

REGULAR Meeting of the AMHERST School Committee
7:30 PM, WEDNESDAY, June 27, 2017
Library
Amherst Regional High School

AGENDA

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Welcome | 7:30 p.m. |
| A. Call to Order | |
| B. Approve Minutes—June 14, 2017 and June 20, 2017 | |
| 2. Announcements and Public Comments | 7:35 p.m. |
| 3. New and Continuing Business | |
| A. Bill S223 Foundation Budget Resolution (Vote) | 7:45 p.m. |
| <i>Proposed Motion: To support the passage of Bill S223 Foundation Budget Resolution</i> | |
| B. Superintendent Evaluation (Vote) | 7:50 p.m. |
| <i>Proposed Motion: To support the summary Superintendent evaluation report</i> | |
| C. School Committee Forum Planning (Vote) | 8:20 p.m. |
| <i>Proposed Motion: To approve text as presented for inviting community participation in August and September School Building Committee forums.</i> | |
| 4. Further School Committee Planning | 8:30 p.m. |
| 6. Adjournment | 8:40 p.m. |

Regular Meeting of the Amherst School Committee

6:00 PM, Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Library in Amherst Regional High School

In Attendance:

Phoebe Hazzard, Chair

Anastasia Ordonez

Eric Nakajima

Vira Douangmany Cage

Peter Demling

Michael Morris, Interim Superintendent

Representative Solomon Goldstein-Rose, by Phone

Public and Press

Melissa Vasquez, Recorder

1. Call to Order

6:04 PM

Ms. Hazzard called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. Mr. Demling moved to approve the minutes of May 17, 2017, Mr. Nakajima seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

2. Announcements and Public Comments

There were no public comments. Ms. Hazzard said that Ms. Ordonez and Mr. Demling attended a meeting of the Charter Commission. Mr. Demling explained that the meeting was about the Charter Commission's latest draft changes to the different proposals as to how long school committee terms. He wants a staggered four-year term. Mr. Demling distributed a hand-out regarding his position. Ms. Ordonez spoke of her attendance at the feedback session and about her position. She encouraged the public to visit Amherstma.gov to share their thoughts. Mr. Demling said the Charter Commission will meet next week. Ms. Hazzard said that she and Ms. Ordonez have started to share updates in the superintendent's weekly update. She also wants to have a conversation with The Gazette about the School Committee having a presence there.

3. Superintendent's Update

Dr. Morris said that there are various meetings and events coming up and shared the list along with times and locations. He spoke about the choice/charter /private school survey that went out. He said the district has received more back in paper form than in electronic. Then the discussion turned to the conference that Dr. Morris, Ms. Ordonez and Ms. Hazzard attended in Washington D.C. Dr. Morris spoke of his appreciation for being there and Ms. Ordonez explained the reason for their attendance, which is to be up-to-date on desegregation in schools. Ms. Hazzard spoke of her appreciation for the conference and the desire to create diverse schools. Ms. Douangmany Cage said she was not aware of the conference. Ms. Hazzard said the invitation was from Mr. Morris. Dr. Morris said that it has been in the update. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked about the selection process. Dr. Morris said he invited the Chair and Vice Chair. Ms. Douangmany Cage said that she feels they need to think through who has access to the outlet of communication that others may not have on the committee. She said all should know what is being put out to represent the committee. Dr. Morris said he was under the impression that the committee wanted to communicate through the newsletter. Ms. Ordonez said that the committee did discuss communicating through the newsletter and that there is equal access. She said that the Gazette is another communication vehicle and they want more feedback from those who cannot attend meetings. Ms. Hazzard apologized if anyone felt suppressed. Mr. Demling said he shared Ms. Douangmany Cage's concerns and spoke of the possibility of sharing the writing task for the newsletter. Hazzard said they will work toward efforts of transparency.

4. New and Continuing Business

A. Open Meeting Law Complaint Response from the Attorney General

Ms. Hazzard read directly from page two of the Attorney General's response to an OML complaint against the Amherst School Committee, which confirmed that the committee did not violate open meeting law. She stated that she is always thinking about open meeting law and takes it very seriously. Ms. Ordonez seconded that. She said she understands peoples' concerns and wanted to restate that this is a very politically engaged community.

B. School Building Committee Composition Discussion

Mr. Demling wanted to know the plan for Wildwood and what he should tell the community. He said he did not know exactly what the feasibility study of the Fort River site was and the funding. Mr. Demling questioned what he should tell the public about the schools, including Wildwood. Mr. Nakajima said that this was not on the agenda. Ms. Hazzard agreed and the committee agreed through a straw poll to have the future of the schools as an agenda item in the future. Dr. Morris spoke about what he included in his handout about the Building Committee. Ms. Hazzard said that the goal was not to vote on it tonight but to discuss what the composition of the Building Committee should be. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked how they would ensure that different sides are represented, and Ms. Hazzard opened the floor for discussion. Ms. Ordonez asked how to find the “parent-at-large” that was referred to in the handout from Dr. Morris and why it was necessary for it to be a Fort-River parent specifically. She said they should aim for randomness, not label or categorize. Mr. Nakajima said he wanted to engage the public on the composition of the committee to get their views, opinions and questions. Mr. Demling said he is okay with dropping the specific Fort River parent, but the committee must have a parent perspective. He thought having someone with a communications background to engage with the public may be a good idea. Ms. Hazzard felt like having a Fort River parent was necessary since this was a Fort River feasibility study. Ms. Douangmany Cage wants all to have a voice in the process. Discussion continued regarding the need for public engagement. Dr. Morris noted the time and that they need to call Representative Goldstein-Rose.

C. Bill S223FBRC Discussion

Representative Solomon Goldstein-Rose joined the meeting by phone for the discussion of Bill S223 (An Act Modernizing the Foundation Budget for the 21st Century). He said that School Committees will play a big role in the passing of the Fair Share Amendment. He then provided an overview and answered clarifying questions regarding the Fair Share Amendment and Bill S223. Mr. Demling asked what Representative Goldstein-Rose feels is the most effective thing the public can do to support the bill. Representative Goldstein-Rose said that the public should write to their representatives, but also write letters to the editor. Dr. Morris thanked Representative Goldstein-Rose for his responsiveness and Ms. Hazzard thanked him for joining the meeting.

D. Enrollment Group

Mr. Nakajima moved to task the Superintendent with forming an enrollment working group to develop a menu of potential solutions to the ongoing enrollment challenges facing the district by the end of the calendar year. Ms. Ordonez seconded and discussion followed. Dr. Morris reviewed the text in the agenda packet, noting that the goal to come back in November or December to give details and have options for the committee. Mr. Nakajima asked what the enrollment zones are and the problem statements. Dr. Morris spoke of preschool access and Special Education busing being issues. Ms. Ordonez said she worries about the committee developing a menu of options and hopes it would be able to give a formal recommendation. Dr. Morris said that it would be like a “consumer reports” comparison. After further discussion about the role and make-up of the working group, the motion was unanimously approved.

E. UFCW Recognition Agreement

Ms. Douangmany Cage moved to accept the enclosed recognition agreement between the School Committees of Amherst, Pelham and the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District and the United Food Service and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1459. Dr. Morris said it was for food service workers to unionize. The motion was then unanimously approved.

F. Amherst School Committee Subcommittee Assignments

After discussion of the role of each of the various committees, members agreed to the following subcommittee assignments:

- Amherst Media Liaison—Ms. Douangmany Cage
- Budget Coordinating Group—Mr. Demling
- JCPC—Ms. Hazzard

- SEPAC Liaison—Ms. Hazzard and Mr. Demling
- Amherst Education Foundation Liaison—Mr. Demling
- The Collaborative Representative—Ms. Douangmany Cage
- MASC Representative—Ms. Ordonez

G. Public Comment Format

Ms. Hazzard spoke about where in the meeting to put public comment. Ms. Douangmany Cage said that her understanding was that the chair could recognize a member of the public during the meeting, and Ms. Hazzard agreed that the Chair has that discretion. Mr. Demling said he wants to be fair, while being conscious of time constraints. Ms. Ordonez agreed that the time issue is her biggest concern, saying it is not supposed to be a debate format, but for someone to go on the record. Mr. Nakajima wanted to avoid debate. He suggested maybe holding a public hearing after the meeting. Mr. Demling liked the idea of a public hearing. Ms. Douangmany Cage wanted to allow people multiple opportunities to weigh in. After further discussion, Ms. Hazzard said they are keeping public comment at the beginning of the meeting, but if something comes up during the meeting they may allow public comment. Dr. Morris said that he heard through the conversation that there would be more flexibility that would need to be built into meeting planning.

5. School Committee Planning

Upcoming items will include the Charter Commission on the next agenda. Ms. Ordonez noted she would like a report on air quality in the schools to be in the next meeting and any outstanding needs we can address. Dr. Morris said he did not think an air quality report could be ready until the fall.

6. Adjourn

9:10 p.m.

By unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 9:10PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Melissa Vasquez

Meeting of the Amherst School Committee
Tuesday, June 20, 2017
Library, Amherst Regional High School

IN ATTENDANCE

Phoebe Hazzard, Chair
Eric Nakajima
Anastasia Ordonez
Peter Demling
Vira Douangmany Cage

Michael Morris, Superintendent
Public and Press
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

1. Welcome and Call to Order 6:07 p.m.

Ms. Hazzard called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. The minutes of June 14 were tabled.

2. Announcements and Public Comments 6:09 p.m.

Katherine Appy, community member, thanked the School Committee for the incredibly hard work they do on behalf of students. She made a statement in support of a short delay in establishing the School Building Committee to allow community input and buy-in up front and in support of having the majority of the building committee be made up of members of the Fort River community. Maria Kopicki, community member, made a statement in support of beginning the collection of data now, particularly regarding the water table data at Fort River. She suggested forming an advisory committee to begin this work while the process of establishing the building committee is underway. Ms. Kopicki noted that she also supports having an advisory committee to look at the health concerns of all of our buildings. Johanna Newman, parent, began by thanking the School Committee for their service. She then noted that her views on the School Building Committee have evolved and she requested that we clarify that the scope of the committee is Fort River by having parent and teacher representation only from Fort River. Additionally, she encouraged the committee to keep the building committee a manageable size. Her comments are included in the minutes. Ms. Hazzard stated that this is a big week in the schools for moving up events and recognition ceremonies, noting that the events highlight that our schools are each unique cultures. She also noted that she neglected to put the Bill S223 vote on tonight's agenda, so it will be on next week's agenda. Ms. Hazzard said the plan is to begin posting the full agenda packet on the district website at least 24 hours ahead of the meeting. Mr. Nakajima noted that he and Ms. Douangmany Cage attended the Employee Recognition event last night, noting that it was a lovely event. He thanked Ms. Westmoreland and Dr. Morris for their work in planning and hosting the event. Dr. Morris spoke about the STARS in Special Education event that was hosted by SEPAC honoring special education teachers and paraeducators and the employee recognition event. He noted that the staff is very appreciative of School Committee members attendance at these events. Since this is the last week of the school year, Dr. Morris ended by thanking and acknowledging all of the staff for the incredible amount of work they do on behalf of students.

3. New and Continuing Business 6:24 p.m.

A. Wildwood Infrastructure

Ms. Hazzard noted that Mr. Demling suggested at the last meeting that the School Committee have a discussion about what the plans will be with regard to plans for Wildwood over the next 18 months of the Fort River feasibility study. She opened the floor to committee members for comments or discussion. Ms. Ordonez noted that she believes it is still a question for the committee to consider whether we will apply for MSBA funding for Wildwood. Mr. Nakajima noted that he believes it would make sense to apply for

MSBA funding for both Wildwood and Fort River. He said the committee should probably engage in an organized process with the Wildwood community to share what information has already been obtained through the analysis that has already been done on the site and to see what questions still remain for them. Dr. Morris noted that a list of ideas has been developed from parents/guardians and staff with regard to potential short-term improvements to both Wildwood and Fort River. With regard to the MSBA process, he explained that in the application for the MSBA process, the district must identify which site is the priority when more than one school application is submitted. Ms. Hazzard noted that this will be an important conversation to have early on in the process. Discussion followed regarding the MSBA process and the two sites. Mr. Nakajima stated that his root assumption is that we already have a lot of really great information about the Wildwood site from the MSBA process that was just completed. He said there are decisions that need to be made about Wildwood, but they are not at a parallel level with Fort River because we do not have that level of information about that site. Mr. Demling thanked the committee for sharing their thoughts.

B. School Building Committee Composition

Ms. Hazzard noted that there is a potential motion on the agenda. Mr. Nakajima moved to delay the decision on the composition of a School Building Committee until late September, in order to give the community a chance to provide further input on the topic through public hearings and other means. Barring unforeseen conflicts, these public hearings will be scheduled for early August and early September. Ms. Ordonez seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Hazzard noted that the committee has heard from many members of the community regarding this issue, with many opinions that are polar opposites. She said she knows that whatever decision the committee makes will not make everyone happy, but she wants to ensure the community that they are listening and will make the decision that they believe will be in the best interest of students. Ms. Hazzard noted that the goals are to establish a building committee that functions well and fosters community support and buy-in. She noted that she **believes** more community engagement is necessary to meet these goals and doing such engagement is not effective over the summer. Mr. Nakajima agreed, noting that much more time can be lost if the committee launches into establishing a building committee through a process that the community is not comfortable with. Mr. Demling noted that he thinks the community is still somewhat in the wake of the last process and said he would ask the community for some level of reset for this process. He said he is leaning toward supporting a delay in establishing the building committee, noting that he does not feel ready to take a fully-informed vote. Mr. Demling asked Dr. Morris if there are things it would be possible for the School Committee to authorize him to move forward with, such as the procurement process, in order to minimize the impact of a delay in establishing the building committee. Ms. Hazzard asked the other members of the committee to share their thoughts before Dr. Morris answers Mr. Demling's question. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that she would like to hear from Dr. Morris before she comments. Ms. Ordonez thanked the community for the input the School Committee has received over the past week, noting that this is not about delaying a decision, rather it is about gathering essential input through community engagement on a more formal basis. She spoke about potential ways in which the committee can engage the community, such as First Night on the common, office hours and other methods. Dr. Morris then spoke to Mr. Demling's question. He noted that having additional time and getting more feedback will help clarify the School Committee's role and the School Building Committee's role since it is not defined by a state process. The funds that were appropriated were for the School Building Committee, so he is somewhat wary of moving forward without it being established since they will be the authorized agent to spend the funds. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that she will be happy to support the motion if we can get dates, locations and other logistics for the public engagement set over the summer. After further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

C. Charter Commission Position on School Committee Term Length

Ms. Hazzard thanked Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Churchill from the Charter Commission for attending tonight for this discussion. Mr. Churchill provided context for the Charter Commission's position that School Committee terms should be for two years. He explained that the commission hopes to engage more voters by holding the local elections in November, which can be complicated for local elections since local candidates cannot be listed on the ballot with presidential or gubernatorial candidates. That would mean that local terms would have to be either two or four years. Mr. Rhodes noted that it is difficult to make decisions such as this. He said that there is power in incumbency, noting that committee members can choose to run again at the end of their two year term. Ms. Hazzard opened the floor for school committee members. Ms. Ordonez noted that her concern is about the effect two year terms would have on the stability of the School Committee and on the administration. She said the number one thing she hears from teachers and administrators about what the school committee can do to support their work is to provide stability. Mr. Rhodes encouraged Ms. Ordonez to speak to school committee members in other districts with two-year terms to see what their experience has been. Mr. Nakajima expressed concern about the loss of institutional memory and stability on the school committee with two-year terms. He noted that four years does seem long in terms of a local election, and said he would be less concerned with two-year terms if they were staggered so the committee is not up for election all at the same time. Mr. Demling noted that he has spoken to the Charter Commission at length about this issue and has submitted his thoughts in writing. He stated that he believes two-year terms is a terrible idea and shared his reasons. Mr. Demling noted that staggering terms results in boards that reflect the ebb and flow of political priorities over time rather than reflecting single hot-button issues. Ms. Douangmany Cage spoke about her support of three-year terms, noting her concern that two-year terms will result in less stability. She noted that she would not want school committee members to serve as rubber stamps. Ms. Hazzard expressed her concerns about what challenges two-year, non-staggered terms would create for the Superintendent and Finance Director. Dr. Morris spoke about the importance for a superintendent to be able to develop relationships with school committee members. He also expressed concerns about the loss of institutional memory and noted the impact running for reelection has on school committee members. Mr. Churchill said that there are pros and cons to both the two and four year terms, noting that the commission does hear the concerns expressed. He asked if the choice was two years or four years which the School Committee members would prefer. Mr. Demling, Ms. Ordonez, Ms. Hazzard and Mr. Nakajima expressed preference for four year terms, with Mr. Nakajima noting that his real preference is for three year terms. Ms. Douangmany Cage said she would like to think about it further.

D. Approve Policy JQA: Food Services Collections

DOCUMENT: Policy JQA: Food Services Collections (approved the the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee June 13, 2017)

Ms. Douangmany Cage moved to approve Policy JQA: Food Services Collections. Mr. Demling seconded and, after brief discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

E. Summer/Fall School Committee Planning

DOCUMENT: 2017-2018 School Committee Meetings--Dates and Topics

The committee discussed the process that will be followed in discussing and voting the composition of the building committee after the public hearings. Ms. Hazzard suggested the possibility of having a one-item agenda meeting on September 11 to discuss the composition of the building committee with a vote on the composition at the September 19 meeting. Dr. Morris suggested having the September public forum during

the week of September 11 not September 4 since that is the week of Labor Day. Discussion followed. Suggested dates were for the week of August 1 for an organizational meeting; August 8, 9 or 10 for the first forum; September 11, 13 or 14 for the second forum; and September 25 for the one-topic meeting. For communication, a draft flyer and email will be developed for the June 27 meeting. Ms. Hazzard and Mr. Nakajima volunteered to develop the text for the full committee's consideration. Doodle polls will be conducted to finalize the dates.

F. Accept Gifts

DOCUMENT: Memo to the Amherst School Committee from Jill Berry, District Treasurer dated June 14, 2017

Ms. Douangmany Cage moved to accept \$5,000 from James Kwak and Sylvia Brandt (Vanguard Charitable) for the Crocker Farm Preschool for use at the Program Director's discretion. Mr. Nakajima seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

5. Adjourn

9:05 p.m.

Mr. Nakajima moved to adjourn at 9:05 p.m. Ms. Ordonez seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Statement before the School Committee (Johanna Neumann)

6/20/2017

Thank you so much for all your service and for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Johanna Neumann and I am the parent of a first grader at Fort River and a preschooler who will likely start at Fort River in the Fall of 2018. I'm here to share with you my perspectives on the proposed formation of a Fort River School Building Committee.

First, I'm hoping the school committee can clarify that the scope and reach of this project is limited to Fort River School building and that it will not have implications on Wildwood or Crocker Farm elementary school buildings. One step that will help clarify that is to remove non-Fort River teachers and non-Fort River parents from the building committee.

Secondly, community buy-in and engagement will be critical if we want to move forward with a functional school building committee. Broad buy-in and engagement will also help secure the next phase of funding for the feasibility study, and ultimately, to win funding to secure 21st century learning spaces for our kids and teachers.

Toward that end, I respectfully request that you constitute a building committee that is made up of at least 50% community members, with a focus on the Fort River community, as well as Amherst residents who bring particular skill sets to the process and/or who represent historically underrepresented constituencies. To complement that, I support having no more than 50% of the voting members be school employees and/or town officials.. I also encourage you to go to reasonable lengths to have individuals of color represented on the building committee.

Thirdly, I believe that the size of the building committee should stay manageable where everyone serving should feel like they have an important role to play - in the realm of 10-12 voting members. Town officials who can help inform and who need to report back to their bodies on the proceedings of the building committee can be involved as nonvoting members or be called in when their expertise is required.

To give an example, one potential composition could be:

POTENTIAL BUILDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

1. Resident Expertise & Guidance: these individuals would apply to serve, would be vetted by the school committee, and then selected randomly out of the pool of applicants with similar qualifications. Ideally, these individuals would also have direct ties to the Fort River community. Some qualifications of interest include:
 - a. Amherst resident with experience in architecture/construction
 - b. Amherst resident with experience in sustainability/green design
2. Fort River Parents/guardians: The Fort River PGO would be charged with developing a process to identify representatives of their community to serve on the school building committee. Those representatives could include but not be limited to:
 - . Current Fort River parent/guardian
 - a. Parent/guardian of former Fort River student
 - b. Future Fort River parent/guardian
 - c. Fort River past or current parent/guardian who can represent the economically disadvantaged/renter community
 - d. SEPAC member
3. School and town officials
 - . Current Fort River Teacher
 - a. Fort River Principal or designee
 - b. School Finance Director
 - c. Superintendent or designee
 - d. Select Board member
 - e. School Committee member

POTENTIAL NON-VOTING MEMBERS

1. Town Manager or designee
2. Finance Committee member or designee
3. Director of Facilities or designee
4. Town Finance Director or designee

I believe a short delay in the formation of the school building committee is prudent if it helps engender community buy-in. I respectfully suggest that you consider a process where the formation of the building committee is discussed at a public forum that allows for dialogue and discussion. Then, once the composition has been decided, I respectfully recommend that you advertise the positions widely. Some fora for outreach include an advertisement in the Amherst Bulletin, flyers posted in prominent locations, an email circulated by the superintendent.



THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

AMHERST SCHOOL COMMITTEE
170 CHESTNUT STREET
AMHERST, MA 01002

413-362-1810 (PHONE)
413-549-6108 (FAX)

Resolution to Support Senate Bill 223: An act modernizing the foundation budget for the 21st century

Amherst School Committee

In light of the 2015 findings of the Foundation Budget Review Commission, the increasing urgency of school budgeting gaps across Massachusetts, and in support of Senate bill 223:

We are convinced that providing a high-quality education to every student within the Commonwealth regardless of wealth, income, educational background, or zip code is not only a matter of constitutional obligation but of generational responsibility.

We agree with the Foundation Budget Review Commission regarding both the constitutional obligation and generational responsibility the Commonwealth holds for all of our students. We recognize the ever-increasing gaps among schools and the increasing dependence of our municipalities on local revenue to fund our schools. We appreciate that it is this dependence, and the inequities that result from it, that the foundation budget was intended to alleviate. We share the concern that in continuing to postpone reform of the foundation budget, we jeopardize the good work of public education and thus the health of our democracy itself.

As such, we call for implementation of the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission with all available speed.

Respectfully,

Phoebe Hazzard, Chair

Anastasia Ordonez, Vice-Chair

Peter Demling, Secretary

Vira Douangmany-Cage

Eric Nakajima