

**Joint Meeting of the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee  
Tuesday, June 24, 2014  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Lawrence O'Brien, Amherst/Region Vice-Chair  
Katherine Appy, Amherst Chair/Region  
Darius Modestow, Pelham Chair  
Trevor Baptiste, Pelham/Region  
Rick Hood, Amherst/Region  
Sarah Dolven, Region  
Stephen Sullivan, Region  
Dan Robb, Pelham/Region  
Amilcar Shabazz, Amherst/Region  
Tara Luce, Pelham  
Kathleen Traphagen, Amherst/Region

**ABSENT:**

Emily Marriott, Pelham

Maria Geryk, Superintendent  
Mike Morris, Director of Evaluation & Assessment  
David Slovin, SEC Principal  
Lisa Desjarlais, Pelham Principal  
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal  
Faye Brady, Student Services Director  
Rhonda Cohen, Director of Teaching and Learning  
Derek Shea, Crocker Farm Assistant Principal  
Monica Hall, Fort River Principal  
Andrew Steinberg, RAWG Chair  
Kip Fonsh, RAWG Member  
Kathryn Mazur, HR Director  
Rachel Bowen, Assistant HR Director  
Sean Mangano, Assistant Finance Director  
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

**1. Welcome and Agenda Review**

**7:03 p.m.**

**A. Call to Order & Agenda Review**

Mr. Modestow called the Pelham School Committee to order at 7:03 p.m. and Ms. Appy called the Amherst School Committee to order at 7:03 p.m. Ms. Geryk noted that she is calling the Regional School Committee to order because we have been informed by legal counsel that the Regional School Committee cannot operate without a Chair until the August retreat as was voted at the last meeting. As a result, the motion needs to be reconsidered and the committee reorganized. Mr. O'Brien moved to reconsider the motion of Tuesday, June 10, 2014 to wait until the August retreat to reorganize and appoint a chair. Ms. Traphagen seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Baptiste noted that he would like to have a full discussion of the role of the Chair prior to reorganizing since that was the intent of the original vote. Ms. Geryk outlined the major responsibilities of the Chair. Mr. Baptiste noted that he is referring to the nuances of being Chair, which have caused some contention over the past year. Discussion followed and the motion was approved 10-1 with Mr. Baptiste opposed. Ms. Geryk then called for nominees for Chair. Ms. Appy nominated Mr. O'Brien and outlined the reasons she supports him for the position. Ms. Dolven seconded the nomination. Mr. Shabazz moved to set a limit on the term of the Regional School Committee Chair until the end of the retreat in August 2014. Mr. Robb seconded and the motion was approved 10-1 with Mr. Baptiste opposed. Mr. Shabazz nominated Mr. Hood as Chair and outlined his reasons for supporting him for the role. Mr. Hood expressed appreciation for the nomination, but said he would prefer not to after serving as Chair for two years in the past. Mr. Shabazz stated that there are differences and polarities on the committee, and he believes it is important to have a Chair for the next two months who can work in collaboration to bring the committee together. He then nominated Mr. Baptiste as Chair. Mr. Robb seconded and Ms. Geryk called for a roll-call vote for Chair. The committee voted as follows:

Mr. Robb—Baptiste	Mr. Sullivan—O'Brien
Mr. Hood—O'Brien	Mr. O'Brien—O'Brien
Mr. Shabazz—Baptiste	Ms. Traphagen—O'Brien
Ms. Appy—O'Brien	Mr. Baptiste—Baptiste
Ms. Dolven—O'Brien	

By a vote of 6-3, Mr. O'Brien was selected as Chair. Mr. O'Brien then asked for nominations for Vice-Chair. Mr. Shabazz nominated Mr. Baptiste. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. By unanimous consensus, it was agreed that Ms. Westmoreland will continue to serve as Secretary for the Regional School Committee.

**B. Approve Minutes**

Mr. Robb moved to approve the minutes of the June 5, 2014 Pelham School Committee meeting. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Appy moved to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2014 Regional School Committee meeting. Mr. Sullivan seconded and the motion was unanimously approved with Ms. Traphagen abstaining.

**2. Public Comment**

**7:12 p.m.**

Mr. O'Brien reviewed district Policy BEDH: Public Participation at School Committee meetings. He noted that the policy provides for 15 minutes of public comment, and the committee is returning to following policy. Mr. O'Brien encouraged the public to use their 24 hour access to School Committee members via email. Vladimir Morales, community member, asked when he could anticipate getting a response to emails to the School Committee. Mr. O'Brien noted that he, personally, tries

to respond within 24 hours. Mr. O'Brien recognized five people to speak for three minutes each with the right to cede all or part of their time to another speaker. Malulani Sherlock, who was not recognized, took the microphone to protest, stating that Mr. O'Brien should be ashamed of himself for trying to shut down public discourse in a democracy. Andrea Battle, retired educator, stated that she does not understand how the Superintendent's evaluation can state "excellent" when there are unhappy staff and children in the schools. She also commented that it appears the committee is trying to shut down comments using a tactic that makes the public feel insecure because they are already unhappy. Ms. Battle stated that the slave masters thought their slaves were happy, too. Sara Aurbach, parent, said she wants to thank the School Committee for their service and the time they take away from their family in order to serve. She said she does not believe the schools are perfect, but she feels there has been good and steady work on behalf of students, and she respects the skills and experience of the teachers and staff. Katie Lazdowski, Amherst resident, said she would be abusing her white privilege if she did not step up to ask who Amherst is a perfect town for, noting the incidents that have occurred at the high school over the course of this school year. Vira Dovangmany-Cage, parent, said she would like for the Chair to prioritize the voice of parents when taking public comment. She then spoke about her experience as an elected member of the Crocker Farm School Council, noting that she feels there can be a more productive way for parents to provide input into the School Improvement Plans. Ms. Dovangmany-Cage spoke about the Superintendent evaluation process in Brookline, noting that it allowed for public feedback. Jean Sherlock, grandparent, spoke regarding ongoing issues she sees in the schools including ARHS and ARMS MCAS scores, MSAN, the Family Center, tracking, PBIS, discipline disparity, racism and affirmative action issues. Caridad Martinez, community member, stated that civil unrest is just as fundamental in a democracy as civil discourse. She suggested changing the policy for public participation in meetings. Ms. Martinez noted that it is not just up to Ms. Geryk to change the problems in the district, but it is the responsibility of every member of the school board. Sonji Johnson-Anderson, community member, expressed concern about the seeming effort to silence the voices of those who are often marginalized. She said she implores the committee to listen to the voices of those who come before them, not to attack anyone, but to address them respectfully as their elected body. Mr. Baptiste noted that serving as Chair is an august responsibility and he believes it is very important for any public discourse to be respectful. He encouraged the public to give the Chair the benefit of the doubt. Mr. O'Brien expressed appreciation for the public comments that were shared. Ms. Geryk reported that Amherst Regional Middle School received notice today that they have been awarded the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant for FY15, which includes funding in the amount of \$500,000 over three years.

### **3. Executive Session**

**7:54 p.m.**

Mr. O'Brien announced that the School Committee will enter Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the Chair so declares. By roll-call vote as follows, the School Committee entered Executive Session at 7:54 p.m. with the intent to return to open session:

Mr. Robb—Aye	Mr. Sullivan—Aye
Mr. Hood—Aye	Mr. O'Brien—Aye
Mr. Shabazz—Abstain	Ms. Traphagen—Aye
Ms. Appy—Aye	Mr. Baptiste—Aye
Ms. Dolven—Aye	

The three committees returned to open session at 9:35 p.m.

### **4. New and Continuing Business**

**9:35 p.m.**

#### **A. Surplus Computers**

**DOCUMENT: Memo to Amherst and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committees from Sean Mangano, Assistant Director of Finance, regarding Surplus IT Equipment with Attached Lists of Equipment**

On behalf of the Regional School Committee, Mr. Baptiste moved to declare the attached list of items as obsolete and to direct the Assistant Director of Finance and Operations to auction off, donate or otherwise dispose of this material in conjunction with provisions of MGL 30B. Ms. Dolven seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

On behalf of the Amherst School Committee, Mr. Hood moved to declare the attached list of items as obsolete and to direct the Assistant Director of Finance and Operations to auction off, donate or otherwise dispose of this material in conjunction with provisions of MGL 30B. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

#### **B. Warrant Signing Subcommittee (for summer recess)**

**DOCUMENT: Memo to the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committees from Sean Mangano, Assistant Director of Finance, regarding Proposal to Establish Warrant Subcommittees for June 25 to August 31, 2014**

On behalf of the Regional School Committee, Mr. Baptiste moved to appoint a Warrant Subcommittee composed of three (3) members of the School Committee authorized to review and sign off on payroll warrants and accounts payable warrants to allow for the release of checks, for the period June 25, 2014 through August 31, 2014. Mr. Shabazz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Appy, Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Traphagen volunteered to serve on behalf of the Region. On behalf of the Amherst School Committee, Mr. Hood moved to appoint a Warrant Subcommittee composed of three (3)

members of the School Committee authorized to review and sign off on payroll warrants and accounts payable warrants to allow for the release of checks, for the period June 25, 2014 through August 31, 2014. Mr. Shabazz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Appy, Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Traphagen also volunteered to serve for the Amherst School Committee. On behalf of the Pelham School Committee, Ms. Luce moved to appoint a Warrant Subcommittee composed of three (3) members of the School Committee authorized to review and sign off on payroll warrants and accounts payable warrants to allow for the release of checks, for the period June 25, 2014 through August 31, 2014. Mr. Robb seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Robb, Mr. Modestow and Mr. Baptiste volunteered to serve for Pelham.

### **C. Student Advisory Committee**

**DOCUMENT: *Memo to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Maria Geryk, Superintendent, regarding Student Advisory Committee***

Ms. Geryk reported that the the ARHS student body held their election for the Student Advisory Council for 2014-2015, and Ms. Haygood will serve as their advisor. She noted that the students elected seven members to the committee including Kendall Dapprich, Gabe Fontes, Sajo Jefferson, Myles Olmsted, John Page and Nina Wolff Landau from the Class of 2015 and Josiah Vasquez from the Class of 2016. The students elected Myles Olmsted to serve as the student representative to the Regional School Committee and Sajo Jefferson to serve as the School Equity Task Force representative.

### **D. RAWG Update from Andy Steinberg, RAWG Chair**

**DOCUMENT: *Memo to the Regional School Committee from Regional Agreement Working Group (RAWG) Chair Andy Steinberg regarding Interim Report and Recommendation***

Andy Steinberg, RAWG Chair, and Kip Fonsh, RAWG Vice-Chair, provided a brief update on the work of RAWG. He gave an overview of the issues under discussion and noted that RAWG plans to host community forums in September. Mr. Steinberg noted that the original timeline RAWG proposed for the process is not realistic. RAWG's proposal to the Regional School Committee is to postpone the Town Meeting consideration to the annual Town Meeting in the Spring, rather than at Fall town meetings as scheduled in the original timeline. Mr. Shabazz asked if it is most appropriate for the community forums to be sponsored by RAWG or by the Regional School Committee. Mr. O'Brien noted that there are members of the Regional School Committee who serve on RAWG who he believes will represent the committee. Mr. Baptiste and Ms. Appy agreed, noting that RAWG members have expertise because they have worked on the Regionalization issue for over two years. Mr. O'Brien noted that all members of the Regional School Committee should plan to attend the public forums as well, though. There was discussion of posting Regional School Committee meetings to discuss Regionalization as an opportunity to have more community attendance. Mr. Steinberg noted that RAWG is meeting at 6:00 p.m. tomorrow night in the ARMS PD Center, and the public is encouraged to attend.

### **E. Superintendent End-of-Cycle Evaluation**

**DOCUMENT: *2013-2014 School Committee Evaluation of the Superintendent***

Ms. Appy moved to accept the Superintendent's End-of-Cycle Evaluation, Mr. Hood seconded and Mr. O'Brien opened the floor for School Committee comments. Mr. Baptiste noted that he cannot vote to approve the evaluation since it uses the comments of prior members and not newly elected members. He said he does not want to disenfranchise the newly elected members. Ms. Geryk noted that Mr. Baptiste asked the question of who should participate at the last Pelham School Committee meeting so the district contacted the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to see if they provide guidance on the issue. They do not; however, after hearing about the process used in Amherst they said it was sound. Ms. Dolven stated that she appreciates Mr. Baptiste's concern for the new members, but she believes the issue is more about timing. As a new member, she said she does not feel capable of any sort of substantive evaluation at this point in her service on the Regional School Committee and would have chosen to abstain if given the opportunity to participate. Mr. Shabazz stated that he believes that within the present evaluation framework, having new members participate with the opportunity to abstain would be a good practice. He also noted that he believes the process started out well but was rushed and somewhat collapsed in the end. Mr. Shabazz wants to discuss the evaluation process and the role of the Chair in the process so that it will be more collaborative. Ms. Appy noted that she believes the process was not rushed and the Chairs took a great deal of time to summarize the very thorough comments provided by the individual members. Ms. Traphagen thanked the Chairs for their hard work in compiling the information, particularly for not shying away from addressing both the areas in which the body agrees improvement is needed as well as the areas in which the body admires the Superintendent's work. She noted that she believes it is important to include a method for community input next year, as well as to provide a more realistic timeline for reviewing what is a great deal of information and providing comments. Ms. Luce asked what the process would be for creating a community forum for next year. Ms. Geryk noted that the school committee retreat provides an opportunity to discuss this issue for moving forward. She stated that public feedback used to be a part of the evaluation, but the new state evaluation model did not include it. The State will be implementing student feedback for staff evaluations, staff input for administrator evaluations and administrator/community feedback for the Superintendent evaluations in the future. Mr. O'Brien noted that nothing precludes the School Committee from implementing a community feedback process before the State does. Mr. Hood noted that school work is long and slow, and he hopes we can continue to work together in the process.

Mr. Baptiste noted that the evaluation summary was more on the high side than he believes it should be. He noted that this belief does not reflect a lack of support for the Superintendent, but of areas in which he believes improvement is needed. He stated that he plans to write an evaluation of his own that he will submit to the Chairs and the Superintendent. At the end of discussion, the motion to accept the summative evaluation was approved with seven in favor; two opposed (Shabazz and Baptiste); and two abstaining (Dolven and Luce). Mr. Shabazz left the meeting after this agenda item.

**F. Staffing Approval**

Mr. Modestow moved to appoint Michael Morris to the position of Assistant Superintendent of the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School Districts as recommended by Superintendent Maria Geryk, beginning July 1, 2014. The motion was approved with Mr. Baptiste opposed.

**G. Accept Gifts**

**DOCUMENT: *Memo to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Mary Wallace, Treasurer, dated June 20, 2014***

Ms. Traphagen moved to accept gifts of \$500 from anonymous for two Community Building Awards; \$21,134.98 from the Stop and Shop A+ School Rewards Program for the high school Principal's discretion; \$500 from Lexalytics, Inc. for Project Backpack 2014; \$50 from Sylvia Stoneham for the Joel M. Stoneham Hockey Award; and \$1,650.28 from the Stop and Shop A+ School Rewards Program for the middle school Principal's discretion. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**8. Adjournment**

**10:24 p.m.**

By unanimous consent the Amherst, Pelham and Regional School Committees adjourned at 10:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland