

**Regular Meeting of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee  
February 3, 2015  
6:00 p.m.  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**In Attendance:**

Trevor Baptiste, Chair	Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Dan Robb	Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent
Sarah Dolvin	Rhonda Cohen, Director of Teaching and Learning
Kathleen Traphagen	Faye Brady, Director of Student Services
Rick Hood	Kathryn Mazur, Human Resources Director
Lawrence O'Brien	Monica Hall, Director of Diversity and Equity
Katherine Appy	Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal
Stephen Sullivan	Marisa Mendonsa, ARMS Principal
John Page, Student Advisory Member	Jane Mudie, ARHS Math Department Chair
<b>Absent:</b>	Josh Nugent, ARHS Math Teacher
Amilcar Shabazz	

**1. Welcome 6:06 p.m.**

Mr. Baptiste called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. He reviewed the agenda and asked for any adjustments. Ms. Geryk noted that the SEPAC representative cannot attend tonight's meeting so that agenda item will be tabled.

**2. Public Comments 6:10 p.m.**

Ali Wicks-Lim, community member, spoke regarding enrollments in the district. She expressed concern that the numbers are going down because Amherst parents are pulling their children from the district to go to charter schools, choice schools, homeschool or private schools. Ms. Wicks-Lim noted that she does not believe parents are pulling their children due to mental health issues, as was noted as a primary reason by the Superintendent at a League of Women Voters meeting last month. She said she feels responsible as a parent who left the district to address her extreme discomfort with shifting the blame to the parents or families rather than addressing the issues within the Amherst schools. She noted that she and others who have left did so because of concern with academics, stress due to environment, and other issues. She requested that the data showing why students leave and where they go be put on the district website. Josh Nugent, ARHS teacher and alumni, thanked Ms. Mudie and the administrators who led the math department through the long, thoughtful process of coming up with the proposed IMP change in the mathematics curriculum. He spoke in favor of IMP, encouraging the School Committee to take time to learn what IMP is about before talking with their constituents about the program.

**3. Student Advisory Update 6:18 p.m.**

John Page, Advisory Committee Member, was sitting in for Myles Olmstead who was unable to attend. He noted that the meeting with School Committee members that was scheduled for today had to be canceled due to the weather-related delayed start.

**4. Subcommittee Updates 6:19 p.m.**

**A. AEF**—Ms. Geryk reported that the AEF grant proposals are on her desk and will be submitted on Friday.

**B. Budget Subcommittee**—Mr. O'Brien reported that the Budget Subcommittee will be meeting next Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. before the Amherst School Committee meeting. They will be hearing about the Governor's proposals for dealing with the current budget shortfall. The agenda will also include a continuing discussion of the FY16 budget, which has not changed favorably since the last meeting. Ms. Appy noted that the Four Towns meeting has been scheduled for February 28 from 9:00-11:00 in the

ARMS library. She encouraged members to attend to hear more about the Assessment Method. Mr. O'Brien reported that Mr. Mangano is looking into a secure system that would allow for electronic signing of the warrants to increase efficiency in releasing payments.

**C. The Collaborative**—Ms. Dolven reported that the member district superintendents were invited to attend the meeting last week. There were a number of good presentations including one from the early childhood program of the Collaborative. Ms. Dolven reported that discussion began regarding the evaluation process for the new Director, noting that things have been going very well under his direction. She will provide the full committee with a spreadsheet that was distributed showing what services all member districts are receiving from The Collaborative.

**D. Policy Subcommittee**—Mr. Robb reported that the committee is scheduled to meet next Monday and reviewed the items on the agenda. Mr. Hood noted that he believes the process for the new Middle School schedule was not completely satisfactory and asked that the committee look at Policy IBA to see if it covered that case and, if not, look at revisions that would bring the School Committee in earlier in the process. Ms. Traphagen requested that the Policy Subcommittee look into developing a policy around remote participation at meetings and distributed a packet of sample policies and OML language around the issue. She requested that the Wachusett policy be considered as a first reading so it can be brought to a vote at the next meeting, and the committee agreed.

Mr. Baptiste noted that the Attorney General's response to the Open Meeting Law violation is in the back of the library with the agendas for those who may be interested in picking up a copy.

## **5. New and Continuing Business**

**6:37 p.m.**

### **A. ARHS Mathematics Decision**

***DOCUMENT: ARHS Mathematics Powerpoint Presentation; It's About Time—Program Research Interactive Mathematics Program and Meaningful Math; Adding It Up—Helping Children Learn Mathematics; and Mathematical Quality of Instruction (MQI)***

Mr. Jackson provided an overview of the reasons for changes in the mathematics curriculum, including primarily the need for a single pathway firmly grounded in the standards. Jane Mudie outlined the process that was followed in making the decision to move to Interactive Mathematics Program (IMP) Mathematics. The process included release time to review the NCM standards to ensure a common understanding among faculty, research into what curriculum is being used by other districts, determining the evaluation criteria to be used for the district's curriculum review, presentations about each curriculum by experts, visits to other schools to observe lessons, and piloting lessons in ARHS classrooms. Ms. Mudie also reviewed the criteria that were developed to evaluate each curriculum considered. Dr. Cohen discussed highlights of the IMP program, including the history of how it was developed. Ms. Mudie reviewed the potential titles for the ninth grade math courses and outlined a new math elective and gave an overview of the implementation plan. Presenters answered clarifying questions from the committee during and after the presentation. Mr. Hood expressed his appreciation for the excellent process that was followed in the mathematics decision, noting that it is a model for the way things should be done. Mr. Page noted that the process began before he graduated from elementary school and the IMP program has been vetted and evolved since before he was born. He expressed his great confidence in the program and the teachers, noting that students can access IMP at any level, and stressed the low threshold but high ceiling of the program. Ms. Appy also expressed appreciation for the process and, in particular, for tonight's presentation, noting that it will help address misconceptions in the community.

### **B. SIPS/DIP**

***DOCUMENT: District Continuous Improvement Plan 2014-2015; ARMS School Improvement Plan; ARHS School Improvement Plan***

Ms. Geryk stated that the School Improvement Plans are closely tied to the District Improvement Plan, noting that the School Councils work with the Principals to develop a plan that brings the broad goals of the district down to the classroom level. She noted that the goal for next year will be to bring these plans

to the School Committee in August. Mr. Jackson noted that he learned a lot through the ARMS schedule process and a date will be pinned down within the next few days for a first community presentation about the upcoming ARHS schedule process. He then briefly spoke about the ARHS School Improvement Plan, focusing on how the school is addressing the question “What are the ways in which attending to climate in a more intentional way supports students in getting better traction in the school?” Mr. Jackson outlined the aspects of climate that are being addressed and the ways in which the work is happening, noting that Pat Romney is working with the high school on these issues. He said he hopes to return in August with a set of codified practices around this issue. Mr. Robb asked how teachers are being trained to deal with climate issues. Mr. Jackson explained that there will be a school wide attention to the matter; however, the primary focus of PD will be on classroom climate. Ms. Traphagen asked how progress will be monitored. Mr. Jackson noted that the School Climate Survey of students will provide quantitative data over time and staff will be given very concrete things to focus on so the observation model can be utilized for qualitative data. Ms. Traphagen noted that the SETF is very interested in the use of qualitative data and hopes to continue work with the administration to find ways to gather and utilize it. Mr. Page noted that the Student Advisory Council talks often about school climate and stated that the work the adults have been doing around school climate has permeated everything in the school in a positive way. Ms. Mendonsa spoke briefly about the ARMS School Improvement Plan, focusing on the instructional climate and the social/behavioral climate goals. She noted that math is an area in which teachers are looking at multiple styles of assessments, science is developing a standards-based assessment method, and work is being done on ways to support middle school learners. For the behavioral goal, teachers are looking at ways to increase interventions and decrease suspensions by developing a tiered intervention model in their own classrooms. Training has also been provided in use of Restorative Practices and Restorative Circles. Mr. Baptiste asked if data is available about how PBIS and Restorative Practices are working this year. Ms. Mendonsa reported that suspensions have been reduced from 12 last year at this time to five this year and the number of detentions have been cut almost in half. She noted that outreach to parents has also increased significantly as they are being involved in the Restorative Practices method.

### **C. Accept Gifts**

***DOCUMENT: Memo to the Regional School Committee from Mary Wallace, Treasurer, dated January 23, 2015***

Ms. Traphagen moved to accept \$1,100 from Ron Moyer for the girls’ basketball program, \$500 from the Anthony Reynolds Sr. Memorial Fund, Inc. and \$25 from Anthony Reynolds for the Anthony Reynolds Sr. Memorial Scholarship, and \$1,500 from JEHH for a student athlete donation. Mr. O’Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **6. School Committee Planning**

**7:59 p.m.**

**Calendar and Future Agenda Items**—The next meeting will be on February 24 and will include the Regional Agreement discussion. Future topics for consideration are PBIS/Restorative Practices, discussion of making meetings more accessible with possible moves of meeting locations, and legal representation

### **7. Adjourn to Executive Session**

**8:11 p.m.**

Mr. Baptiste moved to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the body and the Chair so declares, according to MA General Law Chapter 30A, section 21(a)(3). By roll call vote, the committee entered Executive Session at 8:11 p.m. with no intention to return to open session.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland