

**Regular Meeting of Amherst School Committee**  
**August 23, 2011**  
**Town Room, Amherst Town Hall**

**Present:**

Irv Rhodes, Chair  
Katherine Appy  
Rick Hood  
Steve Rivkin (arrived at 7:30 p.m.)

Maria Geryk, Superintendent  
Mike Hayes, ARMS Principal  
Monica Colley, Fort River Principal  
Mike Morris, Crocker Farm Principal  
Rob Detweiler, Director of Finance and Operations  
Ron Bohonowicz, Director of Maintenance and Facilities  
Press  
Public  
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

**Absent:**

Rob Spence

**1. Welcome**

**7:00 p.m.**

**A. Call to Order**—Mr. Rhodes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He reviewed the agenda and noted that Items A, B, and C under New Business will be moved up on the agenda immediately after public comments. Mr. Rhodes noted that the School Committee will enter Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations once the agenda is completed, with no intention to return to open session.

**B. Approve Minutes**—Mr. Hood made a motion to approve the minutes of April 26, 2011 as presented. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Appy made a motion approve the minutes of June 21, 2011 as presented. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

} Approved  
Motion

**2. Announcements and Public Comments**

**7:01 p.m.**

There were no announcements or public comments.

**3. Superintendent's Update**

**7:20 p.m.**

**DOCUMENTS: Memo to the Amherst School Committee from Maria Geryk regarding Superintendent's Update dated August 23, 2011; Welcome Letter to Parents; Family Guide to School Safety 2011-2012**

Ms. Geryk introduced Monica Colley, the new Principal of Fort River Elementary School and the School Committee welcomed her to the district. Ms. Geryk then provided brief updates regarding:

- First Day on the Common scheduled for September 1;
- Project Backpack and the Safe Seats for Kids program;
- Plans for new teacher orientation on Monday, August 29, including inviting School Committee members to the morning events;
- New flooring at Wildwood Elementary School; and
- Technology improvements made throughout the district.

Ms. Geryk invited the members of the School Committee to attend the All-Faculty/Staff convocation on Friday, September 2 at 8:00 a.m. at the ARHS auditorium. School Committee Chairs are invited to speak to the faculty if they are willing. Ms. Geryk distributed copies of the welcome back letter and the new Family Guide to School Safety that is being mailed to parents this week. She noted that an update will be provided in September regarding the work of the Sixth Grade Task Force and the Later Start Times Task force. Jerry Champagne, Information Systems Director, then briefly outlined the technology infrastructure work that has been done this summer, including replacement of the phone

system district-wide. Ms. Appy thanked Mr. Champagne, noting that it sounds like an incredible amount of work has been done that will be of great benefit to students.

**4. Unfinished/Continuing Business 7:39 p.m.**

**A. Enrollment Update**

**DOCUMENT: Amherst School District Enrollments as of August 9, 2011; Enrollment Comparison Chart 2009 to Present (distributed at meeting)**

Ms. Geryk reviewed the current enrollments, noting that Kindergarten and second grade are areas she is watching closely due to larger than expected enrollments. She then distributed and reviewed a chart she created today that briefly outlines the enrollments from October 2009 to present, noting that the district has 29 more Kindergarten students, 17 more first grade students and 12 more second grade students than were projected during budgeting. Ms. Geryk noted that the enrollment numbers were on track with projections when the classes were set in the spring, and the bulk of new enrollments have happened over the summer, which is atypical. Mr. Rivkin asked what will be done for the lower grade levels if the class sizes become too large. Ms. Geryk noted that she and the principals are having the necessary conversations around enrollments, including the possibility of adding paraprofessional support if it becomes necessary. Mr. Rivkin noted that the district still has very low class sizes compared to other districts in the state.

**B. School Committee Report Schedule**

**DOCUMENTS: School Committee Report Schedule**

Mr. Rhodes asked if there are any items that should be added or changed on the School Committee Report Schedule. Ms. Geryk asked that FY12 budget update and preliminary FY13 budget priority discussion be added to meetings in September. Mr. Hood noted that he would like to devote the entire August 30<sup>th</sup> meeting to the District Improvement Plan if possible. Ms. Geryk suggested having the sixth grade task force recommendation and the later start times discussion at a joint meeting of the Amherst and Regional School Committees. Mr. Rivkin noted that he believes it would be better to begin discussing the sixth grade task force discussion at Amherst only meeting.

**5. New Business 7:04 (A, B, C)/7:59 (D) p.m.**

**A. Approve Easement for Wildwood Sidewalk Project**

**DOCUMENT: Memo from Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works to Maria Geryk, Superintendent of Schools re: Request for Easements on Amherst School Property to Support the Wildwood School Safe Route to School Project**

Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works, explained that the Amherst School Committee is the governing board with the authority to grant the permanent sidewalk easement and the temporary construction easement necessary for completing the Safe Routes to School Project at Wildwood Elementary School. He briefly reviewed the areas of easement and there were no questions from the School Committee. Mr. Rivkin made a motion to approve the permanent and temporary easements as presented. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

} Approved Motion

**B. Approve Temporary Fort River Property Easements**

**DOCUMENT: Two Maps of the Proposed Easement Provided by Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works**

Mr. Mooring reported that the bridge on Pelham Road is slated for repair and MASS Highway will build a temporary sidewalk for pedestrian use during construction. Fort River school property borders a portion of the temporary sidewalk area, which will require the School Committee to grant a temporary easement before construction can begin. After very brief clarifying questions, Mr. Hood made a motion to approve the easement as presented. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

} Approved Motion

**C. Green Communities Act**

**DOCUMENTS: Guidance for Becoming Designated As a Green Community; Town of Amherst Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy**

Nate Malloy, Associate Planner for the Town of Amherst, provided a brief overview of the criteria that must be met in order for the Town of Amherst to be eligible for grant funding through the Green Communities Act. The town hopes to submit an application in November to be recognized as a green community and, concurrently, for grant funding. Mr. Malloy reviewed the Fuel Efficient Vehicle policy the Amherst Select Board recently adopted. Mr. Rhodes asked what the financial impact would be on the schools. Mr. Malloy noted that there are no plans to replace any vehicles in the required categories in the near future. Mr. Bohonowicz clarified that buses and passenger vans are exempt under the guidelines, noting that he does not believe there would be any impact other than meeting the fuel efficiency requirements as vehicles are replaced according to the capital plan. After brief discussion, Mr. Rivkin made a motion that, in an effort to reduce the Town of Amherst’s fuel consumption and energy costs over the next five years, the Amherst School Committee hereby adopts a policy to purchase only fuel efficient vehicles to meet this goal. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Approved Motion

**D. Regionalization Discussion**

**DOCUMENTS: Regionalization Discussion—August 23, 2011 (notes); Memorandum from Attorney Regina Tate re: Creation of a PK-6 Regional School District Comprised of the Towns of Amherst and Pelham**

Mr. Rhodes noted that he and Ms. Geryk met with the Chair of the Pelham Visioning Committee, a representative from the Pelham School Committee, attorney Gini Tate, and Mr. Detweiler regarding potential regionalization options with Pelham. It was decided after that meeting that the Amherst School Committee should begin the discussion at tonight’s meeting. The Pelham School Committee plans to discuss the issue at their September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting and will vote on whether they want to proceed with the process of regionalizing with Amherst. Mr. Rhodes noted that he would like to have a preliminary discussion tonight. If Pelham votes to proceed with the regionalization process, there will have to be a public hearing in Amherst, and the Amherst School Committee will vote on whether to proceed with the Regionalization process. Mr. Rhodes noted that the Amherst Town Manager and the Amherst Finance Director have also been part of the conversation. Mr. Rivkin asked how many classrooms are in the Pelham School, and Ms. Geryk noted there is one for each grade for a total of seven classrooms. He noted that Regionalization is much more important to Pelham than to Amherst, and he is puzzled why this discussion would be entered into now. He noted that regionalization with Pelham is one of many options and he hopes this discussion will be entered with the best interest of Amherst’s students in mind. Mr. Rhodes urged the School Committee members to read the memorandum from Attorney Tate, noting that if the School Committee votes to enter the regionalization process, it will then turn the study/planning over to a Regionalization School District Planning Committee. He noted that the process requires the issue to come before Town Meeting in all involved towns, it is a minimum two-year process, and the issue will be well vetted by the time the process is complete. Mr. Rhodes stated that he is ready to begin the process. Ms. Appy agreed with Mr. Rhodes about beginning the conversation, noting, however, that she understands Mr. Rivkin’s concerns that other options should not be pushed off the table. Mr. Rivkin noted that Amherst has not had the same in-depth community discussion of options for schooling Amherst students as Pelham has had. Mr. Rhodes noted that he does not want this to be an either-or situation, and other options could come forward even if a decision was ultimately made to regionalize with Pelham. Ms. Geryk noted that it would be beneficial to consult with Christine Lynch at DESE because there are limited options that will even be considered for approval by DESE.

**6. Policies**

**None**

**7. Subcommittees**

**8:24 p.m.**

**A. JCPC**

Mr. Rhodes noted that Ms. Appy and Mr. Spence were appointed at the April School Committee meeting to serve on JCPC. He asked that Ms. Appy contact Kay Moran from the Finance Committee to find out when the JCPC meetings will be scheduled.

**8. School Committee Planning**

**None**

**A. Calendar**

**B. Items for Future Agendas**

**5. Adjournment**

**8:25 p.m.**

By roll call vote, the committee unanimously agreed to enter executive session for the purpose of contract negotiations. They will not return to open session.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland

Approved 9-20-11