

Regular Meeting of the Amherst School Committee

March 10, 2015

6:00 p.m.

Library, Amherst Regional High School

In Attendance:

Trevor Baptiste, Chair

Kathleen Traphagen, Vice-Chair

Rick Hood

Lawrence O'Brien

Katherine Appy

Stephen Sullivan

Dan Robb

Amilcar Shabazz (arrived @ 6:27)

Myles Olmstead, Student Representative

Kathryn Mazur, Human Resources Director

Sean Mangano, Finance Director

Marisa Mendonsa, ARMS Principal

Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

Public

Press

Absent:

Sarah Dolven

1. Welcome

6:08 p.m.

A. Agenda Review—Mr. Baptiste called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. and reviewed the agenda. Ms. Appy asked for consideration of tabling the Regionalization discussion and devoting an entire meeting to the topic on March 24. Mr. Hood noted that Superintendent Geryk cannot attend tonight's meeting because she is ill, and Assistant Superintendent Morris cannot be in attendance either. He asked that the Data Trends report be tabled until they are able to participate in the discussion. Mr. Baptiste expressed condolences to Mr. Morris who is absent due to a death in his family.

B. Approve Minutes—Ms. Traphagen moved to approve the minutes of February 24 and February 28, 2015, and Mr. O'Brien seconded. The February 24 minutes were approved unanimously. The minutes of February 28 were approved with five in favor and Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Robb abstaining.

2. Announcements and Public Comments

6:16 p.m.

There were no public comments. Ms. Appy congratulated Mr. Olmstead and all of the ARHS students who participated in the production of Hairspray this past weekend. She noted that the performances were outstanding. Mr. Baptiste congratulated the ARHS Boys Basketball Team for their exceptional performance in making the finals last Friday.

3. Student Advisory Update

6:18 p.m.

Mr. Olmstead reported that the Student Advisory Committee met with Superintendent Geryk and Dr. Brady last Tuesday and had a productive discussion regarding mental and emotional safety of students at the high school. He noted that the things students have expressed a need for are a space where they can go with no questions asked, a list of resources available to students, de-stigmatization of the use of those resources, and adult follow-up with students who access the resources. Mr. Olmstead noted that at their next meeting with Superintendent Geryk, the group will be discussing the teaching styles that work best for them.

4. New and Continuing Business

6:20 p.m.

A. Regionalization

DOCUMENT: Notes from the Amherst School Committee Regionalization Forum 03-03-15; Regional Agreement Working Group Report to the Regional School Committee dated January 13, 2015

Mr. Baptiste noted that the Regional School Committee had hoped to have a completed Regionalization document to consider and vote on whether to bring it forward to the four towns for a vote at the spring Town Meetings. Since the document is not completed, he stated that the next step is to begin immediately to determine a timeline and process for moving forward. Mr. Baptiste opened the floor for a preliminary discussion. Mr. O'Brien asked when we anticipate receiving the Regional Agreement draft from legal counsel. Mr. Baptiste noted that the attorney was working on the document based on information supplied by the RAWG group and has been asked to stop working on it until the school committee decides if they want to provide the guidance for developing the

agreement. Mr. O'Brien noted that he believes the attorney should go forward in developing the draft based on the RAWG recommendations so it can be used as a starting point for the School Committee discussion. Ms. Appy agreed, noting that she believes it would provide a good starting point without losing the work of the past three years. Mr. Hood encouraged the Regional School Committee to look at the agreement first from what is the best thing to do educationally and then what will pass in the four towns. He noted that he believes the school committee needs to have hours of discussion on regionalization, and he does not think the revised agreement is necessary. Mr. Hood stated that having details about the financial savings is important in order to begin the discussion. Mr. Robb agreed that hours of discussion are needed, and he agrees it would make sense to meet on March 24. He expressed his interest in having the attorney's draft and would like to know if the individual town groups will be continuing to work together. Ms. Appy suggested inviting people from each of the towns who have been working on this issue, as well as some middle school teachers who can speak to the educational impact, to the next meeting in order to answer the committees' questions. Ms. Traphagen agreed that she would like to hear from the educators about the educational benefits of regionalizing because she does not believe they are well described in the RAWG report. Mr. Sullivan spoke to Shutesbury's concerns about regionalization, noting concern about the loss of control over things such as the affinity clubs and the Leverett greenhouse. He noted that culture shock is the issue for Shutesbury students moving to the Regional schools, not the academics. Mr. Hood noted that he would like the focus of the next meeting to be mostly on the opportunity for the school committee to talk among themselves about regionalization. Mr. Robb noted that what is best for the education of the students of Pelham is the bottom line for him. Mr. Shabazz stated that we already have a region and this should be discussed as a natural growth of an existing region. He noted that the agreement must address issues such as the greenhouse in a way that will bring all of the towns on board, and discussion by the Regional School Committee is essential to make that happen. After discussion, it was determined that Mr. Baptiste will speak to Attorney Tate to see where she is in the process of finalizing the Regional Agreement draft.

B. FY16 Budget Approval

DOCUMENT: Budget Pages Revised 3/10/15 including pages 5-8, 29-30, 33-40, 4-44, 143-144, and 187-188; FY2016 Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools Budget Vote

Mr. Mangano reported that the amount of the budget being proposed for FY2016 is \$30,022,840. He noted that the items added to the reduction list to close the budget gap are prepayment of retirement incentives and increased health insurance deduction. Mr. Hood moved to adopt a budget of \$30,022,840 for Fiscal Year 2016 for the Amherst Pelham Regional School District and to assess member towns according to the assessment method specified in the Regional Agreement as follows: Amherst \$14,825,506; Pelham \$1,214,614; Leverett \$1,465,029; and Shutesbury \$1,655,434. Ms. Appy seconded and discussion followed with Mr. Mangano answering clarifying questions. Ms. Traphagen recognized the work of the ARMS, ARHS and Central Office administration in putting together this budget with such significant reductions. The motion was then unanimously approved.

C. Capital Plan

DOCUMENT: Amherst-Pelham Regional School District Bond Authorization

Mr. Mangano noted that the Capital Plan has not changed since it was first proposed and briefly reviewed the projects being proposed for FY16. Mr. Hood made the following motion:

VOTED: That the District hereby appropriates the sum of \$310,000 for the purpose of paying costs of the following projects, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto: (i) High School Access Control Upgrade in the amount of \$ 75,000; (ii) High School Gym Bleachers in the amount of \$ 60,000; (iii) High School Intercom System in the amount of \$100,000; (iv) High School Storage Trailers in the amount of \$ 25,000; and (v) Middle School Elevator Upgrade in the amount of \$ 50,000, said sum to be expended at the direction of the Regional School District School Committee. To meet this appropriation, the District Treasurer is authorized to borrow said amount, under and pursuant to Chapter 71, Section 16(d), of the General Laws and the District Agreement, as amended, or pursuant to any other enabling authority. The amounts indicated above for each project are estimates and the Director of Finance may allocate more funds to any one or more of such projects, and less to others, so long as, in the judgment of the Director of Finance, each of the projects described above can be completed within the total appropriation made by this vote.

FURTHER VOTED: That within forty-eight hours from the date on which this vote is adopted the Secretary be and hereby is instructed to notify the Board of Selectmen of each of the member towns of this District in writing as to the amount and general purposes of the debt herein authorized, as required by Chapter 71, Section 16(d), of the General Laws, and by the District Agreement. In addition the Committee shall cause the same information to be published within 10 days after such authorization as a paid notice in a newspaper circulating in the District.

Ms. Appy seconded and discussion followed with Mr. Mangano answering clarifying questions. Mr. Robb noted that it would ease his mind and help him answer questions from his constituents to hear more about the way in which prices were determined for each of the capital items. Mr. Mangano noted that he will speak to Ron Bohonowicz about providing this information to the School Committee. After brief discussion, the motion was approved with seven in favor and Mr. Shabazz abstaining.

D. Data Trends Report

DOCUMENT: District Trends Subcommittee Report (draft) dated February 24, 2015

This item was tabled for a future meeting.

E. 2015-2016 School Calendar

DOCUMENT: 2015-2016 School Calendar (Pre-Labor Day start—Revised w/September 2 School Start)

Ms. Westmoreland reviewed the changes to the proposed 2015-2016 calendar since it was first presented to the School Committee. She noted that the changes are based on feedback from the APEA membership, and the APEA President has reported receiving almost 100% support of the revised calendar. Mr. O'Brien moved to approve the revised calendar with a school start date of September 2, 2015. Mr. Robb seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

F. Approve Gifts

DOCUMENT: Memo to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Mary Wallace, District Treasurer, dated March 5, 2015

Ms. Traphagen moved to accept \$1,667 from the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* for the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* Scholarship donation and \$277.99 from Target Take Charge of Education for the ARHS Principal's discretion. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

5. Policy

7:28 p.m.

A. Second Reading: ADF—Wellness

DOCUMENT: Policy ADF: Wellness (DRAFT—Second Reading)

Ms. Westmoreland noted that the policy presented for second reading is substantially rewritten based on feedback received from the School Committee's first reading of the Wellness Policy. The Wellness Committee worked with Dr. Faye Brady to rewrite the policy. Discussion followed with Rebecca Fricke from the Wellness Committee answering clarifying questions for the School Committee. Mr. Hood moved to strike the language from paragraph eight (8) from the sentence beginning "Only when necessary" to the sentence ending "and positive behavior support." Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. It was agreed that this language pertained to discipline and should be reviewed by the Policy Subcommittee for possible inclusion in a separate policy. Discussion followed with the following edits requested:

- Add the word "contain" between the words "that" and "food" in sentence three (3) of paragraph four (4);
- Edit the last sentence of paragraph five (5) to read "The Superintendent, or his or her designee, will develop guidelines that will help to promote these practices in each building."
- Edit the last sentence of paragraph nine (9) to read "The curriculum will be aligned with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Standards and will focus on building an understanding of healthy living habits."

Ms. Appy moved to accept policy ADF as further amended. Mr. Shabazz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

B. Second Reading: JQA—Food Services Collections

DOCUMENT: Policy JQA: Food Services Collections (DRAFT—Second Reading)

Mr. Mangano reviewed the changes that were made to policy JQA based on School Committee feedback after the first reading. Mr. Shabazz moved to approve Policy JQA as presented. Ms. Traphagen seconded and, after brief discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

C. Second Reading: DFA—Investment Policy

DOCUMENT: Policy DFA: Investment Policy (DRAFT—Second Reading)

Mr. Mangano reviewed the one change that was made to policy DFA based on School Committee feedback after the first reading. Mr. Shabazz moved to approve Policy DFA as presented. Mr. O'Brien seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Shabazz noted that he would like to have more information at some point about what types of investments the district is authorized to make.

D. First Reading: GBGB—Violence in the Workplace

DOCUMENT: Policy GBGB: Violence in the Workplace (DRAFT—First Reading)

Ms. Mazur explained the reason policy GBGB is being requested. She then answered clarifying questions for members of the committee. Discussion followed with the School Committee members providing input on changes for the Policy Subcommittee to consider prior to the second reading. These included:

- Change the word “company” to “district” in the next-to-last sentence before the bulleted list of paragraph one (1);
- Delete the parenthetical clause “(excluding a small pen or pocket knife)” in paragraph two (2); and
- Change the word “person” to “employee” in the first sentence of paragraph four (4).

6. Subcommittee Updates

AEF—Mr. Hood reported that the Spring Sprint fundraiser is May 9.

Budget Subcommittee—Mr. O'Brien reported that the next meeting is March 23, and the agenda will be discussion of the process of setting up an OPEB trust fund.

The Collaborative—Mr. Baptiste reported that the next meeting is March 25.

Policy Subcommittee—Mr. Robb reported that members of the SETF Culture, Community and Climate subcommittee presented proposed language for a policy regarding collection of qualitative and quantitative data about school climate. The next meeting is Monday, April 6.

Data Trends—Mr. Hood noted that the reports are in the agenda packet and will be discussed at the April meeting.

SETF—Mr. Shabazz reported that the next meeting is tomorrow night at 6:00 p.m. in the PD Center at ARMS. Ms. Sherlock reported that the Discipline Disparity working group has a presentation ready for the April School Committee meeting.

7. School Committee Planning

8:45 p.m.

Ms. Westmoreland distributed an updated calendar of School Committee meetings and topics. Mr. Hood requested that consideration be given to adding an additional Regional meeting in April and May. Mr. Mangano requested that OPEB be added as a topic for a future meeting. Mr. Shabazz asked if it might be possible to move the discipline report and PBIS update to March 24 and postpone the regionalization discussion to the April meeting. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair will discuss the possibility with Superintendent Geryk. Mr. Sullivan asked if the co-teaching model that will be implemented at ARMS can be added as an agenda topic at some point this year.

8. Adjourn

8:57 p.m.

Ms. Traphagen moved to adjourn at 8:57 p.m. Mr. Shabazz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland