for giving the students the opportunity to host the MSAN conference, noting that it was a life-changing experience for him. Michaela Bowen, ARHS Senior, spoke about her experience at the conference. She noted the importance of being with other students of color who are combatting the same issues and of sharing ideas for dealing with those issues. Jocelyn Cruz, ARHS Junior, explained how students developed their action plans during the conference. She noted that the ARHS action plan is to work with fifth grade students at Fort River Elementary in a mentoring role. Catia Rodrigues Correia, ARHS Senior, noted that mentoring students was a theme for most of the schools that developed action plans. Since ARHS already has a mentor program for eighth graders, the MSAN students felt that it would be beneficial to begin working with younger students. The group began their work today with the first visit to Fort River and the theme is Courage to Act. Ms. Appy thanked the students for coming tonight and for being such community and school leaders. She asked what the plan is for working with students going forward. Ms. Rodrigues Correia explained that the plans are still evolving but there will likely be some partnering with individual and small groups of students, noting that the next visit to Fort River is in February. Ms. Appy asked what is needed in order for the MSAN students to work with the other elementary schools in addition to Fort River. Ms. Bowen explained that

time is the major factor since they have only one period per month to do the mentoring, noting that Fort River is close to the high school and many of the MSAN students have ties to Fort River. Mr. O'Brien asked if the students have been able to maintain contact with other students they met at the conference. Ms. Bowen said that most of her contact has been through social media. Ms. Rodrigues Correia noted that there is one student from MSAN with whom she developed a strong relationship, and they do talk about how things are going with the action plan in each of their schools. Ms. Gould asked if there were any pictures or video from the conference gallery walk that can be shared. Ms. Custard said she has more than 400 pictures that she can share. Ms. Traphagen suggested that the mentor program consider developing a multi-year relationship with the students rather than starting over with fifth grade each year. She asked the students what they learned from or felt challenged by at the conference. Mr. Thomas noted that he was surprised to learn that all of the students he met from Chicago are in AP classes even though their school environment is not particularly safe. Ms. Cruz noted that she also met students from New Jersey who are struggling because they are required to obtain permission to take AP classes and permission is being denied. She said it surprised her because she has never heard of anything like that happening here. Mr. Fonsh commended the students for the unconditional compassion for their peers that underlies their work. Ms. Geryk thanked the students for stepping up to represent Amherst as bright, strong students and thanked them particularly for choosing mentoring as their action plan. At 8:41 p.m. the committee returned to this agenda item and Ms. Geryk noted a few upcoming events, including:

- At 7:00 p.m. on January 17th, the Amherst Human Rights Commission, Amherst Area NAACP and the Leverett Peace Commission will present a reading of Project Unspeakable, focusing on the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X and Robert F. Kennedy. Mr. Shabazz is one of the performers participating in the event.
- The 30<sup>th</sup> annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Breakfast will be held at the ARMS cafeteria from 9:00 a.m. to Noon on Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **3. Subcommittee Updates**

**8:43 PM**

**Budget Subcommittee**—Mr. Fonsh reported that the subcommittee met last week and discussed the capital planning. The Budget Subcommittee meets again next Tuesday.

**The Collaborative**—The Board of Directors met last week and on January 22 the Board will interview finalists for the Director position. Mr. O'Brien noted that the Massachusetts Legislature passed a new law requiring all collaboratives to redraw all of their agreements. All member School Committees will be required to vote on the new agreements in the coming months.

### **5. New and Continuing Business**

**7:33 p.m.**

#### **A. RSDPB Presentation**

A. Mr. Fonsh introduced Andy Steinberg, RSDPB Chair, noting that he is in attendance to present the next steps being recommended in the regionalization process. Mr. Steinberg provided background information on the work of the RSDPB on the question of regionalization over the past two years. He noted that the board voted unanimously on the following motion to propose to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

*To amend the current 7-12 agreement to a preK-12 agreement with the option that one of the existing four towns can remain 7-12 as long as that town is not Amherst, and that the town that remained 7-12 has the option to become a preK-12 member within a specified period of time, and that the town that remained 7-12 can negotiate with the Regional School Committee regarding shared superintendency services for their preK-6 school.*

Mr. Steinberg reported on the response he received from Christine Lynch from DESE, noting that she is providing a written summary of the department's decision which will support the proposal of the RSDPB. He explained what the process will be for the Regional School Committee if they agree to work on amending the current 7-12 Regional Agreement. Mr. Fonsh thanked Mr. Steinberg, noting the extraordinary work he has done as Chair of the RSDPB. He opened the floor to questions from the School Committee. Mr. O'Brien asked if there is a timeframe in which the Regional School Committee has to act if they vote to move forward. Mr. Steinberg noted that it would be wise to develop a timeline and that DESE would likely require that a decision be made by the end of one fiscal year in order for it to take effect at the beginning of the next fiscal year. He said it would be beneficial to be able to ask for town votes by the end of 2014. Ms. Gould extended her appreciation for the work

of the RSDPB. She asked for clarification of whether it would require participation of three of the four towns in the Pre-K-12 Region in order to move forward with a change in the Regional Agreement. Mr. Steinberg confirmed that this was a requirement of the vote of the RSDPB that was presented to DESE for consideration. Mr. DeChiara noted that if two towns wanted to have a Pre-K-6, the change would have to be presented to DESE to see if it is possible. Ms. Gould asked if a shared superintendency as outlined would be a union. Mr. DeChiara explained that it would not be union. Ms. Gould stated that she would not be in support of a shared superintendency since one of the main goals of regionalizing is to streamline the work of the Central Office. Ms. Traphagen asked about costs moving forward. Mr. Steinberg noted that having assistance with rewriting the Regional Agreement would likely be the main expense, explaining that Gini Tate, Attorney for the School District, worked with the RSDPB on this during their process. Ms. Geryk noted that she also believes legal review of the agreement would be the main expense, noting that there are funds that can be accessed by the School Committee for such work. After further discussion, Mr. DeChiara moved to *amend the current 7-12 agreement to a preK-12 agreement with the option that one of the existing four towns can remain 7-12 as long as that town is not Amherst, and that the town that remained 7-12 has the option to become a preK-12 member within a specified period of time, and that the town that remained 7-12 can negotiate with the Regional School Committee regarding shared superintendency services for their preK-6 school.* Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. DeChiara then moved *that the Regional School Committee revise the Regional Agreement per the prior agreement and appoint a committee to do so including the current members of the RSDPB: Andy Steinberg, Katherine Appy and Alisa Brewer for Amherst; Julia Shively, Anne Delano and Kip Fonsh for Leverett; Trevor Baptiste, Jeff Eiseman, and Mark Santos for Pelham; and Michael DeChiara, Elaine Puleo and Becky Torres for Shutesbury.* Ms. Appy seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Shabazz said he does not understand why the committee cannot simply ask the Superintendent to work with the attorney to revise the Regional Agreement and to bring it back to the committee for a vote. Mr. DeChiara noted that the members of the RSCPB are representatives of their towns, and he does not believe that having two professionals do this work can really represent the concerns of the individual towns. Mr. Shabazz noted that he believes the issues for the towns have been discussed over the past two years, and we are at a different stage now. He fears the idea of regionalization will die by inertia. Ms. Gould noted that she can see Mr. Shabazz's point and suggested that a compromise could be to appoint a smaller committee. Ms. Appy said that there is an enormous amount of work that must be done so having fewer committee members would make much more work for the individual members. She said she actually believes it would be helpful to add more members to the committee. Ms. Traphagen noted that adding a few new people to the committee might bring new energy that could be beneficial to the process. After further discussion, the motion was approved with six in favor and Mr. Shabazz abstaining.

## **B. Approve Gifts**

Ms. Gould moved to accept a gift of \$250 from Marshall and Annie Jones for the James Faison Scholarship Fund and \$500 from the F.L. Roberts Exxon Mobil Education Grant to assist in the promotion of high school science and math. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

## **6. School Committee Planning**

**8:50 p.m.**

**A. Calendar**—February 8 is the next Four Towns; January 28 joint meeting (agenda items include policy discussion and FY15 budget presentation)

## **7. Adjournment**

**8:51 p.m.**

Ms. Gould moved to adjourn at 8:51 p.m. Mr. Shabazz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland