

**Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, November 12, 2013  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**In Attendance:**

Kip Fonsh, Chair	Kathy Mazur, Human Resources Director
Trevor Baptiste	Rob Detweiler, Director of Finance & Operations
Lawrence O'Brien	David Ziomek, Town of Amherst Conservation Director
Debbie Gould	Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder
Trevor Baptiste	Public & Press
Katherine Appy	
Amilcar Shabazz	
Rick Hood	
Michael DeChiara	

**1. Welcome and Agenda Review**

**7:03 p.m.**

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

Mr. Fonsh called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. He announced that a matter has come up within the last 24 hours that requires the committee to enter Executive Session, noting that they will return to open session immediately after. Mr. O'Brien moved to enter Executive Session at 7:03 p.m. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was approved through unanimous roll call vote (with the exception of Ms. Traphagen who arrived just after the vote was taken.) The committee returned to open session at 7:17 p.m. Mr. Fonsh reviewed the agenda.

**B. Approve Minutes**

Mr. DeChiara moved to approve the minutes of October 22, 2013 as amended by Mr. Baptiste. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. DeChiara noted that he requested at the last meeting that PBIS information be included in this agenda packet and it was not. He asked that PBIS be included on an agenda if it has not already been scheduled since this is the fourth consecutive meeting at which a member of the public has commented on PBIS.

**Public Comments**

**7:09 p.m.**

Malulani Sherlock, Amherst resident, Education Coordinator for Quabbin Mediation, distributed a flyer regarding Training Active Bystanders, which is conducting a program at the high school now to train students to be active bystanders. She noted that she felt ashamed and humiliated at the last School Committee meeting when members of the School Committee were silenced and she was unable to be an active bystander, noting that she believes it was rooted in racism. Jean Sherlock, Amherst parent, stated that members of the community have many questions about PBIS and how it is working, noting that they are eager to meet with members of the PBIS team to learn more about the data. She noted that members of SEPAC, OASYS and the NAACP have concerns about the district's ability to address issues of inequity based on behavior witnessed at the last school committee meeting, which she called efforts to silence ALANA School Committee members. Marina Wong, community member, spoke about cultural competence and the School Committee meeting on October 22. Alison Ahearn, parent, stated that she is grateful for the quality education her children receive in Amherst, but expressed concerns about curriculum at the middle school as related to Policy ACB: Affirmative Action on Cultural Diversity. She particularly expressed concern about the use of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, noting that she hopes the selection of literature will be done in a way that will empower youth of color. She also noted that she found the Chair's use of the term "cannibalizing their allies" at the October 22 meeting offensive and stated that he should apologize publicly. Mr. Fonsh thanked members of the community for stepping forward and articulating their views so frankly and candidly, noting that they do not go unheard. He said that the substance of what was shared is not the type of thing that can be responded to quickly, noting that it was not easy to hear some of their words, but he genuinely and sincerely thanks them for sharing. Mr. DeChiara noted that he commented at the last meeting that state law requires enrollment numbers to be provided to the School Committee at each meeting. After checking with MASC, he learned that it is not required by law but may be done by some districts through policy or tradition. He thanked the administration for including enrollment numbers in the agenda packet this week.

**3. Subcommittee Updates**

**7:28 p.m.**

**A. Budget Subcommittee**—Mr. Hood distributed and briefly reviewed the proposed fee schedule for FY2015 on behalf of the budget subcommittee, noting that the proposal is to keep all fees the same as FY14 except for athletics fees. He asked the Committee to review the proposal for a vote at the next meeting.

**B. The Collaborative**—Mr. Fonsh reported that The Collaborative board will meet tomorrow night and the primary work at this time is replacing the current director who is retiring. Mr. Shabazz asked if the current director's contract has been extended to allow for an overlap of her tenure with the new director. Mr. Fonsh will look into the question and report back. Mr. Baptiste noted that as the Pelham representative to The Collaborative he asked for feedback from the Pelham School Committee regarding the characteristics they want in a new director and Ms. Gould shared the feedback from Pelham. Mr. Fonsh then took feedback from the Regional School Committee members.

**C. RSDPB**—Mr. Fonsh noted that the next meeting of the RSDPB is December 5th.

**A. Fort River Conservation Area (Amherst)**

**DOCUMENTS:** *Arial Map of Property; Saul Property Potential Layout; Fort River Conservation Area memo dated November 2014*

Ms. Appy called the Amherst School Committee to order at 7:50 p.m. for the presentation by David Ziomek, Director of Conservation and Development, regarding the Saul property adjacent to Fort River School. Mr. Ziomek outlined the vision for use of the property if it is acquired, which includes a shared space for permaculture and shared gardening in cooperation with Grow Food Amherst. Mr. Shabazz asked what tasks might be asked of school personnel in the future if the land is used as envisioned. Mr. Ziomek explained that a strong interest in utilizing the shared space for educational purposes is what they are seeking from the schools at this time. Ms. Appy asked who would have oversight of the land. Mr. Ziomek said that Grow Food Amherst is taking the lead at this time, but it has not yet been determined who will oversee the land once it's acquired. He noted that it may be a committee of stakeholders. Ms. Traphagen noted that this is a wonderful project, and she hopes it moves forward because of the many educational opportunities it will provide. Mr. Shabazz encouraged Mr. Ziomek to consider the possibilities this project would present for high school students, particularly in areas of career preparation. After further brief discussion, Mr. Hood moved to adjourn the Amherst School Committee at 8:13 p.m. Ms. Traphagen seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**B. FY14 First Quarter Budget Update**

**DOCUMENTS:** *Amherst-Pelham Regional School District Fiscal Year First Quarter Budget Report*

Mr. Detweiler reviewed the highlights of the report, noting that the district is on track at this early point in the year. There were no questions regarding the report.

**C. FY15 Budget Guidelines**

**Document:** *Budget Priorities*

Ms. Mazur distributed and briefly reviewed the Budget Priorities document. Mr. DeChiara requested a bulleted list of expenses related to each item. Mr. Shabazz asked for a careful elaboration of where reductions would be made based on demographics since this was used as justification for cuts in arts last year. Ms. Mazur briefly reviewed how enrollment numbers are utilized to determine the number of sections and teachers are needed at each school. Ms. Gould noted that Ms. Geryk presented the priorities document, which is largely based on last year's document, at last week's Pelham School Committee, explaining that it is meant to serve as a starting point for discussion/feedback. After discussion, it was agreed that members of the committee will review the district improvement plan on their own and submit to Debbie Gould their top six priorities based on their values, even if those that may not be included in the District Improvement Plan. Ms. Gould will compile a list of priorities for discussion at the next meeting.

**D. Enrollment Update**

**DOCUMENT:** *October 1 Reports—Demographic Data 10/1/2013*

Ms. Mazur very briefly reviewed the types of data included in enrollment update and answered questions from the committee. Mr. Shabazz asked if the October 1 figures represent a drop in enrollment over this time last year. Ms. Mazur noted that there was a drop of about 60 students.

**E. Roles Discussion**

**DOCUMENTS:** *2003 MASC/MASS Joint Conference Policy Development—Essentials of Policy Making; Member Handbook—School District Policies; Letter from Robert V. Antonucci, Commissioner of Education; Open Meeting Law Guide dated August 1, 2013*

Mr. Fonsh noted that this agenda item was precipitated by concerns, particularly by Mr. DeChiara, that arose out of implementation of the allergy aware guidelines and invited Mr. DeChiara to begin the discussion. Mr. DeChiara noted that he wanted to have this conversation in order to ensure that the district is productive due to robust conversation. He then reviewed highlights of the documents he shared with school committee members regarding the roles of the School Committee and the Superintendent. Extensive discussion then followed regarding the role of the Chair, Vice-Chair, School Committee members and the Superintendent in a variety of functions, as well as discussion of the way in which the committee is functioning as a body and with the administration. Additionally, there was discussion of ways in which to best make use of time in the meetings.

**F. Superintendent Evaluation Proposed Plan**

**DOCUMENT:** *Superintendent Evaluation Plan*

Mr. Fonsh asked for comments or questions about the proposed evaluation plan to be shared with Superintendent Geryk. Mr. DeChiara noted that everything in the plan is big picture and noted that he plans to email Ms. Geryk with his thoughts. Mr. Shabazz noted that the priority elements of the plan seem consistent with those identified by the School Committee. He said he would like to get a clearer understanding of what the budgetary implications would be for the action plans in order to determine if they could be more ambitious if greater resources were allocated. Ms. Appy noted that she believes everything is included that the School Committee identified as priorities. Mr. O'Brien agreed, noting that he commends the

Superintendent for being responsive to the School Committee's priorities. Mr. Baptiste noted that he spoke to the Superintendent about ways in which she can include an accurate measure in her professional practice goals to determine if members of the faculty and staff have cultural competence. He stated that he believes the School Committee should have a conversation about how to include this in the evaluation rubric. Ms. Traphagen asked for and received clarification about the evaluation process and how the proposed plan is utilized in that process. She noted that, in addition to a focus on increasing achievement, she would like to see a focus on two-way communication to ensure that teachers' and parents' voices are heard.

**G. Accept Gifts**

***DOCUMENT: Memo to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Mary Wallace, District Treasurer, dated November 8, 2013***

Mr. Shabazz moved to accept \$500 from Amherst College and \$300 from Five Colleges, Inc. for the Calvin Terrell assembly and an in-kind donation from the Rotary Club of Amherst for the Dictionary Project. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**5. Adjournment**

**10:09 p.m.**

Mr. DeChiara moved to adjourn at 10:09 p.m. Ms. Traphagen seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland