

Amherst-Pelham Regional and Union 26 School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, October 25, 2016
Library, Amherst Regional High School

IN ATTENDANCE

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

Mike Morris, Acting Superintendent
Sean Mangano, Finance Director
Faye Brady, Student Services Director
Kathryn Mazur, HR Director
Rachel Bowen, Assistant HR Director
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal
Patty Bode, ARMS Principal
Derek Shea, Crocker Farm Principal
Nick Yaffe, Wildwood Principal
Jean Fay, APEA President
Public and Press
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

1. Call to Order and Approve Minutes

6:03 p.m.

Mr. Morris called the Union 26 meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. and asked for nominations for Chair. Ms. Hazzard nominated Ms. Ordonez. Ms. Appy seconded and Ms. Ordonez's appointment was unanimously approved. Ms. Ordonez then asked for nominations for Vice-Chair. Ms. Appy nominated Ms. Castenson. Mr. Baptiste seconded and Ms. Castenson's nomination was unanimously approved. Ms. Appy moved to accept the minutes of the August 17, 2016 Union 26 meeting. Ms. Castenson seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morris then called the Regional School Committee to order at 6:07 p.m. and asked for nominations for Chair. Mr. Baptiste nominated Mr. Nakajima. Mr. Nakajima's appointment was unanimously approved. Mr. Nakajima called for nominations for Vice-Chair. Ms. Appy nominated Ms. Marriott. Ms. Douangmany Cage seconded and the nomination was unanimously approved. Ms. Appy moved to approve the minutes of the September 6, 2016 Regional meeting. After discussion, the minutes were approved with corrections with 8 in favor and Mr. Sullivan abstaining.

2. Announcements and Public Comment

6:15 p.m.

Kathleen Anderson, community member and former school committee member, stated that Amherst has been attractive to people because of its schools' commitment to social justice and multiculturalism. She noted that it is difficult for people to grasp the sub-current of white privilege that impacts our schools. Ms. Anderson noted that, as a mother and grandmother of children of the global majority, she would ask that the School Committee, as a board, rededicate itself to the mission of the Amherst schools.

Mr. Baptiste suggested that the OML complaint should be tabled until the next meeting since the committee just received the attorney's recommendation a few hours before the meeting tonight. Mr. Nakajima asked if there is a time limit associated with the response. Mr. Baptiste noted that the committee has already gone past the required time; therefore, he believes it would behoove the committee to give the appropriate amount of time to consider the response fully. Ms. Appy noted that the committee's attorney has requested an extension from the Attorney General's office, but she does not know what the timeline is. Mr. Morris suggested that this topic should potentially be discussed after Union 26 adjourns since it is a Region only topic. Mr. Sullivan asked why Union 26 is sitting with the Regional Committee since he believes the elementary schools may be looking for different characteristics in a superintendent than the Region is. Ms. Mazur explained that the superintendent is an employee of the Regional School Committee and the Union 26 School Committee so meetings around those topics are traditionally done in joint session. Mr. Baptiste asked if the Interim Superintendent needs to be affirmed in Executive Session. Chair Ordonez noted that her understanding is that this is meant to be an informational session rather than a contractual one, which is what would be done in Executive Session. With regard to tabling the OML complaint, Mr. Nakajimi noted that he will return to that item later.

3. Acting Superintendent's Update

6:28 p.m.

Dr. Morris showed a slideshow of the lawn sign awareness campaign developed by our districts' SEPAC for Disability Awareness month in October, noting that it has received very positive feedback from families and students. He recognized SEPAC for the incredible amount of work they do on behalf of our families. Ms. Appy noted that there is a SEPAC workshop

on Monday, November 14 at ARHS on the topic of supporting teens with executive function challenges. Mr. Baptiste noted that he is also a mobility-impaired person, and he chose to walk with his crutches rather than his prosthetic tonight in honor of Disability Awareness Month and to serve as an example of what can be accomplished. Dr. Morris noted that last week, he and Chair Appy attended the School Diversity in Action conference in Washington, DC, which was co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, The Century Foundation and The National Coalition on School Diversity. Dr. Morris also briefly reported on the status of the water fixture repairs; the Roger Wallace Excellence in Teaching Award; the presentation for parents last month on substance abuse, particularly opiates; the MSAN student conference; and the naming of ARMS Co-Assistant Principal Alicia Lopez as a Ronald McDonald House Charities local hero.

4. New and Continuing Business

6:38 p.m.

A. Interim Superintendent

Mr. Nakajima opened the floor to discussion. Ms. Appy, for the Regional School Committee, moved to appoint Dr. Michael Morris as Interim Superintendent for the remainder of the school year. Ms. Goscenski seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Sullivan asked to hear from the subcommittee that was appointed to identify candidates for the Interim position. Ms. Marriot reported on behalf of the subcommittee. She noted that the subcommittee met once and had a list of names, mostly retired superintendents, all of whom Ms. Mazur contacted. At the end of the process, there were two candidates who applied. Mr. Baptiste noted that, in the final analysis, there were two names; however, with a number of administrators and school committee members happy that Dr. Morris is willing to step up, the subcommittee wanted to check with the full committee to see if the will is to just appoint Dr. Morris. He stated that the subcommittee is willing to submit Dr. Morris as the Interim Superintendent candidate. Ms. Appy spoke to the motion, noting that the committee has heard from a wide variety of people in the community supporting Dr. Morris for this role, both for his leadership and for continuity of the large amount of work to be done this year. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that with the Region and Union 26 committees casting votes, Amherst has eight votes, Pelham has five votes and Leverett and Shutesbury each have just one vote. Ms. Appy clarified that Union 26 is voting for the superintendent of the elementary schools and the Regional committee is voting for the secondary schools. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked to hear from Dr. Morris about his willingness to serve in the Interim role.

Dr. Morris stated that he originally did not apply for the interim superintendent position because he thought it would influence people not to apply for the permanent position. However, feedback he received from other superintendents was that just the opposite is true. Applicants would hesitate to apply if the current Assistant Superintendent was unwilling to step into the role. Dr. Morris noted that School Committee members have been incredibly supportive of him in the acting position, which any superintendent values. He said that a suggestion from a School Committee member is to have Paul Wiley involved on the administrative team since he has the ideal skill set to support the district. Mr. Wiley, retired Crocker Farm Principal and 36-year educator, explained that he would work with Dr. Morris in leadership coaching and development for administrators. He noted that in his retirement he works as a national leadership coach, working with various cohorts across the country, to help school leaders build their skill sets in ways that improve student performance. Mr. Baptiste asked if Mr. Wiley is offering these services for both the elementary and secondary schools, and he affirmed that he is. Dr. Morris noted that 1/3 of the fiscal year is done and the permanent superintendent search is going to be an intensive process. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked what Dr. Morris' participation would look like in terms of the permanent search. Dr. Morris noted that it would be large professional and family decision, and it is something he is beginning to think about. He said he is not yet at a place to answer that. Mr. Nakajima asked for a vote and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Ordonez then asked for a motion for Union 26. Dr. Baptiste moved to nominate Dr. Michael Morris as the superintendent for Pelham and Amherst. Ms. Hazzard seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

B. Permanent Superintendent Search Process

Ms. Mazur noted that the preceding agenda item highlighted the complexity of governance for the schools, which can make it difficult for superintendents outside of Massachusetts to understand who their employer would be. She then answered questions about the permanent superintendent search for the committees. Ms. Gocenski asked what type of searches have been done in the past. Ms. Mazur reported that the districts have done both Regional and National searches, which have resulted in successful hires. She noted that someone needs to have a reason to want to be in Amherst, or Western Massachusetts, to truly be successful in the role. Ms. Ordonez asked about the firms that have been used in the past and what the experience has been with the ones used. She asked what the advantage is to using a firm versus placing ads and doing our own search. Ms. Mazur noted that a firm will have a pool of candidates already available to them, which is beneficial. She stated that HYA, Ray and Associates and NESDEC are all good firms to use since the Massachusetts hiring process for superintendents is very different from other states. Ms. Mazur noted that by Massachusetts law, the committee has only one opportunity to meet with applicants, or to even pre-screen applicants, in Executive Session. Using a

search firm allows the firm to do the prescreening. Mr. Mannino asked when the decision would be made whether to use a regional or national firm. Ms. Mazur noted that it would be good to make that decision tonight since hiring is already going on in the state and our district is a bit behind in the process. Ms. Appy noted that she would want this search to include outreach in the communities to determine what the community wants in a superintendent. Ms. Mazur noted that any consultant firm used will do that. Ms. Castenson asked why the decision was made to use a national firm when the last search was done. Ms. Mazur noted that the committee wanted to have a larger pool than available regionally. Mr. Baptiste asked what work would be entailed if the decision was made not to use a search firm. He asked if it would include the community outreach, etc. Ms. Mazur noted that it would, and it would be done with the assistance of the Central Office staff. Mr. Mannino stated that he has done a number of hires at UMass, and it is imperative to use a national firm due to the tremendous amount of work entailed. Mr. Nakajima asked what decisions need to be made tonight and which can be made later. Mr. Mangano spoke to the timeline and Massachusetts procurement laws. He noted that it would only require getting three quotes if the search cost is under \$35,000. If it is over that amount (which will increase to \$50,000 in about two weeks), it would require either an invitation for bids, which means you receive sealed bids and must accept the lowest price, or an RFP (request for proposals) process through which you can choose based on quality rather than just lowest price. Mr. Mangano answered clarifying questions regarding the procurement policy for the committee members. For the Regional School Committee, Mr. Baptiste made a motion to develop an RFP process for a national firm that meets the criteria for a superintendent that meets the criteria for the mission statement for our district and review how potential applicants will apply their skills in our district, with the mission and values statement appended to the RFP. Ms. Ordonez seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Baptiste made an amendment to the motion that the RFP include that the committee is asking for a diverse applicant pool. Ms. Ordonez seconded. Ms. Gocenski noted that it might make more sense for a subcommittee to meet with the Central Office staff to draft the RFP rather than trying to include everything in the motion. Discussion followed regarding the motion and the process for developing and disseminating the RFP. Ms. Mazur noted that she has drafted an RFP already that she will amend based on comments at the meeting. Ms. Appy suggested that Ms. Mazur send the draft RFP to both the Regional and Union 26 committee members to provide her with any comments or suggestions. Ms. Gocenski noted that feedback would have to be sent only to Ms. Mazur with no deliberation between committee members so a follow-up meeting would be needed. After further discussion, Mr. Baptiste's motion was unanimously approved. For the Union 26 School Committee, Ms. Ordonez made the same motion and Mr. Mannino seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. At Mr. Nakajima's request, Ms. Mazur reported on the potential configuration of the screening committee for applicants. At 7:43 p.m., Ms. Appy moved to adjourn the Union 26 meeting. Ms. Castenson seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

C. Food Service Visioning Group Update

DOCUMENT: Memo to School Committee from Sean Mangano, Finance Director, Regarding Food Service Update dated 10/25/16

Mr. Mangano distributed and briefly reviewed a memo regarding the work of the Food Service Visioning Group that has been considering options for providing food service in the districts. He noted that there are three options to consider including returning to a self-op program for FY18, rebidding the food service program for FY18, or picking up the fifth year option of the current Whitsons contract. Ms. Ordonez asked why the self-op program is projected to cost \$60,000 more than the contracted service. Mr. Mangano noted that it is mostly due to staffing related costs, particularly health insurance and pension costs. What is hard to predict is whether revenues would increase with a different, in-house program. Mr. Nakajima noted that this topic will be brought back for a more in-depth discussion at a future meeting. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked if the visioning committee has a recommendation. Mr. Mangano noted that they are leaning toward a self-op program.

D. Resolution Against Lifting the Cap on Charter Schools

DOCUMENT: Resolution Against Lifting the Cap on Charter Schools

Mr. Morris noted that this resolution has been approved by the Amherst and Pelham committees and by many other School Committees across the state. Ms. Gocenski moved to accept the resolution against lifting the cap on charter schools as included in the agenda packet. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

G. Open Meeting Law Complaint Response (Agenda order changed)

DOCUMENT: Draft Letter from Attorney Tom Colomb regarding Open Meeting Law Complaints—Michael Hootstein v. Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee

Mr. Nakajima returned to the question of whether or not to table this agenda item. Dr. Morris acknowledged Dr. Baptiste's comments that the document from the attorney was received so late prior to meeting, noting that it was shared with the

committee within 10 minutes of receipt from the attorney. Mr. Baptiste moved to table this item until the next meeting. After discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

E. FY16 End-of-Year Budget Update

DOCUMENT: Amherst-Pelham Regional School District FY2016 End-of-Year Report

Mr. Mangano reviewed the highlights of the FY2016 end of year budget report, noting that the operating budget ended the year \$471,996 under budget. There were no questions.

F. FY17 First Quarter Budget Update

DOCUMENT: Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools FY2017 First Quarter Budget Update

Mr. Mangano reviewed the highlights of the FY17 First Quarter Budget Update, noting that the district budget is on track at this early point in the year. Ms. asked what PIP is. Mr. Manago explained that it is a life-skills program for students who are older than 18 and still with the District. Dr. Morris noted that the students have complex disabilities and do typically go to school until age 22. Mr. Baptiste asked how much more settlement costs there are for the Region. Mr. Mangano noted that the costs are approximately \$160,000. With the settlement funds and unanticipated expenses such as the gym floor, Mr. Baptiste asked for an estimate of how much of these costs will be offset by savings from the decision last year to join the Deerfield solar array. Mr. Mangano estimates it will be between \$100,000 to \$150,000. Ms. Appy asked if the Governor has given any indication about the potential of 9C cuts. Mr. Mangano said he has indicated that he will not cut municipal aid accounts, but it is difficult to know exactly what that means. He noted that Regional transportation is an area of concern for cuts. Mr. Nakajima noted that the Governor has indicated that he will hold Chapter 70 harmless. He asked if there has been any official advocacy around the issue of Regional transportation cuts since it is a recurring issue. Mr. Mangano noted that there has been and that the attorneys for the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS) challenges whether it is even legal to make these cuts to the Regional transportation. Mr. Nakajima said consideration should be given to developing an advocacy letter from the Committee around this issue. Mr. Mangano agreed and noted that there can be direct advocacy with our representatives at the Four Towns meeting coming up in December. Dr. Morris noted that there is likely to be advocacy on the issue at the joint MASS/MASC conference.

5. School Committee Planning

8:21 p.m.

A. Meeting Calendar

DOCUMENTS: 2015-2016 School Committee Meetings: Dates and Topics; Major Agenda Topics for 2016-2017

Dr. Morris distributed and briefly reviewed a list of major agenda topics for the committee's consideration in agenda setting for the year. Mr. Baptiste noted that he would like to revisit the policy regarding whether School Committee members can interact with staff at the Policy Subcommittee level. In addition, later start times was an issue that was under discussion, and he would like to make sure it does not get overlooked. Mr. Nakajima asked that members submit to him broad topics they would like to have on a future agenda. He noted that it will be very challenging to calendar out the agendas so he wants to find a way to work together to develop agendas that allow for substantive discussion. There was discussion of moving the next School Committee meeting from November 8 due to it being the election date. It was agreed that Ms. Westmoreland will do a Doodle poll to determine the date for the next meeting.

B. Appoint MASC Delegate

Ms. Appy noted that the Amherst School Committee had two volunteers to attend the MASC conference—Mr. Nakajima and Ms. Douangmany Cage. They can serve as both the Amherst and the Region if it is agreeable. After discussion, it was agreed that they will serve as the MASC delegates for Amherst and the Region.

C. Subcommittee Assignments

DOCUMENT: Subcommittee Assignments 2016-2017

Mr. Nakajima noted that at 8:44 p.m., the committee is beyond the scheduled time for the meeting. He asked for a sentiment of the board of whether to extend the meeting for 10 minutes to complete this item. The committee agreed. After discussion, subcommittees were updated as attached. This item will be on the agenda at the next meeting to see if anyone wants to be added to any subcommittee.

6. Adjourn

8:57 p.m.

Mr. Baptiste moved to adjourn at 8:57 p.m. Ms. Ordonez seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland