

**Joint Amherst-Pelham Regional and Union 26 School Committees Meeting  
Tuesday, February 28, 2017  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Eric Nakajima, Region  
Emily Marriott, Region & Union 26  
Anastasia Ordonez, Region & Union 26  
Trevor Baptiste, Region & Union 26  
Vira Douangmany-Cage, Region  
Cara Castenson, Union 26  
Audra Goscenski, Region (left at 7:20 pm)  
Phoebe Hazzard, Region & Union 26  
Ron Mannino, Union 26  
Stephen Sullivan, Region  
Katherine Appy, Region & Union 26

Mike Morris, Interim Superintendent  
Sean Mangano, Finance Director (left at 7:20 pm)  
Faye Brady, Student Services Director  
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal  
Patty Bode, ARMS Principal  
Public and Press

**1. Call to Order and Approve Minutes**

**6:36 p.m.**

Mr. Nakajima called the Regional School Committee to order at 6:36 p.m. He noted that a joint meeting with the Union 26 School Committee needs to be scheduled prior to the March 8 retreat. Ms. Douangmany Cage moved to accept the minutes of February 14, 2017. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was approved unanimously with the letter submitted by Ms. Page included as referenced. Dr. Morris noted that Ms. Westmoreland is unable to attend tonight, as was the person who fills in for her. She will be taking minutes based on the Amherst Media video of the meeting.

**2. Announcements and Public Comment**

**6:40 p.m.**

Dr. Morris shared that the Massachusetts Board of Education voted 7-2 at their meeting last night to deny expansion of the PVCICS. He thanked members of the town boards who advocated, and particularly Pelham School Committee Chair Cara Castenson who made the first public comment, noting that the vote affirmed the districts' commitment to diverse schools. Ms. Appy also spoke briefly about the vote, noting that the size of the vote was also very powerful. She also noted the powerful statements made by Ms. Castenson, Mr. Demling and others. Ms. Appy noted that PVCICS can bring their request back again next year and spoke to the importance of taking this issue very seriously and continuing advocacy. Mr. Baptiste noted the importance of being careful not to make this an "us against them" issue with PVCICS, but rather as a larger issue of charter school funding. Mr. Nakajima expressed his belief that the Superintendent and School Committee did an exceptional job of organizing quickly and in a fact-based way. Ms. Appy announced that *Anything Goes* is being put on by the high school this weekend and encouraged everyone to attend. Ms. Douangmany Cage reported that she announced that the district is bringing food services back in-house at a climate justice event and attendees were very excited. She encouraged sharing the news with the wider community. Mr. Nakajima opened the floor for public comments. Peter Demling, parent, spoke about the need for cordial conversation between the local charter school and the public schools. He noted, however, that the loss of funding for the public schools is not a compelling argument for the commissioner and it is important to emphasize that charter schools are public schools with an obligation to educate everyone.

**4. Interim Superintendent's Update**

**7:00 p.m.**

Dr. Morris briefly reported on a few items including:

- A community wide meeting focused on immigration will be held at Grace Episcopal Church this Saturday. He noted that the School Committee's resolution on immigration will be read and members of the School Committee are invited up on the stage.

- Dr. Morris is working with UMass professor Laura Valdiviezo to do additional research on questions that came out of the homework discussions, noting that she will support a stakeholder group to complete their work in May and June.
- The water filtration system that the ARHS PGO helped purchase will be opened tomorrow and the press will be on hand to cover it.
- On Friday, March 10, Dr. Morris, Mr. Mangano and several members of the Regional School Committee are attending an MASS/MASC conference titled *Poverty: It Isn't Just Someone Else's Problem Anymore*. He encouraged any members who may be interested in attending to contact Ms. Westmoreland to be registered.

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

**7:15 p.m.**

### **A. FY18 Budget Hearing**

#### ***DOCUMENT: Amherst-Pelham Regional School District FY18 Budget Hearing, February 28, 2017***

Mr. Mangano distributed an updated proposal for the FY18 Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools budget. He explained to the committee that representatives from the Town of Leverett reached out to notify him that they are no longer willing to support the alternative assessment agreement that was agreed upon at the last Four Towns meeting. Mr. Mangano will be leaving the School Committee immediately after the budget hearing to meet with Leverett representatives to see if an agreement can be reached. He then reviewed the highlights of the proposal, including the budget gaps if the Statutory Assessment method must be used and the proposed budget cuts under each scenario. Under this Statutory Assessment method, the gap would be \$190,000 if Amherst has an increase of 3.6% and \$400,000 if the Amherst increase is 2.5%. Discussion followed with the School Committee indicating that they would not support cutting the ARHS preschool or the food services addition under any of the scenarios. It was agreed that a more in-depth discussion with the School Committee will be needed regarding potential cuts if no agreement can be reached with Leverett to use the alternative assessment method. Mr. Nakajima indicated a desire to have a more in-depth long-range planning conversation regarding budgets as well. Mr. Mangano and Ms. Goscenski, Leverett Representative, left at 7:20 for the meeting with Leverett town officials.

### **B. Policy Vote**

#### ***DOCUMENT: New Policy--Disposal of Surplus Materials***

After brief discussion, Emily Marriott moved to approve the new policy Disposal of Surplus Materials as presented. Phoebe Hazzard seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **C. Immigration Resolution Vote**

#### ***DOCUMENT: Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools Resolution: Rights of Undocumented Students and Protocols for INS and ICE Access to Schools***

Dr. Morris briefly reviewed the edits that were made to the original resolution draft and, after discussion, Anastasia Ordonez moved to approve the resolution titled "Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools: Rights of Undocumented Students and Protocols for ICE Access to Schools" as amended. Trevor Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **D. Legal Services Timeline**

#### ***DOCUMENT: Request for Proposals--Legal Services General Counsel - Collective Bargaining***

Dr. Morris distributed a draft RFP document that could be used for a search for legal counsel for the district. Discussion followed regarding the scope of services the School Committee is seeking and the process that will be followed. It was agreed that Mr. Mangano will develop a draft RFP for the committee's consideration at the next meeting and that a subcommittee of the School Committee will be appointed to review any proposals received through the RFP.

## **E. Homework Update**

### ***DOCUMENT: Homework Primer dated January 17, 2017***

Dr. Morris presented a Powerpoint that highlighted his findings in researching homework, including the results of the family and staff surveys that were done regarding the “no homework” plan that was put in place over the December break and modified for the February break. His research showed, in part:

- homework has not increased in recent years;
- consensus is that homework positively influences academic achievement at secondary school but not at elementary school;
- there are non-academic benefits of homework, including at the elementary level;
- grading/feedback on homework increases completion rates;
- homework impacts families and is a major cause of stress and conflict between parents and children;
- other structured activities can also have positive influences on academic achievement;
- there are social justice components of homework; and
- over two hours of homework has been found to be academically counterproductive.

Mr. Jackson addressed specific questions regarding homework at ARHS.

## **6. Adjourn**

**9:00 p.m.**

Mr. Baptiste moved to adjourn at 9:07 p.m. Ms. Ordonez seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland

Approved 4-12-17