

Amherst School Committee
November 19, 2013
Library, Amherst Regional High School

In Attendance:

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| Katherine Appy, Chair | Maria Geryk, Superintendent |
| Lawrence O'Brien | Rob Detweiler, Director of Finance and Operations |
| Rick Hood | Mike Morris, Director of Evaluation & Assessment |
| Kathleen Traphagen | Public & Press |
| Amilcar Shabazz (Arrived at 7:05) | Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder |

1. Welcome **7:00 p.m.**

A. Call to Order—Ms. Appy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

B. Approve Minutes—Mr. O'Brien made a motion to approve the minutes of October 15, 2013 as presented. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was approved with Ms. Traphagen abstaining.

2. Public Comments/Announcements **7:02 p.m.**

There were no public comments.

3. Superintendent's Update **7:02 p.m.**

DOCUMENTS: Superintendent's Update to the Amherst School Committee dated November 19, 2013

Ms. Appy asked if there are any questions regarding the updates that were distributed to the School Committee in advance of the meeting. There were no questions, but Mr. O'Brien expressed appreciation for receiving the information prior to the meeting to allow time to consider it. Ms. Traphagen spoke briefly about the warm winter clothing drive and the need to provide appropriate clothing that will enable all students to safely have outdoor time during the school day. Ms. Geryk expressed appreciation to the PGOs for holding this drive to benefit our students. Ms. Appy reminded members of the School Committees that they are required to complete the state's online Ethics Course, print out the certificate of completion and bring to the Town Clerk at Amherst Town Hall.

4. Subcommittee Reports. **7:04 p.m.**

A. BCG—Mr. Hood reported that the BCG met and was informed that state aid is projected to increase by one percent for FY15, which will not cover anticipated increases. He noted that BCG will meet on December 12 and again on January 27 at 8:30 a.m.

B. RSDPB—Ms. Appy reported that the RSDPB will meet at 7:00 p.m. On December 5, noting that the location will be either the Town Room at Amherst Town Hall or the library at the middle school.

Ms. Appy noted that there was a Four Town meeting on Saturday, November 16, and the next Four Town meeting is scheduled for the first Saturday in February.

4. New and Continuing Business **7:07 p.m.**

A. FY14 First Quarter Budget Update

DOCUMENTS: Amherst Schools Operating Budget Fiscal Year 2014 First Quarter Budget Report

Mr. Detweiler briefly reviewed the first quarter report on the FY14 budget, noting that things look very positive at this early point in the year. He then answered a few clarifying questions from the School Committee about the data.

B. Superintendent's Evaluation Plan

DOCUMENTS: Superintendent's Evaluation Plan Document 2013-2014; Notes from Amilcar Shabazz dated November 19, 2013 (distributed at meeting)

Ms. Appy noted that the committee will vote on the Superintendent's Evaluation goals at tonight's meeting and asked for a motion. Mr. Hood moved to approve the Superintendent's Evaluation Plan and Mr. O'Brien seconded. Discussion of the goals followed, with Ms. Geryk and Mr. Morris answering clarifying questions. Mr. Shabazz distributed a document regarding some of his concerns about the document, noting that his concerns about Goal 5 have been addressed. With regard to Goal 4, he explained that his concern is that he does not see an evaluation system for the effectiveness of the new Family Center. He noted that he would also like to know to

what extent Goal Three has touched teachers since it mentions only elementary staff. For Goals One and Two, Mr. Shabazz noted that he would like to see a specific number rather than a general statement about an increase. Ms. Geryk noted that for Goal 4 she can add in the action plan an action step to develop an evaluation plan to assess the efficacy of the center and the difference it is making for students and families. She noted that as Superintendent she is responsible for overseeing Principals so Goal Three is for her to train them in the work and assess how well they implement it at their schools as part of their evaluation goals. Ms. Geryk noted that she is not sure what represents a reasonable number for an increase in Goals One and Two. Mr. Morris explained that the sample size in some of the state defined groups is quite small. He noted that it might be reasonable to set a comparison to the state and a percentage increase of growth over the state average growth, which will help eliminate some of the large jumps year-by-year for very small groups. For the process, Mr. Morris noted that the percentage should be defined by the time of the mid-cycle review is done. Mr. O'Brien noted that, although he understands Dr. Shabazz's concern, he believes there are too many variables that go into assessments to set a very specific number for goals such as these. Ms. Traphagen noted that she is concerned that one test, the MCAS, given over one to two days is much too narrow a metric to use in assessing progress on these goals. Mr. Morris noted that the evaluation document is a narrow slice of the overall evaluation piece and other metrics can definitely be used in evaluating the Superintendent. Mr. Shabazz said that if more than 90% of white students can take the MCAS test and knock it out of the park, he would like to understand why students of color cannot do the same thing in our district. He noted that if the MCAS test has any diagnostic value, it is diagnosing that we have a problem in our district if all students cannot be successful on it. Ms. Geryk noted that she believes there are trends we have to pay attention to in the data, particularly as district data relates to state trends. Ms. Traphagen said that supporting great principals is one of the best indicators of a successful Superintendent in her opinion. She noted that hearing student and teacher voices regarding the health of our schools is equally as important to her as the evaluation document. Mr. Hood noted that he would like to continue moving forward with an agreed-upon set of measurements for the district. After additional brief discussion, the committee voted unanimously to approve the Superintendent's Evaluation Document. Ms. Geryk noted that she will make the edits as discussed, including adding an action step under Goal Four and a finer-grain measure of progress for Goals One and Two, and bring them back to the committee in January.

C. Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy Amendment

DOCUMENTS: Town of Amherst Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy

Ms. Westmoreland explained that the Town of Amherst receives funding through the Green Communities that he would like to understand why designation, noting that those funds exceed \$300,000 to date. In order to continue in the program, the Select Board and the Amherst School Committee must vote to approve the Green Communities revised fuel efficiency guidelines. She then reviewed the two changes to the original guidelines approved in 2011 and answered clarifying questions. Mr. O'Brien moved to adopt the revised fuel efficiency guidelines and Mr. Hood seconded. After brief clarifying questions, the motion was unanimously approved.

E. Approve Gifts

DOCUMENTS: Memo to the Amherst School Committee from Mary Wallace, District Treasurer, dated October 15, 2013

Ms. Traphagen moved to accept \$500 from the Target Take Charge of Education program for Crocker Farm and a total of \$12,794.00 in donations from various donors for the Fort River Fund in Science Education in memory of Bob Weiss. Mr. Shabazz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

5. School Committee Planning

8:16 p.m.

Calendar and Agenda Items—Ms. Geryk reviewed the agenda topics for upcoming meetings, including the Human Resources report, the budget guidelines vote and the Behavioral Data Report and PBIS. Ms. Appy reminded the committee that the November 26 meeting has been moved to December 3.

8. Adjournment

8:40 p.m.

Mr. Hood moved to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland