

Four Towns Meeting
Saturday, March 2, 2013
Amherst Regional Middle School, Library

School Committee Members in Attendance:

Rick Hood (Amherst and Region)
Michael DeChiara (Region)
Katherine Appy (Amherst and Region)
Annemarie Foley (Pelham and Region)
Kip Fonsh (Region)
Amilcar Shabazz (Amherst and Region): arrived at 2:36 p.m.

District Staff in Attendance:

Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Rob Detweiler, Director of Finance & Operations
Debbie Westmoreland, Assistant to the Superintendent

Welcome and Introductions **2:04 p.m.**

Ms. Geryk called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and noted their town and board affiliation. Ms. Geryk reviewed the norms of the meeting, noting that this is a working meeting not a public forum.

Building the FY14 Regional School District Budget **2:10 p.m.**

DOCUMENTS: Four-Town Meeting Packet (dated 3-2-13)

Ms. Geryk gave a brief introduction reviewing the level services budget for FY14 and the process that was followed in developing the budget proposal. She also reviewed the mandated additions and adjustments to the FY14 budget, as well as the cuts necessary to address the financial gap. Ms. Geryk noted that the cuts are being made strategically in order to create a model that will be better for students and as well as sustainable over time.

The Revenue Picture **2:38 p.m.**

Mr. Detweiler provided updated information regarding state funding for FY2014 including the governor's proposed budget, which came in lower than anticipated, and transportation reimbursement. He noted that the district now plans to use \$500,000 from E & D funding rather than \$400,000 as was anticipated at the January Four Towns meeting. Mr. Detweiler also addressed the use of choice funds; factors impacting budget planning, such as the impact of sequestration on federal grants and the expansion of the Chinese Charter School through grade 12; and what the assessments will be to member towns.

Capital Planning **2:55 p.m.**

Mr. Detweiler reviewed the capital plan for the Region, noting that some projects that were planned for FY13 cannot be completed and have been moved out to other years. Mr. Trickey asked when Mr. Detweiler expects the next bond since it would be helpful for Pelham to have this information for planning purposes. Mr. Detweiler noted that he does not have the answer yet, but would be happy to meet with town finance members to discuss when it will be most advantageous.

Guidance from the Member Towns **3:00 p.m.**

DOCUMENT: Five Year Regional Assessment Forecast, February 2013

Mr. Trickey noted that the assessment amount is much higher than Pelham hoped for, but they will pay their bill. Mr. D'Errico noted that the Leverett figures are also higher than hoped, but the town accountant is doing the figures now and said things look hopeful. Ms. Torres said Shutesbury can meet their assessment. Mr. Musante stated that Amherst has been doing multi-year planning so the 3% is doable for the town of Amherst. Ms. Torres stated that she thinks Ms. Geryk's presentation was amazing and her ability to make changes under the current financial conditions is remarkable. Mr. D'Errico seconded those comments and acknowledged Ms. Geryk for staying strong in the face of public criticism and for not waffling on what she knows is best with regard to the budget. Mr. Detweiler distributed a document showing projections for each town's assessments over the next five years.

Regionalization Board Update **3:06 p.m.**

Mr. Steinberg gave a brief update on the work of the Regionalization Board since the January Four Towns meeting. He noted that the Board will meet next Saturday, March 9 at 9:00 a.m. in the Amherst Regional High School library to take a vote on whether to advise moving forward with Regionalization and, if so, which model to use. Mr. Steinberg answered brief clarifying questions after his update.

Calendars

3:19 p.m.

Ms. Geryk noted that the School Committees will vote the Amherst and Regional school budgets on March 12 and the Pelham school budget on March 7. Amherst warrants are due by March 11 with Town Meeting beginning on May 6, Pelham warrants are due March 15 and Town Meeting is May 4, Shutesbury Town Meeting is May 4, and Leverett articles are due April 1 with Town Meeting on April 27.

The meeting adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland