

Amherst-Pelham Regional and Union 26 School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 21, 2017
Library, Amherst Regional High School

IN ATTENDANCE

Eric Nakajima, Region
Vira Douangmany-Cage, Region
Anastasia Ordonez, Region & Union 26
Emily Marriott, Region
Cara Castenson, Union 26
Katherine Appy, Region & Union 26
Phoebe Hazzard, Region & Union 26
Ron Mannino, Union 26
Trevor Baptiste, Region & Union 26
Stephen Sullivan, Region
Audra Goscenski, Region

Michael Morris, Superintendent
Sean Mangano, Finance Director
Kathryn Mazur, Human Resources Director
Patty Bode, ARMS Principal
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal
Derek Shea, CF Principal
Jean Fay, APEA President
Faye Brady, Student Services Administrator
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder
Public and Press

1. Welcome and Call to Order **6:33 p.m.**

Mr. Nakajima called the Regional School Committee to order and Ms. Ordonez called the Union 26 School Committee to order at 6:33 p.m.

2. Approve Minutes—March 7, 2017; March 8, 2017 **6:33 p.m.**

Ms. Marriott moved to approve the minutes of March 15, 2017 as amended. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was approved with Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Goscenski abstaining. Ms. Castenson moved to approve the minutes as amended on behalf of Union 26. Mr. Mannino seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

3. Announcements and Public Comment **6:37 p.m.**

Jennifer Page, Crocker Farm parent, spoke about her concerns regarding Policy JQA: Food Services Collection. She noted concerns that the policy will shame students because of the requirement to take the alternative meal. Rick Hood, community member and former School Committee member, spoke about the service Katherine Appy has given to the School Committee over the past six years, noting the incredible amount of time and effort she put into the job. Mr. Mannino asked what the follow-up is when a public comment is a complaint or concern. Mr. Nakajima explained that issues of management are followed up by the superintendent and comments can be used to inform the School Committee's discussion on topics before the committee. Ms. Ordonez spoke about the importance of advocacy on the part of the School Committees regarding budget cuts and concerns. She suggested pulling together a small delegation from Amherst and the Region to go to Boston and speak with our representatives about the significant impacts cuts proposed in President Trump's budget will have on the schools. Ms. Ordonez noted that she has spoken to Representative Goldstein-Rose, and he will be providing information about best timing for such a visit. Mr. Nakajima noted that April 25 is Day on the Hill in Boston, noting that it would be beneficial to participate in that day as well as to have a delegation such as Ms. Ordonez suggested. Ms. Appy thanked Mr. Hood for his comments and read brief remarks about her time on the committee, expressing thanks and her hope that the School Committees will come together and work hard to support the work of the excellent teachers and administrators in our schools.

Mr. Nakajima noted that he received a request to table the Food Services Collection policy from a member of the committee. Ms. Douangmany-Cage moved to table the policy. Mr. Baptiste seconded and discussion followed. Ms. Douangmany Cage spoke to her reason for requesting that the item be tabled, noting that it would be beneficial to have the new Food Services Director in place so he or she can weigh in on the policy before it is reconsidered. At Ms. Hazzard's request, Mr. Mangano noted that the policy must be in place by July 1. Ms. Appy noted that she is fine with tabling the policy since July 1 is the deadline for implementing it; however, she wants to state for the record that not all overdue balances are due to students' socio-economic status. Ms. Ordonez asked that the motion be amended to table the policy for a couple of meetings rather than indefinitely, and the committee agreed by consensus. Ms. Hazzard stated that the Policy Subcommittee has requested input on the policy from the School Equity Task Force several times, noting that it would be helpful if the subcommittee will provide such input in writing. At that time, the motion to table the Food Services Collection policy for two meetings was unanimously approved.

4. Collaborative for Educational Services with Dr. William Diehl **6:59 p.m.**

Dr. William Diehl, Executive Director of The Collaborative for Educational Services, noted that he is pleased to speak to the committee tonight about the mission of the Collaborative; the work of the Collaborative with the Amherst, Pelham and Regional School Districts; upcoming events; and to gather input and feedback. He provided an overview of services

provided by The Collaborative statewide and then specifically for our districts. Services the Collaborative provides for the districts include:

- Access to Mt. Tom Academy for students who have trouble adjusting to school for a variety of reasons;
- Professional development opportunities for district staff;
- Access to a licensure program;
- Professional learning communities;
- Participation in the SPIFFY coalition;
- Grant consortium services when the district would not be eligible on its own;
- Participation in early childhood program;
- Afterschool programs--VELA at ARMS; and
- Programs that connect ARHS special needs students with careers and the Perkins program.

Dr. Diehl noted that The Collaborative is talking with the districts about working with them on special education transportation and through their food purchasing program. He spoke about the advocacy work The Collaborative does on behalf of local districts, including the Rural Schools Coalition. Dr. Morris thanked Dr. Diehl for the advocacy work of The Collaborative, noting that the Pelham School Committee is now active in the Rural Schools Coalition. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that The Collaborative is always active at the MASS/MASC Joint Conference each year. Mr. Baptiste noted that his tenure on the committee is coming to an end and said he is happy to see that The Collaborative is being used by the Districts since he has been a champion of The Collaborative for many years. Mr. Nakajima expressed appreciation to Dr. Diehl for the presentation tonight.

5. Interim Superintendent's Update

7:21 p.m.

Dr. Morris reported that ARHS librarian Leslie Lomasson has been named the 2017 Web Seal of Excellence winner by the Massachusetts School Library Association in recognition of the excellence of the school library's website. Mr. Nakajima requested a demonstration of the website at the next meeting. Dr. Morris noted that CivicsFest, which has been organized by Representative Solomon Goldstein-Rose, is coming up this Friday night. There is a need for judges and School Committee members are encouraged to contact Dr. Morris if they want to serve in that capacity.

5. New and Continuing Business

7:24 p.m.

A. Superintendent Search Process Discussion

DOCUMENT: Memorandum to Regional and Union 26 School Committees from Kathryn Mazur regarding Superintendent Search Options dated March 20, 2017

Mr. Nakajima provided an overview of the options the committee has for moving forward with the Superintendent search which include:

- rebooting the search with Ray and Associates, moving forward immediately;
- soliciting search firms to restart the search as soon as quotes are received;
- delaying the search until the fall using Ray and Associates; and
- delaying the search process until the fall and seeking quotes from multiple firms.

Ms. Ordonez briefly reviewed the steps that the Chairs and Ms. Mazur have taken since the last meeting. She reported on the phone meeting she, Mr. Nakajima and Ms. Mazur had with representatives of Ray and Associates noting that Ray and Associates began the call by stating their strong desire to continue working with the district. Ms. Ordonez noted that Ray and Associates seemed amenable to working with the district at no additional cost even if the search is delayed until the fall. Ms. Mazur noted that she received a phone call from Dr. Rush last night in which he was very conciliatory and apologetic for not having met the expectations of the district. Ms. Gosenski asked if Ray and Associates was able to explain why the issue happened in the first place when the law was brought to their attention and what actions they will take to ensure compliance going forward. Mr. Nakajima noted that they did not go through the events that led to the issue and did not go into details about what sequence of action they would take to ensure they will comply with Massachusetts laws going forward. Ms. Ordonez noted that they said they would remove the question from the application and ask those who have already filled out applications to resubmit. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that she would like for us to look at our internal operations to prevent something like this from happening again, for instance, by copying the chairs on email communications with the contractor. Mr. Baptiste noted that Ray and Associates ignored input from the District, but they have acknowledged their mistake and offered remediation going forward. He expressed his belief that the committee should keep their eye on the goal to hire a Superintendent for the fall. At Mr. Nakajima's request, Ms. Mazur outlined the information she received from MASS and MASC regarding the best time to conduct Superintendent searches, which is in the fall of any given year. Ms. Ordonez asked Dr. Morris to provide information about what restarting the search would mean to Central Office. Dr. Morris noted that he would pull the posting for the Assistant Superintendent if the search is not postponed so the permanent superintendent can participate in the hiring. He noted that some community-engagement strategic planning will need to be done and that will be a priority for next year. Dr. Morris noted that he has concerns about reorganizing Central Office over the summer. Ms. Marriott asked if it would be advantageous to have the strategic planning done before the new Superintendent comes on board. Dr. Morris noted that he believes that would be very helpful to an incoming Superintendent. Ms. Appy noted that she

would have a lot of concerns about doing an immediate search. She stated that we have made a commitment to the community to find the most qualified, best fit Superintendent for our districts so she does not know why we would go forward with the search immediately when there are concerns about it failing. Ms. Marriott asked if Dr. Morris would go forward with hiring the Assistant Superintendent position if the superintendent search is put off until the fall. He noted that he would move forward with more input from the School Committee in the search since it would be difficult to go a full year with the position vacant. Ms. Goscenski noted that there are really two questions: How are we going to achieve the best pool of candidates? and What will we do about the contract with Ray and Associates? She noted that she thinks waiting until the fall to conduct the search is best, while giving ourselves time to talk further with Ray and Associates to be sure they will be able to meet our needs going forward before deciding whether to continue working with them for the search. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that she is interested in either rebooting the search immediately with Ray and Associates or in continuing with Ray and Associates in the fall. She stated that if the committee moves forward with option one and it is not successful, we could move to option four. Mr. Baptiste agreed, noting that promises have been made to our faculty and staff. He noted that if we move forward and it turns out that the pool is not good enough, we could move to a search in the fall. Mr. Nakajima stated that he believes it is important to have an honest assessment of how to best get a pool of outstanding candidates who will also find us to be right for them. He said that one of the state association leaders made the remark to Ms. Mazur that the leadership of the district is viewed as being so chaotic that some superintendents do not want to come here, and it would be beneficial to wait a few more months to show more stability in order to attract candidates. Ms. Appy said she appreciates what Ms. Goscinski suggested, and she supports having more time to talk to Ray and Associates about what can be done to make the committee comfortable moving forward with them. She noted that she believes we run the risk of not honoring the goal of bringing the most qualified candidates forward if we push through with the search now. Ms. Ordonez thanked Ms. Mazur for the work she has done to date on the search process. She noted that she asked Dr. Rush some difficult questions about the search process prior to this mistake and did not feel she got completely satisfactory answers. Community members have expressed concern to her about how quickly the search was already moving, particularly in the impact it had on allowing community members to participate in the screening committee process. Ms. Ordonez noted that she thinks it would be beneficial to engage with the search consultant in the summer to develop a better process and allow for due diligence with the staff and the community. Ms. Hazzard noted that the endgame is to have a leader who will be excellent for this community, and she wants to set him or her up for success. She noted that she also agrees with Ms. Goscenski's suggestion for moving forward. Ms. Castenson said that every day that goes by stacks the cards increasingly against getting the leader the district wants. She said she believes going forward in the fall will allow us to do the search more deliberately and have more success in getting a good pool of candidates. Ms. Castenson noted that she has lost some confidence in Ray and Associates since they disregarded the input of our Human Resources Director. Mr. Mannino stated that he is in favor of option four, which is to wait until the fall to conduct the search. Mr. Sullivan noted that regardless of what is decided, the Central Office needs to be set up for success in the fall. He noted that out-of-the-box thinkers may be what is left in the pool, which would be good; however, he believes that waiting until the fall is best. Ms. Goscenski moved to resume the search process in the fall of 2017 and allow Ray and Associates to provide root cause and corrective action to execute the search. If that proves unsatisfactory, the committee will conduct a search for a new vendor. Ms. Appy seconded and discussion followed. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked to amend the motion to include a statement that we will also examine internal and external systems to improve the search. Ms. Goscenski was amenable to the amendment to the motion. The revised motion is:

To resume the search process in the fall of 2017 and allow Ray and Associates to provide root cause and corrective action to execute the search. If that proves unsatisfactory, the committee will conduct a search for a new vendor. We will also examine internal and external systems to improve the search.

Ms. Douangmany Cage called the question and the motion was unanimously approved. On behalf of Union 26, Mr. Mannino moved to approve the motion as discussed and approved by the Regional School Committee. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Mannino then moved to adjourn Union 26 at 9:10 p.m. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Nakajima called for a 10 minute break.

B. Legal Counsel Solicitation

DOCUMENT: Legal Counsel RFP Powerpoint Presentation

Mr. Mangano utilized a Powerpoint presentation to outline the draft RFP, suggested timeline and suggested search process for selecting legal counsel, answering clarifying questions for the committee throughout the presentation. He noted that he is looking for a green light from the committee on the selection criteria to include in the RFP and for appointment of the proposal review subcommittee. It was agreed that Mr. Mangano will send the document to the committee so they can provide feedback with him via email. Since there is an election next week and there will be at least one new committee member, it was agreed that the subcommittee will be appointed after the election. Mr. Mangano can begin the advertising process.

C. Policies

JQA: Food Services Collection

DOCUMENT: Policy JQA: Food Services Collection

This item was tabled for a future meeting.

New Policy: Protection of Undocumented Students

DOCUMENT: Students--Protection of Undocumented Students; Email to Katherine Appy from Felicia S. Vasudeven of Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane

Ms. Appy explained that the Policy Subcommittee developed a draft policy for the protection of undocumented students and felt it was important to get advice from legal counsel regarding several questions. Ms. Marriott asked if something should be added to the policy indicating that the Superintendent will provide training to faculty and staff. Ms. Goscenski noted that all policies translate to development of guidelines for implementation from the Superintendent. Mr. Baptiste noted that the intention of the policy is to mobilize support for families if ICE reaches out to the school. Ms. Ordonez expressed serious concern about the sentence that has been added by the attorney stating "If there is a warrant...will notify the parents of the warrant, unless ICE has specifically instructed the District not to inform the parents." She suggested leaving out the final portion "unless ICE has specifically instructed the District not to inform the parents." Mr. Nakajima agreed, noting that he cannot fathom passing a policy that would allow a government agency to prevent us from notifying a parent/guardian if they are questioning their child. Dr. Morris noted that any reference to parent should be changed to parent/guardian. Ms. Douangmany Cage said she would like to see language that differentiates the level of response if ICE attempts to enter. Dr. Morris suggested moving the first sentence from paragraph three "Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)..." to the beginning of the policy. Ms. Ordonez suggested adding "hereafter referred to as ICE" in the first reference.

6. School Committee Planning

9:56 p.m.

Dr. Morris noted that the next meeting is scheduled for April 11, which is the second night of Passover. It was agreed that Mr. Nakajima and Dr. Morris will review the calendar to see if other dates need to be changed. Ms. Ordonez thanked Ms. Appy for her service and thanked Mr. Nakajima for his work as Chair, noting the importance of recognizing public service of the committee members and the district staff in making this work happen. Ms. Douangmany Cage also thanked Ms. Appy for her years of service and acknowledged the work Mr. Nakajima and Ms. Ordonez took on in the search process, noting that they conducted it with the level of transparency needed. Mr. Nakajima also thanked Ms. Appy for her dedication and service, noting that it takes great love of your community to do this type of work. Dr. Morris noted that the public does not see how important the role of the Chair is making things runs smoothly in the district. He thanked both Ms. Appy and Mr. Nakajima for their work as Chair.

7. Adjourn

10:07 p.m.

Ms. Appy moved to adjourn at 10:07 p.m. Ms. Douangmany Cage seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland