

**Joint Meeting of the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee  
Tuesday, May 27, 2014  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Lawrence O'Brien, Region Vice-Chair/Amherst  
Katherine Appy, Amherst Chair/Region  
Kathleen Traphagen, Amherst/Region  
Trevor Baptiste, Pelham/Region  
Rick Hood, Amherst/Region  
Sarah Dolven, Region  
Stephen Sullivan, Region  
Emily Marriott, Pelham/Region  
Dan Robb, Pelham/Region

Maria Geryk, Superintendent  
Faye Brady, Director of Student Services  
Mike Morris, Director of Evaluation & Assessment  
Sean Mangano, Assistant Director of Finance  
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal  
Faye Brady, Student Services Director  
Rhonda Cohen, Director of Teaching and Learning  
Jerry Champagne, Information Systems Director  
Lisa Desjarlais, Pelham Principal  
Public and Press  
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

**ABSENT**

Amilcar Shabazz, Amherst/Region  
Darius Modestow, Pelham  
Tara Luce, Pelham

**1. Welcome and Agenda Review**

**7:04 p.m.**

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

Mr. O'Brien called the Regional School Committee to order, Ms. Appy called the Amherst School Committee to order and Ms. Geryk called the Pelham School Committee to order at 7:04 p.m. Mr. O'Brien introduced Stephen Sullivan, the new Shutesbury representative and Sarah Dolven, the new Leverett representative. He then reviewed the agenda and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**B. Approve Minutes**

Mr. Baptiste moved to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2014 joint meeting. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was approved with Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Dolven abstaining. Ms. Appy moved to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2014 Regional School Committee meeting. Ms. Traphagen seconded and the motion was approved with Mr. Baptiste and Mr. Sullivan abstaining.

**2. Public Comment**

**7:06 p.m.**

***DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC: High Stakes Testing—A Platform Statement from the Committee to Elect Barbar Madeloni; Letter to the Regional School Committee from Janet McGowen, dated May 27, 2014; Amherst, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury Population and Proposed Voter Representation***

Sonji Johnson-Anderson, community member, spoke about her concern regarding the welfare of her friend Carolyn Gardner. She stated that the school administration has been inadequate in its response to the repeated attacks on Ms. Gardner and expressed outrage and concern for the safety of all students and staff of color in the district. Jean Sherlock, grandparent, spoke against the new PARCC test noting that it reinforces the divide between the economically advantaged and others in the community. She distributed the platform statement from the Committee to Elect Barbara Madeloni, the new Massachusetts Teachers Association President. Malulani Sherlock, parent, spoke against the high-stakes nature of PARCC and MCAS testing noting that it does not lead to true knowledge but to rote learning. She stated that it is inherently classist and racist and is fundamentally wrong for children. Janet McGowen, parent, spoke regarding the regionalization process noting that there has been a lack of Amherst Town Forums, sharing of information, and updating of data on the RSDPB website. She encouraged the Regional School Committee to take a step back from the fast-track timeline the RAWG is proposing to allow a more open dialogue before any decision is made. Marylou Theilman, Amherst Precinct Seven Town Meeting member, distributed and reviewed a chart that outlines her concerns about Amherst's under-representation with the hybrid models being considered by the RAWG.

### **3. Superintendent's Update**

**7:27 p.m.**

Ms. Geryk noted that members of the Lions Club are in attendance to present the DaVinci Machine that they donated to the school districts. Dr. Brady and Ms. Stender introduced Todd Cromack, Amherst Lion's Club President, members of the Amherst, Pelham, and UMass Lion's Club and members of the student Leo Club who provided a demonstration of the machine. Mr. Cromack explained that the primary mission of the Lion's Club is to eliminate blindness worldwide. Mary Kiley, parent, spoke about the ways in which her daughter, who is sighted but legally blind, is benefiting from use of the DaVinci Machine and the incredible impact it has had on improving her access to the curriculum. The capabilities of the machine were demonstrated for the School Committee. Ms. Geryk thanked the Lions and Leos for the wonderful contribution, which she said is already having a profound impact on our students.

### **4. Subcommittee Updates**

**7:45 p.m.**

#### ***DOCUMENT: Regional Agreement Working Group (RAWG) Timeline***

**A. AEF Representative**—There was no update.

**B. Budget Subcommittee**—There was no update.

**C. The Collaborative**—Mr. Baptiste reported on the last meeting of The Collaborative School Committee representatives, noting that the primary discussion was around the Articles of Agreement and ways in which it can best support member districts.

**D. Policy Subcommittee**—Mr. O'Brien reported that the Policy Subcommittee met on Monday, May 19 and discussed the Collections Policy, the Investments Policy, the state-mandated Fingerprinting Policy and the Service Animals Policy. The next meeting is June 9 at 5:00 p.m. in the ARMS cafeteria.

**E. SETF**—Ms. Traphagen reported that there was a pre-meeting last Tuesday at which the purpose and scope of the SETF was reviewed. About 30 people attended and there was discussion of what each person hopes to get from the group. The first official meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 5 from 5:30-7:00 p.m. in the ARHS library and anyone who is interested is invited to participate in one of the working groups. Mr. Baptiste noted that the School Committee needs to think about how SETF volunteers' expertise can be used while understanding the Superintendent's role. Ms. Traphagen noted that this was discussed at the meeting, and it was very clear that the subcommittee and working groups will report to the Regional School Committee.

**E. Data Trends Subcommittee**—Mr. Hood reported that the Data Trends Subcommittee met tonight prior to the School Committee meeting. He noted that discussion continued regarding areas in which they may want to track trends. The next meeting is at 5:30 on Tuesday, June 10 and there will be public comment time for anyone who wants to share ideas or thoughts.

**F. RAWG**—Andy Steinberg, RAWG member, reported on the potential hybrid regions they are studying. These now include the possibility of either one or two towns choosing to participate in only the 7-12 Region. He distributed and reviewed the current timeline they are utilizing for completion of their work in order to make a formal recommendation to the Regional School Committee. Mr. Steinberg expressed appreciation for a number of people who have provided help to the committee. Ms. Appy encouraged the members of the School Committee to attend any meetings of the working group they can since it is the best way to see the process. Mr. Baptiste agreed, noting that the ultimate decision will lie with the School Committee so it is important for members to understand what went into the process and recommendation. Mr. Steinberg answered clarifying questions from the committee.

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

**7:40 p.m.**

#### **A. Bond Council Required Vote**

#### ***DOCUMENT: Memo to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Mary Wallace, Treasurer, regarding the Bond Council Required Vote***

Mr. Mangano reviewed the reason for the vote required by the Bond Council. Ms. Appy made the motion: Voted that the maximum useful life of the departmental equipment to be financed with the proceeds of the \$9,000 dishwasher and \$200,000 security cameras borrowing authorized by the vote of the School Committee passed March 11, 2014 is hereby determined to be 10 years with respect to the dishwasher and 10 years with respect to the security cameras. Ms. Traphagen seconded and the motion was unanimously approved after brief clarifying questions.

## **B. Establish Revolving Gift Account for South East Campus (SEC)**

**DOCUMENT: *Memo to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Mary Wallace, Treasurer, regarding the Revolving Gift Account for South East Campus***

Mr. Mangano explained that SEC needs to have a separate gift account now that there is a principal at the campus. Mr. Baptiste moved to establish a revolving gift fund for the South East Campus effective fiscal year 2015. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

## **C. SSO/Special Education Update**

**DOCUMENT: *Student Services Department, The Year in Review and a Look Ahead 2013-2014***

Dr. Brady utilized a Powerpoint presentation to provide an update and overview of the work of the Student Services/Special Education department over the course of the school year. She reported that in Special Education, the new classroom space for the Pathways to Independence program at ARHS has been the biggest change this year, noting that it has been a tremendous addition. Another new program is the Inclusive Concurrent Education (ICE) partnership with Westfield State University and UMass. Dr. Brady also provided an update on highlights of the Student Services work this year, including Mental Health Teams, professional development, discipline disparity data review, code of conduct revisions and work with the Wellness Committee. Finally, Dr. Brady gave an overview of initiatives and work planned for 2014-2015, including implementation of the Bridge to Resilient Youth in Transition program (BRYT). Throughout and after the presentation, Dr. Brady answered clarifying questions from the committee. Mr. Hood noted that in presentations he would like to have concrete examples of ways in which the information shared is impacting and, hopefully, improving the educational experience for students. Ms. Geryk noted that such examples can be shared in future presentations. Mr. O'Brien thanked Dr. Brady for the presentation. At that time, Mr. Baptiste moved that the PARCC update be tabled until the next joint school committee meeting on June 24th due to the lateness of the hour. Ms. Traphagen seconded and discussion followed. After discussion, the motion failed with one in favor (Mr. Baptiste) and eight opposed.

## **D. PARCC Update**

**DOCUMENT: *Choosing PARCC or MCAS for Spring 2015***

Mr. Morris reported that the Massachusetts Department of Education has given districts a choice of the assessment method to be used in spring 2015—either PARCC or MCAS. He explained that it has been unclear about whether the decision lies with Superintendents or School Committees; however, last week the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees announced that they recommend that School Committees vote on the issue with administration providing information and guidance to inform the vote. Mr. Morris noted that the first vote, required by June 30, is which test to use in the 2014-2015 school year. If PARCC is chosen, a decision will be required about whether to administer the online or paper version. Mr. Morris utilized a Powerpoint presentation to provide a comparison of the two tests, including an overview of reasons to consider PARCC as well as reasons to consider MCAS. Mr. Hood asked what the Superintendent's recommendation is and whether the district is legally obligated to administer one or the other. Ms. Geryk stated that her recommendation is the PARCC test and that the district is legally obligated. Mr. Baptiste asked if this is the right time for the School Committee to weigh in on whether to uncouple PARCC from high-stakes. Mr. Morris noted that this is the critical time to do so. Ms. Appy noted that she understands the recommendation to use PARCC, but expressed concern about the additional training it will require for teachers. Mr. Morris noted that if the choice is to use the paper version of PARCC the training will be minimal. If the online version is chosen, Mr. Champagne has already done a large amount of training. Mr. Morris believes it would not take a full day of training, and he believes an online test will be required in the near future regardless of the choice for next year. Ms. Traphagen asked what our districts' teachers think about PARCC versus MCAS. Mr. Morris noted that it is a small group of teachers who are doing the pilot this year so very few teachers have had a chance to experience it. Mr. Robb asked if choosing one test over the other will move the districts down a different curricular path. Mr. Morris noted that both tests are based on the same standards, so he does not believe there would be a large curricular impact. Mr. O'Brien talked about the way in which the school environment is impacted on testing dates and expressed concern about expanding that from four days of MCAS to eight days of PARCC. After further discussion, it was agreed that the discussion will continue and votes will be taken at the individual committee meetings in June.

**E. Accept Gifts and Project Backpack Donations**

**DOCUMENT: Memo to the Regional School Committee from Debbie Westmoreland regarding Donations to the Backpack Project**

Ms. Appy moved that the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee accept any and all donations of backpacks, supplies, and monetary gifts in support of the Backpack Project for school year 2014-2015. Mr. Sullivan seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**6. School Committee Planning**

**9:55 p.m.**

A. Calendar—Ms. Geryk distributed and reviewed the updated calendar of topics for the meetings remaining in the school year.

**7. Adjournment**

**9:59 p.m.**

Mr. Baptiste moved to adjourn the Regional Committee at 9:59 p.m. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Hood moved to adjourn the Amherst School Committee at 9:59 p.m. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Robb moved to adjourn the Pelham School Committee at 9:59 p.m. Ms. Marriott seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland