

**Amherst School Committee**  
**April 10, 2012**  
**Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**In Attendance:**

Katherine Appy, Chair  
Lawrence O'Brien  
Rick Hood  
Rob Spence  
Amilcar Shabazz

Maria Geryk, Superintendent  
Jerry Champagne, Information Systems Director  
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder  
Public  
Press

**1. Welcome**

**7:00 p.m.**

**A. Call to Order and Reorganize**—Ms. Geryk called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She welcomed the two newly elected members, Amilcar Shabazz and Lawrence O'Brien and thanked them for the service they are giving to our students. Ms. Geryk also recognized Irv Rhodes for his service on the School Committee and his dedication to the children of Amherst. Ms. Geryk asked for nominations for Amherst School Committee Chair. Mr. Hood nominated Ms. Appy, Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Geryk then turned the meeting over to Chair Appy. Ms. Appy called for nominations for Vice-Chair. Mr. Hood nominated Rob Spence to serve as Vice-Chair. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Appy asked for nominations for Secretary. Mr. O'Brien nominated Mr. Hood to serve as Secretary. Mr. Spence seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**B. Approve Minutes**—Mr. Spence made a motion to approve the minutes of March 20, 2012 as presented. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved with the exception of Mr. Shabazz who had momentarily stepped away from the table.

**2. Public Comments**

**7:07 p.m.**

Abby Jensen, Amherst resident and Pelham Choice parent, made a statement noting that she is thrilled with the new Director of Teaching and Learning and is pleased to know that some of the questions about the math program are being revisited under her direction. She then made a statement about the importance of small class size in the early elementary grades, citing the Tennessee STAR program study. Ms. Jensen stated that this research study showed definitively that small class size in grades K-2 has a large impact on student achievement.

**3. Superintendent's Update**

**7:11 p.m.**

***DOCUMENTS: Superintendent's Update to Amherst School Committee dated April 10, 2012; Memo and Report from Maria Geryk, Superintendent and John Musante, Town Manager, to the Budget Coordinating Group re: School/Community Partnership for Out-of-School Time dated April 5, 2012***

Ms. Geryk briefly reviewed new elementary-specific updates since the last Regional meeting, including the Literacy Night held at Fort River on April 4<sup>th</sup>, the School Choice information open house happening tonight, and the upcoming fundraiser for "Sabir's Health Recovery Fund" being sponsored by the Crocker Farm PGO and The Pub on April 24<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-9:00 p.m. on behalf of preschool student Sabir Anderson. Ms. Geryk then distributed and reviewed the recommendations for the district's after-school program she and Amherst Town Manager John Musante are jointly making based on the National Out of School Time Institute's (NOSTI) evaluation report. The recommendations have been presented to the Budget Coordinating Group (BCG) and will be presented to the Amherst Finance Committee on Thursday evening, April 12. Ms. Geryk noted that she and Mr. Musante will also be meeting with the current after-school providers to discuss implementation of the recommendations. Mr. Hood noted thanked John Musante and the Town for working so closely with the schools and for dedicating \$40,000 in funds to make this after-school program possible. Mr. Shabazz noted that he had an opportunity to participate in one of the parent groups that gave feedback to the NOSTI representatives. He asked if the School Committee will receive the full report. Ms. Geryk noted that she can forward the full report to the School Committee now that it has been shared with the providers. Mr. Shabazz noted that some parents expressed concern about their current program losing all autonomy if changes are made to the current model and asked how those concerns will be addressed. Ms. Geryk noted that the Advisory Council, which will include parents and community members, will have input in the process.

#### **4. New and Continuing Business**

**7:18 p.m.**

##### **A. Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy Reconsideration**

***DOCUMENTS: Memo to Amherst School Committee from Maria Geryk, Superintendent re: Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy Reconsideration; Town of Amherst Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy***

At Ms. Geryk's request, Ms. Westmoreland explained that the School Committee is being asked to revote on the Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy that they approved in August 2011 because the state required minor wording changes to the original submission. She noted that this is part of the Town of Amherst's Green Communities initiative. Mr. Hood moved to approve the changes to the Town of Amherst Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy as presented on April 10, 2012. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

##### **B. Class Size Discussion**

***DOCUMENTS: Memo and Supporting Data to Amherst School Committee from Maria Geryk, Superintendent re: Class Size Discussion; Class Size Information Summary to the Amherst School Committee dated April 10, 2012; Research Reports—Optimal Context Size in Elementary Schools: Disentangling the Effects of Class Size and School Size; Crowding Peter to Educate Paul: Lessons from a Class Size Reduction Externality; Class Size Reduction or Rapid Formative Assessment? A Comparison of Cost-Effectiveness; Evidence from Project STAR about Class Size and Student Achievement***

Ms. Appy reported that she attended a meeting of the Policy Subcommittee yesterday (April 9, 2012), and they are beginning to draft a class size policy for consideration by the full committee. She noted that she discussed with the subcommittee the necessity of developing a policy that allows the administration flexibility necessary to plan based on the realities of budget constraints. Ms. Geryk then reviewed the data regarding class size and her recommendations for the district. Mr. Lawrence asked where the research stands with regard to PBIS and intervention versus class size. Ms. Geryk noted that use of strong evidence-based intervention is more important than a class-size change of one or two students. She said she will talk with Dr. Cohen to gather more research on that issue. Mr. Spence stated that he is fine with developing a policy that is general; however, he noted that he would like to see an explicit class size range that everyone understands and knows when and how it was developed. Ms. Geryk noted that she is happy to develop ranges as guidelines; however, she noted that class composition also plays into appropriate class size. Mr. Spence stated that he would like to differentiate between the class size at which an additional class would be added for in-district students versus the range at which we are comfortable adding choice students. Ms. Geryk will send the School Committee and the Policy Subcommittee her suggested class size ranges this week. Mr. Spence noted that his preference would be to have a policy that does not include specific numbers.

#### **6. Subcommittees**

**7:48 p.m.**

##### **A. Appoint New Members**

Subcommittee members were appointed as follows:

- Joint Capital Planning Committee—Ms. Appy and Mr. Spence
- Policy Subcommittee—Mr. O'Brien
- Innovation School Representative—Mr. Shabazz
- Budget Coordinating Group—Mr. Hood

Ms. Appy noted that the Regionalization School District Study Committee public forum is tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. in the ARHS library.

#### **7. School Committee Planning**

**7:55 p.m.**

**A. & B. Calendar & Items for Future Agendas**—School Improvement Plans; Follow-Up Report from Director of Teaching and Learning; Mr. Shabazz requested a Discipline Data update. Ms. Geryk suggested having a K-12 report at a Regional meeting after one-year of collecting PBIS data.

#### **8. Adjournment**

**8:00 p.m.**

Mr. Spence moved to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland

Approved May15, 2012