

Regular Meeting of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee
Tuesday, May 13, 2014
Library, Amherst Regional High School

IN ATTENDANCE

Lawrence O'Brien, Vice-Chair

Katherine Appy

Kathleen Traphagen

Amilcar Shabazz

Rick Hood

Sarah Dolven

ABSENT:

Trevor Baptiste

Stephen Sullivan

No Second Pelham Representative Appointed

Maria Geryk, Superintendent

Faye Brady, Director of Student Services

Mike Morris, Director of Evaluation and Assessment

Sean Mangano, Assistant Director of Finance

Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal

Press

Public

Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

1. Welcome and Agenda Review

7:05 PM

Ms. Geryk called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. She welcomed Sarah Dolven, the new Regional representative from Leverett. Ms. Geryk then reported that district policy is to reorganize the Regional School Committee within 10 days after the four towns have all had town elections. However, she noted that Pelham has not yet had an opportunity to appoint their second representative to the Regional School Committee. The Committee has the option of postponing reorganization until after the Pelham School Committee has reorganized in June. Mr. Shabazz made a motion to postpone reorganizing until all four towns have appointed their representatives to the Regional School Committee. Ms. Traphagen seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. O'Brien reviewed the agenda and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Public Comments

7:07 p.m.

Mr. Nunez-Ortiz, Crocker Farm parent, spoke about his experience with the APD during the Crocker Farm lockdown. He noted that he is sharing it again since there were audio difficulties with the meeting at which he last spoke and it has never aired on ACTV. Caridad Martinez, read a statement on behalf of OASIS and Occupy Amherst, regarding standardized, high-stakes testing and their stance against it. Malalani Sherlock, parent, spoke about the Equity Task Force noting that she believes the task force can help hold the board accountable for using and implementing what has already been created. Jean Sherlock, community member, distributed an article about the election of Barbara Madeloni as the new president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association. She noted that Ms. Madeloni is opposed to high stakes testing and reviewed the steps the MTA will be taking with regard to the issue. Ms. Sherlock noted that she hopes the Amherst School Committee will use their privilege to advocate against high-stakes testing.

3. Superintendent's Update

7:27 p.m.

Ms. Geryk noted that the school budgets have now been approved at all four Town Meetings. She briefly noted that the 8th Annual Latino Achievement Night is scheduled for this Friday, May 16 at 6:30 p.m. and that the Amherst Human Rights Commission is seeking student nominees in grades K-12 for the 10th annual Human Rights Youth Heroism Awards. Ms. Appy spoke about African-American Achievement Night, noting that it was a wonderful, celebratory night. Mr. O'Brien agreed, noting that it was a particularly nice event at this time of the year, reinvigorating everyone who attended. Ms. Geryk reminded the committee that graduation is June 6th and that members are invited to attend and sit on stage.

4. Subcommittee Updates

7:29 PM

A. AEF Representative—Mr. Hood reported that the Spring Sprint was held on May 3 and was very successful.

B. Budget Subcommittee—There was no update.

C. The Collaborative—Ms. Geryk reported that she and Mr. Baptiste met with Bill Diehl, the new Executive Director of The Collaborative, on May 9th. Discussion centered around ways in which The Collaborative can better serve member districts.

D. RAWG—Ms. Appy reported that the group met on May 8, and the agenda included looking at different potential hybrid models. She noted that the group is meeting again on May 22 and plans to report to the Regional School Committee in June. Mr. Hood noted that the possibility of presenting a key issues memo to the School Committee was discussed, and he encouraged the group to do so. Ms. Geryk said that RAWG hopes to present that on May 22nd.

E. Policy Subcommittee—Mr. O'Brien reported that the Policy Subcommittee is scheduled to meet again on Monday, May 19 at 5:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda that will be considered. Ms. Traphagen noted that a request was made that the dress code policy be reviewed. Mr. O'Brien stated that it will be added to the agenda.

F. Data Trends Subcommittee—Mr. Hood reported that the Data Trends Subcommittee met for the first time before tonight's meeting and is scheduled to meet again at 5:30 p.m. on May 27 and June 10. He invited students, staff and community members to share ideas for areas to be reviewed at the email address arpstrends@gmail.com.

5. New and Continuing Business

7:40 p.m.

A. School Equity Task Force (SETF)—Membership and Structure

Mr. Shabazz reviewed the steps that have been taken so far in setting up the SETF, noting that the APEA has proposed two ARHS faculty to serve. He noted that he and Superintendent Geryk feel it would be important to include a faculty member from the middle school. Mr. Shabazz said he would like to hold a planning meeting on May 19th to which everyone who has been nominated or expressed interest would be invited. He said he believes it would be important to have working groups in the areas of 1) Discipline and Development, 2) Culture and Community, and 3) Excellence and Equity. He noted that it is important for the district's historical work in equity and multicultural education to inform the present work and asked for input from the Committee. Mr. Hood noted that the outcome to be achieved seems to be missing from this work at times, noting the importance of working with a measurable outcome in mind. Ms. Appy agreed, noting that it sometimes feels there are people in many areas doing good work which is not being coordinated. She said she would like to see the SETF integrate the work being done throughout the community and within the school system. Ms. Appy asked the time and location of the meeting on the 19th, noting that there is town meeting in Amherst that night. After discussion, it was agreed that the meeting will take place at 5:30 on Tuesday, May 20 in the PD Center at ARMS, if the space is available. Ms. Traphagen asked about the status of the Student Advisory to the School Committee. Ms. Geryk outlined the requirements of MA General Law to have student elections for a five-member Student Advisory to the School Committee by the end of June. She noted that it would be beneficial to have one or more of those students serve on the SETF. Ms. Traphagen noted that it will be important to spend some time at the beginning of the SETF work to set realistic expectations for what can be implemented and to help everyone understand what authority the School Committee does and does not have in this work.

B. FY14 Third Quarter Budget Update

Mr. Mangano distributed and reviewed the FY14 Third Quarter Budget Update, noting that the district is on track to finish the year on budget. Ms. Appy asked when the district was first notified about the Smith-Vocational tuition increase. Mr. Mangano said the first notice was received in March, which was after the budget had been built with the assumption of a lower increase. Mr. Shabazz asked for information about whether the district has an OPEB account set up. Mr. O'Brien noted that the Regional School Committee has to establish an Investment Policy before an OPEB account can be established, and the Policy Subcommittee is currently working on that policy. Ms. Dolven asked for information about the increased cost for the high school locker room, noting that it was a question that came up at the Leverett Select Board meeting. Mr. Mangano reviewed the reasons for the increases, noting that he will ask Ron Bohonowicz, Facilities Director, to provide more details. Mr. O'Brien asked how many students are represented by the higher than anticipated choice and charter costs. Mr. Mangano did not have the exact figures, but noted that charter enrollments went up because Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School added a new grade level this year. Choice costs increased due to increased increments for special education students who choice out of the district.

C. Smith-Vocational Tuition Increase

Superintendent Geryk explained that Smith Vocational increased their tuition by more than 12% for the upcoming 2014-2015 school year. She noted that such a substantial increase can be difficult for districts, and it would be much preferable to have increases smoothed out over several years. Ms. Geryk said that she will be sharing her concern with Smith-Vocational and would like to hear from the School Committee about whether they would like to make a formal statement regarding the issue. Discussion followed with Ms. Geryk and Mr. Mangano answering clarifying questions. It was agreed that additional information will be provided to the Committee to inform development of a statement on the issue.

D. Clerical/Media Awards

Mr. Shabazz moved that, in accordance with the Unit B employee contract, the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee approves clerical/media merit awards in the amount of \$500 each for Mildred Martinez, Andrea Dustin, Angela Mills, Joyce Gooden and Georgia Malcolm. Ms. Appy seconded. Ms. Appy noted that she was on the selection committee with Debbie Westmoreland and Terry Ominsky and that a lot of staff members were nominated with glowing recommendations. The motion was then unanimously approved.

6. School Committee Planning

8:30 p.m.

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

B. Future Agenda Items—Mr. Shabazz noted that he would like to speak to Mr. Nunez-Ortiz and draft a letter for the School Committee to consider sending to Amherst Police Chief Livingstone. He said he believes it is important to recognize the good work of the APD, but to also provide feedback when this type of issue arises. The committee agreed that it is a good idea and Mr. Shabazz will speak with Mr. Nunez-Ortiz after tonight's meeting.

7. Adjournment

8:40 p.m.

Ms. Appy moved to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. Mr. Shabazz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland

Approved May 27, 2014