

**Regular Meeting of the Amherst School Committee
January 17, 2012**

In Attendance:

Irv Rhodes, Chair	Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Rick Hood	Rob Detweiler, Finance Director
Rob Spence	JoAnn Smith, Student Services Director
Katherine Appy	Beth Graham, Director of PD, Collaboration & Teacher Evaluation
	Monica Colley, FR Principal
	Mike Morris, CF Principal
	Rhonda Cohen, Director of Teaching and Learning
	Jerry Champagne, Information Systems Director
	Kathy Mazur, Human Resources Director
	Susan Kennedy Marx, FR Assistant Principal
	Nick Yaffe, Wildwood Principal

1. Welcome 7:00 p.m.

A. & B. Call to Order and Agenda Review--Mr. Rhodes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda. He announced that the Amherst School Committee will enter Executive Session after the agenda is complete and will not return to open session.

C. Approve Minutes--Ms. Appy made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 13 and December 20, 2011 meetings. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. Public Comments 7:02 p.m.

Mr. Rhodes announced that the Regional School Committee entered Executive Session at 6:30 p.m. at which time they voted unanimously to ratify the contracts for Units A, B and C. The Amherst School Committee will be considering the contract in Executive Session at the end of this meeting.

3. Superintendent's Update 7:03 p.m.

DOCUMENT: Memo from Superintendent Maria Geryk to the Amherst School Committee regarding Superintendent's Update, dated January 17, 2012

Ms. Geryk expressed gratitude to everyone who worked on the Administration's negotiating team and to the APEA and their negotiating team for their work in negotiating the contract that was just ratified. Ms. Geryk then reported that when Marks Meadow School was closed, there were some funds left in the Principal's gift account, which need to be reallocated in some way. She noted that she plans to transfer those funds to the Wildwood Principal's gift account since that is where the majority of the Marks Meadow students were redistricted. Ms. Geryk reported that the ARHS library has been set-up to allow for live broadcasts on ACTV and thanked Mr. Champagne and the rest of the IS staff for working with ACTV to make this happen. She noted that the facility should be ready for school committee meetings within the next couple of weeks. Ms. Geryk briefly noted the dates for the upcoming later start time public forums and days/times at which the free adult ESL classes and Parent Cafes are offered.

4. New and Continuing Business 7:08 p.m.

A. FY13 Budget Information

DOCUMENTS: Amherst Public Schools FY2013 Proposed Budget (binder); Amherst Schools one-page budget summary (dated 1/17/2012; 6:02 p.m.)

Mr. Rhodes noted that the presentation tonight is merely a summary of the FY13 budget proposal and that there will be an in-depth discussion at the next meeting. Mr. Detweiler then provided a brief orientation to the budget proposal. He then distributed and briefly reviewed a one-page "cheat sheet" summary of FY13 budget proposal highlights. Ms. Geryk reported that she will be working with the Principals over the next two weeks to bring a proposed adds/cuts list to the School Committee at their next meeting. They will be working to address the gap, which is close to \$500,000, keeping School Committee priorities in mind throughout the discussions. Mr. Hood noted that he would like to see an analysis of why the cost of salary step increases is not "a wash" with higher paid

teachers retiring each year. Ms. Geryk said she will be happy to provide that analysis. Mr. Rhodes encouraged the school committee members to review the documents and be ready for discussion at the next meeting. He thanked Mr. Detweiler and his staff for the in-depth, detailed information provided in the budget proposal binders, noting that this is the type of data necessary for the School Committee to make informed decisions about the budget.

B. PBIS & Instructional Rounds Update

DOCUMENTS: *School Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (Powerpoint slides); Instructional Rounds: Crocker Farm Elementary School June 8, 2011 (Powerpoint slides); Never Work Harder Than Your Students & Other Principles of Great Teaching (Chapter 2: Know Where Your Students are Going)*

Ms. Smith distributed the PBIS Team Implementation Checklist, which is used by the PBIS team as a tool to monitor progress. She spoke about what PBIS has identified as the necessary components to make a culturally competent school. Mr. Morris gave examples of two specific ways in which Crocker Farm is working to ensure that everything done at the school is viewed through the lenses of cultural competency and responsiveness. Ms. Colley reported that PBIS has provided a framework that allows all Fort River administrators, faculty and staff to be very consistent in expectations and responses. She noted that it levels the playing field for all children. Mr. Yaffe spoke about how PBIS fits in the district's and schools' collaborative structure, which is helping to identify our core, essential practices. He noted that this is leading to a more coherent, consistent experience for all students. Ms. Appy stated that she likes the notion that PBIS not only helps students develop social skills, but that it provides them with the answer about expected behaviors, which is a tremendous equalizer. Mr. Hood asked if PBIS might have an effect on the discipline data in the secondary schools in five to 10 years, based on research and literature from schools already using it. Ms. Smith gave an example of one district that reported a positive change in the disproportionality in their discipline data, noting that the improvement was sustained over the three year period included in the research. Ms. Geryk noted that PBIS helps staff shift their thinking about behavior, noting that children behave in certain ways because they are trying to get their needs met. PBIS gives adults a new way to think about viewing behavior without judgment. Mr. Rhodes noted that he is really excited about PBIS and is looking forward to seeing a year's worth of data. He said he would like to have a composite of staff buy-in on PBIS at the end of the year.

Ms. Graham reported on the inaugural Instructional Rounds that were done at Crocker Farm last June. She noted that Instructional Rounds provide a way for the adults in the district to model for students what it means to be a learner. It also provides a safe way for experienced and new teachers to have meaningful conversations and to have shared ownership of all students. She noted that the next Instructional Rounds are scheduled for February, and they will be done in one of the elementary schools. Ms. Graham noted that a press release last week by the East Penn School District in Pennsylvania cited the Instructional Rounds model in Amherst as the model they are using to implement Rounds in their district. Mr. Hood asked how many teachers will participate in the February rounds. Ms. Graham noted that about 40 participated in the last ARHS rounds and it was a very large group to do the work. The group in February will probably be smaller. Ms. Appy noted that PBIS and Instructional Rounds are both huge changes both for implementation and for the culture of the district. She asked how the buy-in from teachers has been on both. Ms. Geryk reported that a great amount of time was spent in setting up school instructional teams, noting that it has been a very thoughtful, somewhat organic process that has helped people to feel excited. She noted that the leaders of the building have done a great job of sharing the vision with their staff members. Mr. Morris noted that teachers rarely get an opportunity to see teaching and there is a high-level of buy-in on event days because teachers want the opportunity to see their colleagues teach.

C. School Choice

DOCUMENT: *Memo from Kathy Mazur, Human Resources Director, to Maria Geryk, Superintendent, regarding School Choice--Amherst (dated January 12, 2012)*

Ms. Geryk noted that she has asked the Amherst School Committee to consider opening School Choice seats that will be filled only when there are gaps in enrollments. School Choice would not be used to increase enrollment enough to require additional teachers. Ms. Appy asked if the backfill of classrooms would be guided by target numbers. Ms. Geryk assured her that the class size targets would be used as the guide. She noted that, even if enrollment was below target, she would work with Principals to also consider make-up of the classes to ensure it would make sense to accept choice students. Mr. Spence asked about the timeline for filling School Choice slots. Ms. Geryk said that advertising can begin at the end of next month but it will be later in the year before the final

decision can be made about what seats to open. Mr. Spence said he would like to have a discussion at the School Committee level about the class size targets, noting that they seem high based on what has been stated as priority in the district. Mr. Rhodes said this should be a full discussion that should result in a School Committee policy. Ms. Geryk said she can pull together a recommendation for the School Committee's consideration. Mr. Hood made a motion that the Amherst School District participate in the School Choice program beginning in Fiscal Year 2013. Ms. Appy seconded. After brief discussion during which each School Committee member reiterated that School Choice should be used only to fully utilize existing district capacity, not to increase capacity, the motion was unanimously approved.

D. Open School Committee Seat

Mr. Rhodes explained that, by statute, the School Committee must act on the open seat left by Mr. Rivkin's resignation by voting to either fill the seat now or not to fill the seat before the next election. He noted that if the School Committee votes not to fill the seat, the Select Board would have the right to override the vote and fill the seat. Mr. Rhodes said his recommendation is to vote to fill the seat. After brief discussion, Mr. Hood made a motion to fill the empty seat on the Amherst School Committee. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Rhodes asked Ms. Westmoreland to prepare a notice of the vote for the Select Board Chair for his signature.

E. Appoint Innovation Planning Committee Member

DOCUMENT: Memo to the Amherst School Committee from Maria Geryk, Superintendent, regarding Innovation School Planning Committee (dated 1/12/12)

Mr. Morris briefly described the process for becoming an Innovation School in Massachusetts. He noted that Crocker Farm is at the very beginning of the process, which is to apply for a planning grant. If awarded, the grant would provide funds to study the possibility of becoming an Innovation School, which requires appointment of an Innovation Planning Committee. The planning committee must include either a School Committee member or a designee appointed by the School Committee. Mr. Rhodes noted that he is interested in serving on the Innovation Planning Committee. Mr. Spence made a motion to appoint Mr. Rhodes to serve on the Crocker Farm Innovation Planning Committee. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

E. Accept Gifts

DOCUMENT: Memo from Mary Wallace, Treasurer, to the Amherst School Committee dated January 5, 2012

Mr. Spence made a motion to accept \$3,000 from the Crocker Farm School PGO Read-a-Thon for the Crocker Farm library. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

5. Policies **None**

6. Subcommittees **None**

7. School Committee Planning **8:42 p.m.**

A. Calendar—FY13 Final Budget Proposal; Sabbatical Proposal

B. Items for Future Agendas—Class size

8. Adjournment **8:44 p.m.**

Mr. Spence made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:44 p.m. not to return to open session. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland