

Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee Four Towns Meeting
Saturday, January 7, 2017
Library, Amherst Regional Middle School

In Attendance:

Katherine Appy

Emily Marriott

Anastasia Ordonez

Eric Nakajima

Phoebe Hazzard

Audra Goscenski

Vira Douangmany Cage

Mike Morris, Interim Superintendent

Sean Mangano, Finance Director

Cara Castenson, Pelham School Committee Chair

Absent:

Stephen Sullivan

Trevor Baptiste

Dr. Morris welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Regional School Committee was called to order at 10:00 a.m. Representative Solomon Goldstein-Rose reported that the state government is doing well; however, state revenue is not keeping up. He noted that the December revenue numbers are better. Mr. Mangano then reviewed a Powerpoint presentation regarding the Fiscal Year 2018 budget, highlighting the following points:

- Budget projections are stable.
- All guidance projections from the member towns are being met with what is being proposed for FY18.
- Special Education out-of-district costs are going down.
- Charter numbers received in December are below the state's projections.
- Risk and benefits costs are rising.
- The control account currently has funds because we are involved in staff negotiations.
- The Region is beginning to fund OPEB, with this being the first year there was a contribution.
- E & D levels are at a very healthy 5% for next year.
- The proposed budget shows a 1.92% assessment increase overall.

There was some discussion about having grades 7-12 in one building, and updates were provided by the Capital Working Group and the Assessment Working Group. Shutesbury representatives indicated they will not agree to the 15% taxable assessment method. Both Shutesbury and Leverett indicated support for the Statutory method. The towns then provided the following guidance and comments:

Amherst

- The statutory method doesn't work for Amherst, which has a very different situation given the University and public safety costs.
- There is a crisis coming if we stay with the statutory method.
- They agree we need a longer term solution, but one year use of the 15% solution makes sense.

Pelham

- With the tax rates of towns, the reality is of a tax cap of \$25/\$1000 of valuation.
- Pelham does not like to switch the financial burdens back and forth between the towns.
- Pelham could benefit from the statutory method, but it is not the way to affect change.

- They support use of the 15% method even though it is the worst method for Pelham.
- The statutory method is not a fair assessment of ability to pay.

Leverett

- They want the Region to prepare a budget with the statutory method in mind.
- Leverett feels that Shutesbury has more ability to pay for education and pays less.
- They would prefer the regional agreement method and consider it the only acceptable formula.

Shutesbury

- Similar to discussions in past years, they are not happy with any proposed budget.
- We need to get the regional assessment working group to come up with a plan.
- Shutesbury wants the ability to pay with the stability of the alternative method.
- The 15% method is acceptable to the Town.