

Amherst School Committee
January 20, 2015
Library, Amherst Regional High School

In Attendance:

Katherine Appy, Chair
Lawrence O'Brien
Rick Hood
Kathleen Traphagen

Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent
Sean Mangano, Director of Finance
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

Absent:

Amilcar Shabazz

1. Welcome **6:03 p.m.**

A. Call to Order—Ms. Appy called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

B. Approve Minutes—Mr. Hood moved to approve the minutes December 16, 2014. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. Public Comments **6:05 p.m.**

There were no public comments.

3. Subcommittee Updates **6:05 p.m.**

A. Amherst Education Foundation: Mr. Hood noted that the AEF Excellence Grant applications are due on February 2nd and the forms are available on the AEF website.

B. Audit Committee for Town of Amherst: No report

C. ACTV Liaison: Mr. Hood reported that ACTV mailed their first fundraising appeal to the community in December.

D. BCG: No report

E. JCPC: Ms. Appy reported that JCPC was scheduled to meet this Thursday, but the posting was not done in time to comply with Open Meeting Law due to the MLK holiday. The meeting will take place on Thursday, January 29 at 9:30 a.m.

5. New and Continuing Business **6:06 p.m.**

A. Advocacy Discussion

Ms. Appy noted that Max Page, UMass professor, asked to come next month for this discussion so it will be moved to the February meeting agenda. She noted that the letter to DESE regarding the Kindergarten Grant GOLD requirements is almost complete and should be ready to send next week. Senator Rosenberg and Representative Story have been added to the list of those who will be copied on the letter. Mr. Mangano noted that he will attend a meeting of the Foundation Budget Review Committee at Nashoba Valley Regional High School this Saturday. Ms. Geryk and Mr. Morris may also attend.

B. FY16 Budget Presentation

DOCUMENTS: Amherst Public Schools FY16 Budget Proposal

Mr. Mangano distributed and reviewed the highlights of the FY2016 Amherst Public Schools budget proposal. The proposed budget totals \$21,771,698, which is a 1.8% increase over the FY2015 budget. Mr. Mangano reviewed the additions/reductions, which include adding \$10,000 for school garden curriculum integration and \$36,000 as a placeholder to potentially begin instrumental music in third grade. Ms. Appy opened the floor for questions and discussion. Ms. Traphagen asked if there is a way for Central Office to support some of the enrichment field trips since fundraising currently falls on the PGOs. She noted that more and more families need financial assistance for their child to attend. Ms. Geryk said that it is important to look at the number and type of field trips being taken at each school and grade level to ensure they fit with the curriculum. Mr. Morris stated that this is a topic worthy of discussion, which is multi-layered apart from the budgetary considerations. Mr. Hood noted that Spanish was added in 2010 and cut again in 2013. He wondered if this was because it was

unsustainable financially. Ms. Geryk stated that the financial support was an issue, but for her the program design was more of an issue. Mr. Morris noted that, as a building principal at the time the Spanish program was implemented, he saw that the teachers worked very hard to make it work but it was just too hastily implemented and was the wrong model. After further discussion, Ms. Appy thanked Mr. Mangano for the presentation.

C. School Choice Forum

DOCUMENTS: Kin

Ms. Geryk noted that this is the opportunity for community members to share thoughts regarding school choice. There were no community comments or committee questions, so the issue of whether to remain a school choice district will be voted at the next meeting.

D. MSBA Update

Mr. Morris reported that there was a very well-attended information session for those interested in the OPM position last Wednesday. They were given a tour of the building, focusing particularly on the quads. He noted that one of the firm representatives in attendance happened to be a Wildwood graduate. Mr. Mangano reported that tomorrow is the last day for OPM questions and the Selection Committee is meeting on January 26. He gave a brief overview of the process that is followed in selecting the short-list of candidates and selecting the final OPM. Mr. Mangano noted that the process is slated to be done in April and then the process of selecting an architect will begin.

E. Approve Gifts

DOCUMENT: Memo to Amherst School Committee from Mary Wallace, Treasurer

Mr. O'Brien moved to accept \$500 from an anonymous donor for Crocker Farm to be used at the Principal's discretion. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

6. School Committee Planning

6:41 p.m.

A. Calendar and Future Agenda Items—Advocacy Discussion with Max Page on February 10; Field Trips; Later Start Time (March)

7. Adjournment

6:43 p.m.

Mr. O'Brien moved to adjourn at 6:43 p.m. Ms. Traphagen seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland