

Amherst-Pelham Regional and Union 26 School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, April 4, 2017
Library, Amherst Regional High School

IN ATTENDANCE

Eric Nakajima, Region
Vira Douangmany-Cage, Region
Anastasia Ordonez, Region & Union 26
Emily Marriott, Region
Audra Goscenski, Region
Peter Demling, Region
Phoebe Hazzard, Region & Union 26
Ron Mannino, Union 26
Trevor Baptiste, Region & Union 26
Stephen Sullivan, Region

Michael Morris, Superintendent
Faye Brady, Student Services Director
Patty Bode, ARMS Principal
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal
Leslie Lomasson, ARHS Librarian
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder
Public and Press

ABSENT:

Cara Castenson, Union 26

1. Welcome and Call to Order 6:35 p.m.

Mr. Nakajima called the Regional School Committee to order and Ms. Ordonez called the Union 26 School Committee to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. Approve Minutes—February 28, 2017; March 21, 2017 6:35 p.m.

Ms. Westmoreland noted that the February 28 minutes need to be tabled because she is still waiting on feedback from members in order to complete them since she was ill and unable to attend that meeting. Mr. Nakajima agreed to table them. Ms. Douangmany Cage then moved to approve the minutes of March 21, 2017 as amended. Ms. Hazzard seconded and the motion was approved with Mr. Demling abstaining. Mr. Baptiste moved to approve the minutes as amended on behalf of Union 26. Mr. Mannino seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

3. ARHS Library Website Presentation--Leslie Lomasson, ARHS Librarian 6:40 p.m.

Dr. Morris welcomed Mr. Demling to the School Committee and the committee extended their welcome, as well. Mr. Jackson then introduced Leslie Lomasson, ARHS librarian, noting that she has been at the high school for more than a decade and has made the library the heart of the school. He explained that Ms. Lomasson has received an award from her colleagues in recognition of the excellence of the library's website she has developed. Ms. Lomasson then demonstrated the features of the website, including the Libguides for the school's classes and departments. She explained that the website contains hundreds of thousands of resources that supplement the physical volumes in the library. Ms. Lomasson answered clarifying questions for the committee throughout the presentation.

4. Announcements and Public Comment 7:03 p.m.

There were no public comments. Ms. Douangmany Cage congratulated everyone who ran for School Committee and welcomed Mr. Nakajima back and Mr. Demling to the School Committee. Mr. Demling expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the committee.

5. Interim Superintendent's Update 7:05 p.m.

DOCUMENT: Interim Superintendent's Update to the Regional School Committee, April 4, 2017

Dr. Morris reported on several recent events and honors including:

- ARHS hosted an immigration rights workshop in partnership with the PAIR Project (Political Asylum/Immigration Representation) to provide information for immigrant students and families, which was attended by more than 60;
- ARHS graduation will be live-streamed for the first time this year which will allow family members who cannot attend to watch the ceremony;
- The UMass College of Education hosted a Marks Meadow Reception this week in honor of the educators from Marks Meadow who supported the College of Education for many years.

6. New and Continuing Business 7:11 p.m.

A. Process and Timeline for Reorganizing Committees

Mr. Nakajima noted that the Leverett, Shutesbury and Pelham School Committee elections will take place in May and, the committee typically waits to reorganize until after their elections. Mr. Baptiste noted that for a couple of years the decision was to hold on reorganizing until the School Committee retreat in June. Mr. Demling asked for clarification of what

reorganizing entails. Mr. Nakajima explained it includes selecting the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary for the committee as well as membership on subcommittees.

B. Permanent Superintendent Search Process Update

Ms. Ordonez reported on the progress that has been made since the last meeting. She noted that the Chairs have had one conference call and several email exchanges with Ray and Associates explaining the committee's expectations for a response from them, including why the problem happened in the first place and what they will do to ensure such issues will not happen again going forward. Ray and Associates had told them they would have a letter ready for the committees by tonight's meeting; however, as of today, an email communication has been received, but the formal response has not yet been received. Ms. Goscenski asked if Ray and Associates has been able to provide a timeline for when they anticipate responding. Mr. Nakajima said that at some point no answer is an answer and more formal communication may be necessary with counsel. Ms. Ordonez noted that she hopes for a formal response by next week's meeting. The sentiment of the committee is that Ray and Associates should be informed that the committee expects the formal response in time for next week's meeting, and the reply will be forwarded to members of the committee as soon as it is received. Mr. Demling noted that members of the public he spoke with while campaigning expressed much more interest in understanding how this happened than in getting the money back that has been spent with Ray and Associates. Ms. Douangmany Cage said it would be helpful for Mr. Demling to be forwarded the letter that summarized the sequence of events leading up to the search postponement. Mr. Nakajima noted that he is hearing questions from the public about how the committee can be confident in working with Ray and Associates moving forward. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that it was established at the last meeting that the School Committee needs to be more involved and hands-on going forward with the search. Ms. Ordonez said that the process may seem to be moving slowly because she and Mr. Nakajima have been moving deliberately and carefully to ensure that the public has a clear understanding of everything that is happening. Ms. Hazzard asked Ms. Douangmany Cage if she would elaborate on what she means when she says the School Committee was not involved enough. Ms. Douangmany Cage gave examples, noting that the survey that went out was not developed and approved by the School Committee and the committee did not have a lot of involvement in the scheduling of interviews. She noted that when a potential problem is identified, the School Committee should be notified immediately. After discussion, it was agreed that this topic should be on a future agenda for further discussion.

C. Superintendent Evaluation

Mr. Nakajima raised the question of whether it would be helpful to have a subcommittee to frame the evaluation and discussion followed. Ms. Goscenski noted that the Chair has done that on other committees she has served on. Mr. Baptiste asked Dr. Morris for his thoughts on the evaluation process. Dr. Morris noted that in the fall it was agreed that each committee will do a separate evaluation rather than one composite evaluation as has been done in the past. Dr. Morris said he would really like the committee or a subcommittee to organize an anonymous survey of staff in Central Office, principals and assistant principals both for the evaluation and his own growth. He said that whatever the process is from now to the end of the year, it should include critical feedback about how the goals were realized and the goals should be connected to the evaluation rubric. Dr. Morris will have his artifacts in by the end of May to allow the Chairs time to get the committee members' evaluations. Discussion followed regarding whether to appoint an evaluation subcommittee and what its role would be. Mr. Baptiste moved to establish a subcommittee of the Regional School Committee consisting of representatives from Shutesbury, Leverett and at least one other member as appointed by the Chair, for the purpose of collaborating with the Superintendent to translate the Superintendent's goals into the state rubric. Ms. Douangmany Cage seconded and discussion followed. Ms. Goscenski moved to amend the motion to be less specific and to state "consisting of three committee members ensuring no quorum of any committee." Ms. Marriott seconded and, after discussion, the amendment was approved with Mr. Baptiste opposed. Mr. Baptiste moved to increase the membership of the subcommittee to four. Ms. Marriott seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. The amended motion to establish a subcommittee of the Regional School Committee consisting of four committee members, ensuring no quorum of any committee, as appointed by the Chair, for the purpose of collaborating with the Superintendent to translate the Superintendent's goals into the state rubric was unanimously approved. Ms. Goscenski, Ms. Hazzard, Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Nakajima will serve on the subcommittee. Ms. Westmoreland will conduct a doodle poll to help the subcommittee set their first meeting date.

D. Discussion of Interim Superintendent for 2017-2018 School Year

Mr. Nakajima noted that his sense is that the committee and the community at large would like for a decision to be made as soon as possible about the interim superintendent for the 2017-2018. Discussion followed regarding the process and timeline, including whether to schedule an Executive Session at the next meeting or to conduct a Doodle poll to schedule an Executive Session sooner. It was decided that Ms. Westmoreland will send a Doodle poll for an Executive Session meeting on Tuesday, with several times offered including later in the evening. Discussion about the process continued, including whether it would be proper to suspend a search for an interim superintendent and ask Dr. Morris to continue in the role for next year. Mr. Baptiste moved that the School Committee enter contract negotiations with Dr. Morris to extend his contract for academic year 2017-2018. Ms. Goscenski seconded and discussion followed. Ms. Goscenski noted that she has heard

nothing but favorable feedback regarding Dr. Morris' work this year. Mr. Demling noted that he has also heard only positive feedback. He asked Dr. Morris to talk about whether the Assistant Superintendent role needs to be filled for him to be successful in the role next year. Dr. Morris explained that the search is active now for the Assistant Superintendent for Diversity, Equity and Human Resources role. He plans to ask for a member of the school committee to serve on the hiring committee for that role. Dr. Morris noted that he would also want someone other than himself to oversee curriculum work next year. He spoke about the collaborative way in which he and the School Committee have worked this year, noting that it has enhanced the work. Ms. Hazzard thanked Dr. Morris and noted that the School Committee does not take it for granted that he is willing to continue in the role. Ms. Ordonez also expressed her appreciation, noting that she has heard from teachers and the community that Dr. Morris is collaborative and is developing trust. The motion was then unanimously approved by the Regional Committee. Mr. Mannino made the same motion on behalf of Union 26. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Dr. Morris thanked the committee for their confidence in him, noting that he believes a lot of good work has been done this year. He stated that his commitment is to keep that work going next year in his 16th year in the district. It was agreed that the Doodle poll will be cancelled and there will be an Executive Session for the purpose of negotiating with non-union personnel at the April 12 meeting.

Mr. Mannino moved to adjourn Union 26 at 9:14 p.m. Ms. Hazzard seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

E. Legal Services Subcommittee Appointment

Dr. Morris noted that Mr. Mangano is looking for the subcommittee to review proposals and score the submissions to identify a couple of firms for the full committee to interview. Mr. Baptiste, Ms. Douangmany Cage and Mr. Demling volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

F. State-Level Advocacy Discussion

DOCUMENT: Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents April 4, 2017 "A View from Capitol Hill Federal Education Update"

Ms. Ordonez noted that the idea was raised at the last meeting to send a delegation to Boston to talk with our state representatives about budget cuts and concerns of our rural towns. She noted that because of the representatives' budget schedule, there will be a better chance of getting full attention from representatives on a date other than the April 25 MASC Day on the Hill. The potential date being considered is May 2. Ms. Ordonez noted that eight student members of COSEBOC, Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color, will plan to attend. Dr. Morris noted that April 25 can definitely work for the students to attend, and he is working to confirm the potential May 2 date. Dr. Morris reviewed the April 4 update from the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, which outlines potential cuts of \$3 billion dollars President Trump is proposing to the current year's budget. One major impact on the district if it passes would be cuts proposed to Title IIA grant funding. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that the School Committee should be cued in not only to Massachusetts Association of School Committees, but to the work of the National Association of School Committees. Mr. Demling noted that he would like practical advice from our representatives about what types of advocacy are the most effective in making actual change. Ms. Ordonez said that Representative Goldstein-Rose's staff talked with her about the value of what citizens can provide them when they share stories and information with them. Mr. Nakajima noted that it would be helpful to have an ad hoc subcommittee looking into types of advocacy that can be done in an organized way in the coming year.

6. School Committee Planning

9:40 p.m.

Ms. Ordonez and Ms. Douangmany Cage will serve on the Assistant Superintendent for Diversity, Equity and Human Resources Subcommittee. Mr. Baptiste was interested in serving, but deferred to the other two members since his tenure on the committee will be ending soon.

7. Adjourn

9:46 p.m.

Mr. Baptiste moved to adjourn at 9:46 p.m. Ms. Douangmany Cage seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland