

**Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, April 24, 2012  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**In Attendance:**

Rick Hood, Chair  
Kip Fonsh  
Lawrence O'Brien  
Katherine Appy  
Debbie Gould  
Annemarie Foley (arrived @ 7:22)  
Amilcar Shabazz  
Kristen Luschen  
Rob Spence (arrived @ 7:12)  
Zoe Langsdale, Student Representative

Maria Geryk, Superintendent  
Jerry Champagne, Information Systems Director  
Kathy Mazur, Human Resources Director  
Mike Hayes, ARMS Principal  
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal  
Rich Ferro, Athletic Director  
Public  
Press  
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

**1. Welcome and Agenda Review**

**7:01 p.m.**

**A. Welcome and Agenda Review**—Mr. Hood called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. He welcomed everyone and announced that the Committee will enter Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations and will return to open session. Mr. Hood then moved to enter Executive Session. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote at 7:02 p.m. The Committee returned to open session at 7:06 p.m. and Mr. Hood reviewed the agenda. There was brief discussion about when the Regional School Committee will reorganize based on elections, and Ms. Luschen noted that this will be her last meeting.

**B. Approve Minutes**—Ms. Appy made a motion to approve the minutes of April 4, 2012 with a minor change on page two. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**2. Announcements and Public Comments**

**7:08 p.m.**

Vince O'Connor, community member, made a statement encouraging the School Committee to support increases in capital budgeting to improve safety for athletics.

**3. Superintendent's Update**

**7:10 p.m.**

**DOCUMENTS:** *Superintendent's Updates to the Regional School Committee dated April 24, 2012; Together in Song program and press release*

Ms. Geryk thanked Ms. Luschen for her three years of service on the Regional School Committee, noting that she has been a strong voice on behalf of our students. She then introduced Anita Cooper, ARHS Choral Director, who reported on the WGBY Together in Song program. Ms. Cooper noted that the program showcased 41 choirs from all over Western New England, and the ARHS Hurricane Singers took first place in the High School category as well as in the overall competition. She invited the School Committee to attend the Chorale and Hurricane Singers concert on May 31, which will include both of their winning performances. Ms. Geryk then highlighted several news items and upcoming events, including:

- The upcoming ARMS performance of Charlotte's Web;
- The first annual African American Achievement Night scheduled for Friday, May 11;
- The sixth annual Latino Achievement Night scheduled for Friday, May 18;
- The ARHS new Orleans Relief Coalition, which included 17 student volunteers working in New Orleans for Hurricane Katrina rebuilding projects;
- The Memory Project, an ARHS art project that will be presented at the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting; and
- The hiring of Dr. Faye Brady for the position of Student Services Director, noting that Dr. Brady will begin her work with the district on July 1, 2012.

Ms. Geryk distributed an email from Dr. Rhonda Cohen to the K-5 teaching staff that provided an update on the math curriculum process.

**New and Continuing Business**

**7:21 p.m.**

**A. Later Start Times**

**DOCUMENTS:** *Memo to the Regional School Committee from Superintendent Maria Geryk regarding Later Start Times (dated April 20, 2012); Later Start Time Parent Concerns and Questions (compiled by Rachel Stern and Louisa Holmberg, Amherst College Interns)*

Ms. Geryk gave a brief overview of the process that was followed in developing a recommendation regarding the potential to implement a later start time for the secondary schools. She noted that her recommendation is to adopt Scenario Two: Flip and Move Start Times beginning in Fall 2014. Ms. Geryk stated that tonight is an opportunity for the School Committee to ask questions, express concerns and/or ask her for additional areas of research before a vote is taken. Mr. Shabazz noted that negative and adverse impacts were identified for each of the scenarios, including scenario two which is being recommended. He asked Ms. Geryk to speak to how those impacts will be addressed. Ms. Geryk noted that a substantial amount of up-front work has been done with regard to the elementary after-school program (one area of concern), which will involve transportation and expanded opportunities for students so she feels those concerns should be worked out by the time of the time change. She noted that the district will maintain after-school support for secondary level students as well. With regard to athletics, Ms. Geryk said the reality is that there will be some effects. During the 16 months leading up to the change, Mr. Ferro will be working with other districts and athletic organizations to minimize the impacts as much as possible. Mr. Shabazz said that 9:00 a.m. seems late for the secondary start time. Ms. Geryk noted that she would propose adjusting the flip and move start times to 8:00 a.m. for elementary students with an 8:45 drop off for secondary as long as those times work logistically for transportation. Ms. Gould noted that she believes the after-school piece needs to be spelled out before the School Committee can vote, including end times for athletic practices and how athletic support times will be handled. Mr. O'Brien asked for information about what the extra 1/2 hour of after-school care would cost families. Mr. Spence asked if some sports will definitely have to cease if this change is adopted. Mr. Ferro reported that four sports will be dramatically impacted by either sunset or ice time—hockey, Nordic skiing, Alpine skiing and golf. None have been identified that would absolutely be unable to run. Ms. Foley asked if there is any way students would be able to leave early for athletics and still access after-school academic assistance. Ms. Geryk said there is not a way at this time. Mr. Hayes noted that he believes there will be more give in scheduling as more districts look into making this type of change in the school start time. Ms. Appy said she realizes there will be a lot of logistical concerns, particularly for elementary school families, noting that as a district we need to focus on ways to mitigate these concerns. However, she said she believes it is a very responsible change when you consider the benefit to students' mental health and achievement, noting that such a change would be most beneficial to students at risk. Mr. Shabazz noted that he asked Ms. Langsdale if she is willing to share her opinion as a student and she agreed to do so. Ms. Langsdale said she agrees completely that students will perform better if the day begins later, noting that she, personally, performs better on late start days. Ms. Langsdale volunteered to survey some underclassmen to get feedback to share at the May 8th meeting. Ms. Luschen asked if Ms. Geryk learned anything at the public forums that surprised or concerned her. Ms. Geryk distributed the feedback from the forums, which was compiled by Amherst College interns Rachel Stern and Louisa Holmberg. She noted that there were no comments that really surprised her, but concerns were expressed that she knows will need to be addressed. Mr. Fonsh noted that he attended all of the forums, studied the research and has come to the conclusion that he cannot support any change in the start times. He stated that academic achievement involves many factors other than sleep, which he believes is an issue that has to be deferred to parental oversight. Mr. Fonsh noted that the role of homework, length of instructional time, and other factors are absent in the discussion. The Committee then discussed whether the research shows real increases in achievement after changes in start times. Ms. Geryk noted that she did not have any concerns or questions about there being real, positive effects in achievement after changing start times. She said she is happy to forward more research information to the School Committee. Mr. Jackson acknowledged that this type of change is paradigm-shifting in a way that makes things that should be simple nuances become insurmountable obstacles in the minds of many. He said he believes that it is the job of district leaders is to keep the focus on the ultimate end, which is to improve student outcomes. Ms. Fonsh noted that he is not afraid of change, noting that he is asking the community to look at other issues that represent major change, such as homework and increased instructional time. Ms. Geryk said she sees the later start time issue as a starting point in examining what schools look like today compared to the past, noting that the district will be conducting a time and learning study to examine length of instruction and that the homework conversation has already begun within the leadership team. Mr. Shabazz noted that he could see supporting something like this only if a "reopener clause" is included that requires that successful efforts are made to mitigate known negative impacts in the 16 months prior to implementation. Mr. Hood reviewed the information the School Committee wants for the next meeting, noting that it will be discussed again and voted at the second meeting in May:

- Summary of data showing improved outcomes;
- What after school support will look like and the additional cost for elementary families;
- How an academic support period can be maintained—what does the afternoon look like now vs. then;

- Student input from Ms. Langsdale including information about why students do or do not support a later start time; and
- Information on where the teachers stand on this issue.

Mr. Hayes noted that the ARMS School Council asked him to convey to the School Committee that they unanimously support this change.

## **B. Technology Update**

Ms. Geryk introduced Jerry Champagne, Instructional Technology Director, who presented an update on the work of the Information Systems Department. He gave a Powerpoint presentation that outlined the work accomplished by the department since he last spoke to the School Committee in the fall as well as information about future initiatives. Mr. Champagne also presented a video featuring students and teachers talking about and demonstrating the various technology tools used in the classrooms, which was put together by ARHS teacher Lee Larcheveque and his students. Ms. Gould noted that she is extremely impressed with the work accomplished by Mr. Champagne's department, particularly given the small size of the department. Mr. Fonsh asked if all classrooms have an interactive white board. Mr. Champagne noted that they are working toward installing them in every K-12 classroom, with the exception of Pelham. He pointed out that a Capital Plan is currently in development for Pelham, and it will include technology needs. Ms. Luschen asked if the people in Mr. Champagne's department are the ones who work with teachers and staff to teach them how to use the technology and to understand the potential of each type of technology. Mr. Champagne confirmed that they are, noting that he has implemented regular staff discussion opportunities for faculty and staff to meet with him to discuss issues surrounding technology as well as to do visioning about the future of technology in the district. Ms. Geryk stated that Mr. Champagne and his department work extremely hard, noting that as Information Systems Director, Mr. Champagne has really brought the district forward and is leading the charge in using technology creatively and well in the classroom. Mr. Shabazz noted that it will be beneficial for Mr. Champagne to assist with the upcoming mathematics curriculum presentation.

## **4. Subcommittee Updates**

**9:00 p.m.**

### **A. Appoint Merit Award Representative Member**

Ms. Foley volunteered to serve on the Clerical/Media Merit Award subcommittee.

## **5. Policies for Second Reading**

**9:02 p.m.**

Mr. Fonsh expressed appreciation to Ms. Luschen for her work on the Policy Subcommittee. He noted that the Policy Subcommittee plans to present a draft policy regarding advertising/signage at the May 8th meeting and a class size draft policy at the first June meeting.

### **A. Policy EEB: Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds**

Mr. Fonsh moved to approve Policy EEB: Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds. Mr. O'Brien seconded and discussion followed. The discussion centered on enforceability of the policy, lack of clarity of some of the language, and the potential to rewrite it simply to state that the district will follow the law. After discussion, the motion to approve the policy passed with seven in favor and Ms. Appy and Ms. Foley opposed.

Mr. Fonsh noted that an additional representative will be needed for the Policy Subcommittee after the towns have all had their meetings and the Regional representatives are set.

## **6. School Committee Planning**

**9:20 p.m.**

**A. Calendar**—Retreat from 6:00-9:00 p.m. on June 26; NEASC meeting on Sunday, May 6

**B. Items for Future Agendas**—Later Start, FY12 budget update, Vote Merit Awards, Equity update

## **7. Adjournment**

**9:23 p.m.**

Mr. O'Brien moved to adjourn at 9:23 p.m. Mr. Spence seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland

Approved May 8, 2012