

Regular Meeting of the Amherst School Committee
May 19, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.
Library, Amherst Regional High School

In Attendance:

Katherine Appy, Chair
Vira Douagmany Cage
Phoebe Hazzard

Absent:

Kathleen Traphagen
Rick Hood

Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent
Monica Hall, Director of Diversity and Equity
John Bechtold, 7-12 Arts Coordinator
Joan Gallinaro, FR Technology Teacher
Fran Ludington, FR Librarian
Kayley Kaiser, FR PE Teacher
Nicole Singers, FR Art Teacher
Pat Romney, Romney Associates, Inc.
Paul Wiley, Romney Associates, Inc.
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder
Public
Press

1. Welcome and Call to Order 6:02 p.m.

Agenda Review: Ms. Appy called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

Approve Minutes: Ms. Hazzard moved to approve the minutes of April 28, 2015. Ms. Douagmany Cage seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. Public Comments 6:03 p.m.

There were no public comments.

3. New and Continuing Business 6:03 p.m.

a. Arts Integration Update

Mr. Morris spoke about the focus of arts integration and introduced John Bechtold, 7-12 Arts coordinator, who has overseen implementation of the new arts integration program in grades K-6. Mr. Bechtold noted that the arts integration work has been done consistently with Universal Design for learning and has sparked conversations around vertical alignment in the arts and lateral alignment with core subjects. He noted that two key components of arts integration are that it requires authentic learning experiences through the arts and these experiences must be distinct from arts classes themselves, not a replacement for them. He introduced members of the Fort River staff and students who gave a presentation about the arts integration projects that have been done at Fort River over the course of the year. Nicole Singers, Fort River Arts Teacher, reported on the large scale immersion art program that was done in connection with the social studies units. Kayley Kaiser, Fort River PE Teacher, spoke about the fifth grade integration project with math which, included math games in both PE class and on Family Math Night. Joan Gallinaro, Technology Teacher, and Fran Ludington, Fort River Librarian, explained that sixth grade students did social studies research in the library on the topic of ancient Egypt. The students then used their research to produce individual reports utilizing technology integration. Students were able choose to create a brochure, develop and present a Powerpoint presentation, or make a video using the Movie Maker program. Ms. Gallinaro introduced sixth grade students who were selected by their classmates to present their projects at tonight's meeting. Students presented the following:

- Anastasiya Kaltashova—distributed her brochure *Ancient Egyptian Gods* and the brochure *Hieroglyphics* by Anthea Spirko;
- Seo-Ho Lee—presented a Powerpoint presentation on pyramids;
- Ana Lewis—presented a Moviemaker video about the embalming process;
- Celia Malone—presented a Powerpoint presentation entitled *The Afterlife*;
- David Greenbaum—presented a Powerpoint presentation about ancient Egyptian architecture; and
- Shreya Venkataraman—presented a Powerpoint presentation about ancient Egyptian architecture.

Members of the school committee expressed great appreciation for the presentations, noting that this work is clearly not an add-on, but a deep learning experience. Ms. Geryk thanked the students for their presentations, noting that they were the teachers tonight, and expressed appreciation to the teachers and Mr. Bechtold for their work.

b. Equity Professional Development

PRESENTATION: ARPS Equity Professional Development

Ms. Geryk introduced Monica Hall, Director of Diversity and Equity, and Dr. Pat Romney, Romney Associates, Inc., who provided a Powerpoint presentation regarding equity professional development in the district K-12. Ms. Hall noted that the first training session was an exploration of personal identity to help participants begin thinking about what they bring to school with them and to engage in self-reflection. Session two focused on knowing our students, including review of data and the implications of the data for instruction and professional development. Session three focused on Dr. Ron Ferguson's text *Excellence with Equity* and *The Movement*. Ms. Hall noted that *The Movement* was looked at through a historical perspective of equity work that has been done in the district. Session four focused on stereotype threat and growth mindset. Session five focuses on diversity flashpoints, looking at ways to address difficult situations related to identities differences. Dr. Romney noted that she facilitated session five at Fort River, and it was a very positive experience for which teachers expressed appreciation for having the time to share, discuss strategies and build relationships with one another in a safe space. Dr. Romney reported briefly on equity work at the middle and high schools, noting that the secondary sessions are focusing on many of the same themes as the elementary work. Ms. Hall also reported on the work Dr. Romney has done with the districts' ALANA PLC in developing their mission and vision statements. The ALANA PLC meets once per month on Thursdays during the academic day. Dr. Romney noted that the ALANA work is both a retention strategy and a leadership strategy, and they are seeing strong leadership emerge from the teachers in the group. Ms. Hall reported that year two teacher professional development has also focused on equity topics and then provided a brief overview of the equity work done by the district leadership team members. Dr. Romney noted that Ms. Hall is working to develop a long-term plan that will include sustained equity work throughout the district in the future. Ms. Appy thanked Ms. Hall and Dr. Romney, noting that this is complex work. She asked how the teacher groups are set up structurally and whether the groups will continue going forward. Ms. Hall reported that much of the work has utilized staff meetings working in small groups and the work will be ongoing. Dr. Romney noted that the focus on the work is more professional than personal and centers on what staff members embody when they walk into the school building. Ms. Geryk noted that the model of starting the work with the leadership team and then doing the work close to the school level has been a smart, positive design that has created community at the schools. Mr. Morris said it is important that Ms. Hall is owning this work, noting that it has changed the staff's view of the work and has emphasized the district's commitment to the work. Ms. Douagmany Cage said that she sees the School Equity Task Force as part of Ron Ferguson's *The Movement*. Ms. Appy noted that she appreciates the structure and intention of this work since there is a clear vision and plan for moving forward. Ms. Geryk spoke briefly about the steps that will remain in place in an ongoing way, including equity walks.

c. Field Trips Update

DOCUMENTS: Crocker Farm Elementary & PreK Field Trips, 2014-2015 School Year; Elementary Field Trips 2014-2015 (Updated 5/19/15)

Mr. Morris noted that the documents distributed at tonight's meeting reflect updates provided by members of the Crocker Farm and Fort River PGOs to the document presented to the Amherst School Committee in March. Ms. Geryk explained that the data was intended to provide the School Committee with an overview of the field trips that are taken at the elementary level, noting that there are currently two field trips that happen and are funded district-wide. Other field trips are based at the school and are funded at the school level, with support from the school PGOs in some cases. Mr. Morris noted that the district leadership is interested in the School Committee's guidance in how much autonomy the schools should have in planning and supporting field trips versus the district overseeing it. Ms. Hazzard distributed notes she developed based on the data provided and the fifth and sixth grade field trips at each of the three schools, which shows where discrepancies lie in the funds used, cost for families and trips taken. Ms. Douagmany Cage said it would be valuable to share a list of potential field trip locations with the PGOs for their consideration and suggested a

possible “mega-field trip” once per year that involves all three schools. She noted that such a trip might help students feel more comfortable when they move into the middle school. Ms. Geryk agreed, noting that she believes a group field trip in sixth grade would be valuable. Ms. Appy said it will be valuable to continue discussions of equity in funding for field trips and of how much the district budget should support funding trips. Ms. Hazzard noted that she believes the first priority to look at is whether the students are having an equitable experience in the trips they take and whether parents are having an equitable experience in the cost of the trips to their family. Ms. Douagmany Cage suggested using the strategy of deciding where we want our students to go, if money were no object, and then brainstorm ways in which we could make it happen.

d. Wildwood School Building Project Update

DOCUMENT: Wildwood School Building Project Underway (press release dated April 21, 2015); Memo to Members of the Amherst School Committee from Michael Morris, Assistant Superintendent dated May 19, 2015; WWSBP Update Options for the Wildwood School Building Project

Mr. Morris distributed and reviewed a memo summarizing events related to the Wildwood Building Project since the last update to the School Committee. He noted that eight submissions were received from designers for the project. Mr. Morris also reviewed the upcoming dates and events connected to the project, which include:

- Mr. Morris and Ms. Appy will attend a Wildwood PGO event to answer questions about the project on May 26;
- The local Designer Selection Panel Team will attend the next MSBA Designer Selection Panel meeting in Boston on June 2;
- Mr. Morris will visit Fort River to discuss the project at a staff meeting;
- Amherst Media is filming a discussion with John Musante, Ms. Appy, Ms. Geryk, Ron Bohonowicz and Mr. Morris regarding the MSBA process and community engagement sessions that will occur in the fall; and
- The local Designer Selection Panel team will attend a MSBA Designer Selection Panel meeting on June 16 in Boston to interview the finalists identified at the June 2 meeting.

Mr. Morris answered clarifying questions about the designer proposals, the designer involvement in the community engagement process going forward, and the three options under consideration.

4. School Committee Planning **8:23 p.m.**

June meeting—Unless the June meeting is canceled, MSBA update is only agenda item. Ms. Geryk reported on the dates and times of the sixth grade graduations, high school graduation and the staff celebration.

5. Adjournment **8:25 p.m.**

Ms. Douagmany Cage moved to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Ms. Hazzard seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.