

Regular Meeting of the Pelham School Committee
Thursday, May 1, 2014
Pelham History Room, Pelham Library

In Attendance:

Debbie Gould, Chair
Emily Marriott
Dan Robb
Trevor Baptiste
Darius Modestow

Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Lisa Desjarlais, Principal
Public
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

1. Welcome and Call to Order 6:32 p.m.

Ms. Gould called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. Mr. Baptiste moved to approve the minutes of March 6, 2014. Ms. Marriott seconded and the motion was approved with one abstention (Modestow)

2. Announcements and Public Comments 6:33 p.m.

Mr. Vanderbeck thanked Ms. Gould for her service on the school committee since this is her last meeting.

3. Superintendent's Update 6:34 p.m.

Ms. Geryk invited the School Committee members to three events: African American Achievement Night tomorrow night at ARMS; Latino Achievement Night on May 16 at ARMS; and the Cambodian New Year celebration at Crocker Farm tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. Ms. Desjarlais reported that the first literacy night was very successful with close to 40 parents attending, and it will become a new tradition at Pelham School. There was also a Pelham Open House that gave parents an opportunity to come into the school with their children.

Upcoming events include:

- The Spring Fair will be held this weekend;
- The culminating event for the artist-in-residence is scheduled for Tuesday, May 6 with a variety of performances by each of the grade levels that have worked with Caravan Puppets;
- The grade six shadow day is tomorrow at ARMS;
- The Nature's Classroom overnight trip has been replaced with two back-to-back full day trips for this year;
- Sixth grade graduation is scheduled for June 19; and
- The preschool will have a moving on ceremony on the evening of June 18.

Ms. Desjarlais reported that she will be replacing three staff positions for next year—the PE teacher, technology teacher and music/movement integration teacher. She noted that there are now 16 daily full-time students signed up for preschool next year, with a waiting list of about 15 even without advertising. In addition, the afterschool program is funding a chain-link fence for the playground and is supporting the school in helping to clean out the courtyard. Ms. Desjarlais reported that there is an organic movement in the school with parents discussing working with Whitsons to start gardens in the school. Ms. Marriott is part of the group and said she is excited to see it going forward with support from Whitsons, noting that there will be curricular connections. Ms. Desjarlais noted that Whitsons is very willing to support the school gardens. Ms. Gould reported that the Pelham Fun Night put on by the Pelham fathers was very successful and a lot of fun. Ms. Desjarlais agreed, saying that it replaced the Valentine's Dance this year and that it will become a tradition.

4. New and Continuing Business 6:47 p.m.

A. School Choice Update

DOCUMENT: School Choice Update dated May 1, 2014

Ms. Desjarlais distributed and reviewed an update on school choice enrollments. She noted that fifth and sixth grade have each lost one student, but she met with a parent today who is interested in her child entering grade five next year. Ms. Desjarlais noted that she may open slots in some grade levels if enrollments warrant for next year. She also reported that there are currently 16 Pelham town students expected for kindergarten in 2014-2015 and eight for 2015-2016. There are two school choice families who will have kindergarten students with siblings

already at Pelham through choice. Ms. Desjarlais and Ms. Jacque have agreed that they will be invited in through choice for the convenience of the families.

B. Preschool Guidelines

Ms. Desjarlais distributed proposed preschool guidelines at the March 6 meeting so the School Committee could review them. She noted that she and the preschool teacher have agreed to increase the enrollment from 15 (as noted in the guidelines) to 16 next year to ensure the preschool is sustainable without a fee increase. Ms. Desjarlais then answered clarifying questions from the committee. There was discussion regarding the lengthy time it takes preschool tuition checks to clear. Ms. Desjarlais and Ms. Geryk will check into the possibility of streamlining the process for depositing checks, which currently entails going through the district treasurer as well as the Pelham Town treasurer.

C. Collaborative Discussion

Ms. Geryk reported that she and Mr. Baptiste, Pelham Collaborative representative, are meeting with the new Collaborative Director, Bill Diehl, on May 9th. Mr. Baptiste asked for input from the committee on any needs or support they would like for The Collaborative to address for Pelham. He noted that he believes training in cultural climate is a service The Collaborative could provide for member districts. Ms. Desjarlais noted that she has received multiple communications from The Collaborative in the past week seeking feedback. Ms. Geryk noted that the district uses specialty services from The Collaborative for very low incidence needs, such as specialized vision services. She briefly outlined the criticisms that have been leveled against The Collaborative in recent years, noting that she believes Mr. Deihl will be much more responsive to input from member districts. Discussion centered on lowering the overhead cost taken out of grants, being more accessible and responsive to acute needs, and providing districts with more services at no cost above the district dues.

5. School Committee Planning

7:40 p.m.

A. Calendar Review—Third quarter budget update; The Collaborative Articles of Agreement; Reorganize

Ms. Gould noted that this is her last meeting. She thanked the members for their work and said she has enjoyed working with them, noting that Mr. Modestow has expressed interest in serving as Chair if the committee wants him to. Ms. Gould then expressed concern that, on the Regional Committee, she has noticed a certain level of disrespect to the women on the committee. In particular, she noted that the female members of the committee are addressed by their first names and the men are addressed as Mr. or Dr. She encouraged Ms. Marriott to consider serving as the Pelham representative to the Regional Committee since it is important to have female representation to the board. Mr. Baptiste and Mr. Dann expressed appreciation to Ms. Gould for bringing the issue to the table and agreed that such issues have to be addressed. It was agreed that the issue should be brought to the school committee retreat and a consistent way of addressing people at meetings should be agreed upon and adhered to. Ms. Geryk, Ms. Desjarlais and the School Committee members thanked Ms. Gould for her excellent service and her excellence in the role of school committee member and Chair. Mr. Modestow presented Ms. Gould with a bottle of champagne as a gesture of thanks.

6. Adjournment

7:59 p.m.

Mr. Modestow moved to adjourn at 7:59 p.m. and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland