

**Joint Meeting of the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committees
Tuesday, January 28, 2014
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

In Attendance:

Kip Fonsh, Regional Chair	Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Katherine Appy, Amherst Chair/Region	Kathryn Mazur, Human Resources Director
Debbie Gould, Pelham Chair	Faye Brady, Director of Student Services
Lawrence O'Brien, Amherst/Region	Sean Mangano, Assistant Finance Director
Kathleen Traphagen, Amherst/Region	Mike Morris, Director of Evaluation & Assessment
Trevor Baptiste, Pelham/Region	Betsy Dinger, ARMS Principal
Emily Marriott, Pelham	Kim Stender, Community, Partnerships and Volunteers
Rick Hood, Amherst/Region	Debbie Westmoreland
Amilcar Shabazz, Amherst/Region	Public and Press
Michael DeChiara, Region	

ABSENT

Darius Modestow, Pelham
Dan Robb, Pelham

1. Welcome and Agenda Review 7:03 PM

A. Ms. Fonsh called the Regional School Committee to order at 7:03 p.m. Ms. Appy called the Amherst School Committee to order and Ms. Gould called the Pelham School Committee to order at 7:04 p.m. Mr. Fonsh welcomed the audience and reviewed the agenda. There were no requests for changes to the agenda.

C. Approve Minutes—Ms. Gould moved to approve the minutes of December 10, 2013 with one minor correction. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was approved with Ms. Traphagen abstaining. Mr. Hood moved to approve the minutes of January 14, 2014 as presented. Ms. Gould seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. Announcements and Public Comments 7:07 p.m.

Sierra Romero, ARMS student, spoke in support of the nut restriction in the schools noting how terrifying it would be to see another student having a reaction just because she ate peanuts. Jean Sherlock, community member, made a statement regarding high-stakes testing noting its negative impact on the future of students with special education needs and students of color. Malulani Sherlock, parent, requested that the School Committee reconsider the absence policy for the district and the language of the letters sent home to parents when a student accrues a certain number of absences. She read from the letter she received, noting that the language feels threatening to families as well as condescending. Allie Wicks-Lim, parent, spoke about how difficult it has been for her family since the debate around the nut restriction has been so protracted and requested that a decision be finalized as soon as possible. Karen Skofield, parent, spoke briefly again in support of the nut restriction in the schools. Camila Carpio, ARHS Senior, spoke about her experience with institutional racism and policies in the district saying it is intentional on the part of the School Committee and administration. Vira Douangmany, CF and ARHS parent, expressed her hope that everyone will encourage Amherst Media to play the tape of last night's parent hearing regarding the closing of ARHS on Monday. She applauded the parents who had the courage to bring up the issue of race and the high school principal for acknowledging the issues. Carol Ross, parent and Human Rights Commission member, said that the Commission is planning to work closely with the schools to proactively address these issues.

3. Superintendents Update 7:30 PM

Ms. Geryk distributed written updates about upcoming events. She then provided an update on the timeline of events and the decision making process followed in making the decision to close ARHS and SEC on Monday, January 27th to ensure the safety of students and staff. She also outlined the plan for moving forward in the investigation and for evaluating the steps taken by the system to identify what was done well and what needs improvement. Ms. Geryk noted that the student who made the statement online is not in school right now and no final decision has been made about consequences. After the update, Ms. Geryk recognized Betsy Dinger for her amazing work as an ARMS administrator for the past four years. Ms. Mazur then reviewed the process that will

be followed in searching for new principals for both Fort River and Amherst Regional Middle School. Mr. Shabazz requested that Ms. Mazur email the link to the positions to School Committee members so they can share them with potential candidates. He also requested that the screening committees meet on different days so that people who have children in both schools can participate in both processes. Mr. DeChiara expressed appreciation to Ms. Geryk and the entire staff for their work in keeping students safe yesterday and for acknowledging that this situation did not just begin yesterday. Mr. Baptiste also expressed appreciation for the decision to close, but noted that as someone who sees things from a different perspective he wants to share his thoughts. He stated that what happened yesterday is indicative of a festering problem and is the tip of the iceberg. In terms of financial cost, Mr. Baptiste expressed concern that the student's action caused the entire system to shut down and used major resources to sweep the building to ensure safety. He stated his hope that disciplinary actions for the student will be commensurate with the scope of his actions. Ms. Geryk noted that due process must be followed, but what the student did was a major breach of expectations for our community and there will definitely be appropriate consequences.

3. Subcommittee Updates

7:58 p.m.

Budget Subcommittee—Mr. Hood reported that the Budget Subcommittee met yesterday and reviewed the Capital Plan. He reviewed the budget calendar for the upcoming months. Mr. Hood also reported that the BCG met last week, noting that the Governor's budget came in less than anticipated but hopefully the Senate budget will provide additional funding for towns.

AEF—Mr. Shabazz asked if there has been any success in getting more diversity on the screening committee for allocation of AEF funds. Mr. Hood was not sure and promised to check into the question.

Policy Subcommittee—Mr. Fonsh reported that the Policy Subcommittee met on January 15 and will be bringing forward revised Policies AC and ACB to the full committee for consideration in March. He reported that the Policy Subcommittee will meet at 5:00 p.m. tomorrow in the PD Center at ARMS.

The Collaborative Representative—Mr. Fonsh reported that The Collaborative has appointed Mr. William Deal as the new Executive Director of the Collaborative, noting that he was the unanimous choice of the 30 person committee, with only one abstention. Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Baptiste also spoke about Mr. Deal, noting that they were impressed with him and his educational philosophy in particular.

4. New and Continuing Business

8:10 p.m.

A. Policy Discussion

DOCUMENT: *Memo to the Amherst, Pelham and Regional School Committees from the School Committee Chairs and the Superintendent regarding Policy and Allergy Aware Guidelines dated December 19, 2013 (revised January 23, 2014); School Committee Policy Manual Introduction; Policy BG-G1; Policy ADF*

Mr. Fonsh noted that it is essential that the School Committee determine whether to move forward on whether to adopt a policy on the issue of food allergies so families will know where things stand. Mr. DeChiara said that he believes that a discussion of the process is most important and will lead to a decision. He noted that he believes policy directs procedures so he thinks the school Committee must look to see if there is a policy that covers life threatening allergies, and he does not believe the Wellness Policy covers this issue. For him, he believes the School Committee should decide whether a stand-alone policy is needed regarding life threatening allergies and what the scope should be. Mr. Fonsh requested that Mr. DeChiara put this into a motion for discussion. Mr. DeChiara moved that the Regional School Committee begin a procedure for adoption of a life-threatening allergy policy. Mr. Baptiste seconded and extensive discussion followed regarding the process that was followed in implementing the nut restriction and whether a food safety policy is needed. After discussion, the motion was approved 7-2 with Ms. Gould and Ms. Appy voting against. Mr. DeChiara spoke in favor of creating an ad hoc committee to develop this policy. In light of the lateness of the hour, Mr. Fonsh asked for consensus from the committee to task the Policy Subcommittee with developing a Life Threatening Allergy Policy. After discussion, it was agreed that each member should briefly share any input they want the Policy Subcommittee to consider while crafting the new policy. Ms. Traphagen noted that she is in favor of keeping the regulations in place at the elementary level and hearing more about the efficacy of the regulations at the high school level. Mr. Baptiste, Mr. Shabazz and Ms. Appy agreed with Ms. Traphagen. Mr. DeChiara noted that a number of national stakeholders do not support a ban on nuts. He stated that the policy should be primarily about food safety, not about social-emotional impacts. Ms. Gould and Mr. O'Brien agreed with Ms. Traphagen's comment. Mr. Hood stated that he agrees with the ban and as it stands and believes this is a matter of compassion and protection of the minority. He

would like the policy to address enforcement of the ban. Ms. Marriott stated that she supports the ban as it currently stands. Mr. Fonsh noted that this will be the number one item on the agenda for the Policy Subcommittee tomorrow night.

C. FY15 Regional Budget Presentation

DOCUMENT: FY2015 Proposed Regional Public Schools Budget

Ms. Geryk provided a brief overview of how the proposed budget was developed, noting that there is currently still a gap to be addressed based on the Governor's budget. Mr. Mangano provided an overview of the information binder, outlining the types of data that are included and highlighting the major differences between the FY14 and FY15 budget. He noted that this budget proposal represents a 1.8% increase over FY14. Mr. Morris provided a broad overview of the additions that have been proposed to support district and school goals. He also noted that the district has declining enrollments and it is our fiduciary responsibility to reduce costs related to that decline. More specific information about cuts will be provided at the February meeting. Ms. Mazur reported that the district contracted with NESDEC to review enrollment projections for the next 10 years. They also will be reporting specifically on school choice and its impact on the district's programming. Ms. Geryk reported that the middle and high schools are currently reviewing their schedules based on parameters she set. She noted that the goal will be to implement schedules in FY16, so funding is requested in FY15 to provide time for planning. Mr. Mangano, Ms. Geryk, Mr. Morris and Ms. Mazur answered clarifying questions for the committee as they came up during the overview. Ms. Geryk asked that the School Committee send any specific questions regarding the budget to Kathy Mazur so they can be addressed when the budget comes back before the committee in February.

B. Approve Gifts

DOCUMENT: Memos to the Amherst School Committee from Mary Wallace, District Treasurer, dated 12/13/13 and 1/16/14; Memo to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Mary Wallace, District Treasurer, dated January 23, 2014

For the Amherst School Committee, Mr. Hood moved to accept \$100 from Michael and Carolyn Barnes, \$100 from Mary and Gino Sorcinelli, \$30 from Jamin and Sarah Raskin, \$100 from Nancy Forger, two donations of \$25 each from Thomas and Linda Sten, \$100 from UMass Department of Chemistry, and \$100 from UMass Chemistry-Biology Interface for the Fort River Fund for Science Education; \$4,400 from the Crocker Farm School PGO for the Readathon for Crocker Farm Library; \$200 anonymous cash donation for the Crocker Farm Principal's discretion; \$25 from Elmer and Elaine Ramsey for the Laurie Rabut String Scholarship Fund, and \$500 from Alliance Energy for Crocker Farm for Community Awareness. Ms. Traphagen seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Shabazz moved to accept \$400 from Matthew Emerson for the ARHS Theater Program. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

5. School Committee Planning

10:07 p.m.

Calendar and Items for Future Agendas—Regional School Committee on February 11; Amherst School Committee on February 4; Pelham School Committee on February 6. Mr. Shabazz noted items for future agendas, including the schedule change and discussion about the common core, and requested follow-up information about where we are on language in the absence letter and on the absence policy.

6. Adjournment

10:09 p.m.

Mr. O'Brien moved to adjourn the Amherst School Committee at 10:09 p.m. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Baptiste moved to adjourn the Pelham School Committee at 10:09 p.m. Ms. Marriott seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Gould moved to adjourn the Regional School Committee at 10:09 p.m. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland