

**REGULAR Meeting of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee  
Tuesday, October 13, 2015  
Library, Amherst Regional High School**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Trevor Baptiste, Chair  
Rick Hood  
Katherine Appy  
Stephen Sullivan  
Kip Fonsh  
Phoebe Hazzard  
Vira Douangmany-Cage (arr. 6:02 p.m.)  
Kathleen Traphagen (arr. 6:39 p.m.)

Maria Geryk, Superintendent  
Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent  
Sean Mangano, ARPS Finance Director  
Faye Brady, Student Services Director  
Monica Hall, Equity & Professional Dev Director  
Kathy Mazur, Human Resources Director  
Rachel Bowen, Human Resources Assistant Director  
Mark Jackson, Principal ARHS  
Marisa Mendonsa, Principal ARMS  
Carol Ross, Media/Climate Communications Specialist  
Jean Fay, APEA President  
Todd Bard, Independent Energy Advisor  
Josiah Vasquez, ARHS Student Advisory Council  
Community members & press  
Kimberly Stender, Recorder

**ABSENT:**

Dan Robb

**1. Executive Session**

**6:00 p.m.**

Mr. Baptiste called the meeting to order for the purpose of Executive Session. He read the wording pertaining to executive session as it appeared on the agenda: "Enter Executive Session according to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21 (a)(2) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares." He announced the Regular meeting of the Amherst School Committee would be in recess until 7:00 p.m. He then asked for a roll call vote:

Hood – aye  
Sullivan – aye  
Fonsh – aye  
Appy – aye  
Hazzard – aye  
Baptiste – aye

Ms. Douangmany-Cage arrived after roll call and did not vote. All proceeded into Executive Session with Ms. Geryk, Mr. Morris, Ms. Mazur, Ms. Tate, and Ms. Bowen. Ms. Traphagen arrived at 6:39 p.m. and did not participate in Executive Session.

**2. Welcome**

**7:01 p.m.**

Mr. Baptiste re-convened the Regular Meeting of the Amherst School Committee. During Agenda review, Mr. Fonsh requested an additional ten minutes to discuss the solar project (agenda item B.) and asked that five minutes of discussion be removed from agenda item D. He also requested that time be allotted to discuss the role of parliamentarian. Ms. Appy advised that the group remain on time as the agenda was very full. She suggested the parliamentarian role be discussed during the Norms conversation (agenda item E.) Mr. Baptiste asked if there were any objections to these changes and there were none. Ms. Traphagen reminded the group that the topic of parliamentarian should never have been started at the August 27, 2015 retreat and asked that this be discussed during the Norms conversation. Ms. Douangmany-Cage reported that the Culture, Community and School Climate (CCC) sub-committee of the School Equity Task Force would like the school climate data survey feedback to be included on an upcoming agenda. Ms. Appy explained that the Policy Sub-Committee did not meet so this item must be postponed. Mr. Baptiste offered to schedule the next meeting of the Policy Sub-Committee on behalf of Mr. Robb. Mr. Hood made a motion to approve the minutes of September 8, 2015 and October 1, 2015. Mr. Fonsh indicated that in the minutes dated October 1, 2015 the date of the Leverett Regionalization

Public Forum was noted as October 26 but it is actually October 21, 2015. Ms. Appy seconded and both sets of minutes were approved unanimously.

**3. Announcement & Public Comment**

**7:07pm**

There were no public comments.

**4. Superintendent's Update**

**7:07 p.m.**

Ms. Geryk invited all to attend the free screening of the film, *Most Likely to Succeed*, on October 14, 2015 in the ARHS Auditorium. She also encouraged all to attend the Pelham Regionalization Public Forum on Wednesday, November 4, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. in the Pelham Elementary School Gymnasium.

**5. New & Continuing Business**

**A. 7-12 Consolidation Update**

**7:10 p.m.**

***DOCUMENT: Memo regarding Update-Exploration of Secondary Restructuring Options***

Ms. Mazur reminded all to attend the Hurricane Re-Visioning Summit on Saturday, November 7, 2015 in the ARMS Auditorium at 9:00 a.m. She explained the purpose of the summit and the comprehensive work of MOPC. Ms. Mazur reviewed the contents of the memo and stated that she will update the FAQs. She then asked for questions. Mr. Hood asked how the MS/HS building will be updated and utilized. Ms. Mazur replied that the priority will be to make modifications at ARHS. Ms. Hazzard asked when building renderings and overlays would be available and if separate drop-off locations and entrances were being considered. Ms. Mazur stated that as plans are received they will be shared. Ms. Traphagen inquired about the financial timeline for this project and what the overall savings would be for the district. Ms. Mazur replied that by closing the ARMS cafeteria the savings would be approximately \$75,000.00. If ARMS in its entirety was closed, the savings to the district would be approximately \$800,000.00. If South East Campus was moved to ARMS, the annual savings would be \$40,000.00. Ms. Mazur advised that by combining the two schools into one building, the costs associated with paraeducators, librarians and staff would be consolidated. She will create a document explaining savings/costs for school committee members to review before the November 7, 2015 Hurricane Re-Visioning Summit. She will also submit a final report to the school committee prior to the vote in January 2016. Mr. Sullivan asked how Grade 7-12 licensed educators would fare in a Grade 9-12 school. Ms. Mazur replied that this should not be a major issue.

**B. Solar Project**

**7:16 p.m.**

Mr. Fonsh asked to remove Ms. Appy's motion from the October 1, 2015 meeting from the floor. Ms. Douangmany-Cage seconded. Ms. Traphagen read the motion from the October 1, 2015 meeting: "Move to authorize the district to enter into a twenty year contract for net metering credits with Lake Street Development partners, LLC." Mr. Fonsh's motion passed unanimously. Ms. Douangmany-Cage suggested that a decision regarding Lake Street Development and the Deerfield array be postponed until after the October 27, 2015 Town of Amherst Sustainability public forum pertaining to the future of solar energy in Amherst. Ms. Appy replied that the Deerfield array and the subsequent solar credit is currently the best option for Amherst. Ms. Mangano agreed that the Deerfield array is the safest deal as the two landfills in Amherst may not be developed into solar arrays until late 2016. He reminded the group that only enough energy for municipal buildings and not regional schools would be generated. Mr. Hood stated that the only risk would be locking into a contract for 20 years. Mr. Fonsh stated that 20 years is a long time to commit to the Deerfield deal and as the improvements and changes in the solar industry occur, he has concerns. He specifically cited page 17/paragraph #11.13 of the contract and pointed out that this section of the contract is missing. Mr. Mangano assured the group that he would send the missing information to them. Mr. Fonsh is concerned that the committee is rushing into a decision that would impact the next 20 years and that a vote could reasonably be postponed. Mr. Bard explained that the lawyers would negotiate the contract and this would not be a responsibility of the school committee. In addition, a right to re-negotiate with the developer exists. He explained that the DEA could make it extremely difficult to develop the Amherst landfills into array because of possible environmental contaminants. He currently is speaking with other school districts which could enter into the Deerfield array contract. Mr. Bard stated that the

Deerfield array would be the last one built in western Massachusetts and would offer the largest discount and urged the committee to vote its approval immediately. Mr. Mangano added that the district's attorney reviewed the contract. Ms. Appy added that financial benefits for regional schools were evident and urged the committee to allow lawyers to negotiate the contract and discuss changes with the committee at a future time. She added that this opportunity should not be missed as it saves money for the district and also urged the committee to vote immediately. Ms. Douangmany-Cage inquired about the money Deerfield would make from this deal. Mr. Mangano explained that Deerfield will receive credit for the land upon which the array will be built as payment in lieu of taxes. All districts will enter into identical contracts. Ms. Douangmany-Cage hoped that Amherst could develop a plan to decrease energy expenditures. Mr. Bard explained that the Amherst Town Manager negotiates the contract with Lake Street Developer LLC. Ms. Douangmany-Cage asked if the Northampton Housing Authority and Shutesbury Solar Project and the public were made aware of other solar opportunities. Mr. Bard replied that many unknowns currently exist. Ms. Traphagen stated that a vote should not be postponed as this is the only chance to enter into this project. Mr. Hood stated that he was not concerned about solar and Mr. Mangano added that the deal seems "safe." Mr. Baptiste asked Ms. Vasquez if he understood the debate and Mr. Vasquez indicated he did and that the savings seemed very appealing. Mr. Vasquez inquired if the savings would be used for ARHS programs and Ms. Geryk stated the savings would reduce budget cuts. Upon conclusion of discussion, Mr. Baptiste asked members to vote. The vote passed with all in favor except for one objection (Douangmany-Cage).

**C. Superintendent Goals**

**7:50 p.m.**

***DOCUMENT: Superintendent Evaluation 2015-2106 Self-Assessment, Goals, Action Steps***

Ms. Geryk asked that the committee approve the goals just as the Pelham school committee did on October 7, 2015. She reviewed changes she made to the goals based upon recommendations by the committee. Mr. Fonsh thanked Ms. Geryk for the work around family engagement especially the Kindergarten home visits. Ms. Appy also thanked Ms. Geryk for her work. Ms. Hazzard stated she was excited about the direction the district was headed and noted the SMART goals. Ms. Traphagen struggled with understanding how the committee will know if these goals are achieved. Ms. Geryk explained that staff will develop action plans with built-in measures. She offered to create a draft action step and submit to the committee for consideration. Ms. Traphagen asked if artifacts could be included as well. When the discussion ended, Ms. Appy made a motion to approve the superintendent's goals and Ms. Traphagen seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

**D. Determine which members will complete 2015-2016 Superintendent Evaluation 8:17 p.m.**

Mr. Fonsh moved that the current Regional School Committee is responsible for the 2015-2016 Superintendent Evaluation along with members of the Pelham School Committee. Ms. Appy seconded the motion. Mr. Hood asked if this was legal and Mr. Morris replied that he conferred with DESE which stated that districts can manage this on their own and a policy could be written if a district wanted to create one specific to this matter. Mr. Hood responded that the committee could vote as to specifically what it wanted to do but advised that a policy would make this very clear. Mr. Sullivan stated that he was happy to opt out of the evaluation process last year because he felt he did not have time to prepare as a new member (May 2014). Ms. Douangmany-Cage added that disclosure should exist regarding the evaluation process for all new and resigning committee members. Mr. Fonsh added that even as an experienced but returning regional committee member, he still felt uncomfortable with completing the evaluation process. Mr. Baptiste prefers the opt-out clause for members in fairness to the superintendent. Mr. Sullivan asked if Pelham should be exempt from the Regional discussion on the grounds that they are PreK-6 like Shutesbury. Ms. Douangmany-Cage asked if Mr. Sullivan meant this as a policy revision. Mr. Baptiste added that the Policy Sub-Committee has an opportunity to review this process but it is currently not a policy. He would like this topic to be reconciled immediately so that the evaluation process can begin earnestly in Spring 2016. Ms. Douangmany-Cage suggested that the Regional evaluation be different than that of Pelham. When the discussion ended, Mr. Baptiste asked for a vote. The vote passed with all in favor except for Mr. Baptiste and Ms. Douangmany-Cage who opposed.

**E. School Committee Norms**

**8:32 p.m.**

***DOCUMENTS: Amherst Regional School Committee Proposed Norms at August 27 Retreat; Amherst Regional School Committee Existing Policies Related to Roles, Responsibilities, Norms SUMMARY***

Ms. Traphagen distributed two documents and thanked Mr. Hood and Mr. Baptiste for creating them after the retreat. Mr. Fonsh brought up the topic of parliamentarian. He stated that in many instances, motions are voted which are not listed on the agenda. This practice should be avoided. He also stated that agendas themselves are often problematic. He suggested the Policy Sub-Committee determine what do in this case. Ms. Appy added that most of this is already a policy and the purpose of a parliamentarian would be to enforce policy during a meeting and help the committee adhere to the policies in place. She is in favor of a committee member serving in the role of parliamentarian. Ms. Traphagen believes the current practice works. She and others rely on Mr. Hood's knowledge of Roberts Rules. Ms. Douangmany-Cage suggested that a copy of the Policy Handbook be brought to all meetings for reference. Mr. Hood stated that the key is to be reminded of policy and thinks the group is doing well in regards to this. He suggested that Roberts Rules and policies be re-visited at the first meeting. Ms. Douangmany-Cage pointed out that the policy pertaining to Union 26 currently exists as a draft and has yet to be approved. Mr. Baptiste agreed with Ms. Traphagen and felt it unnecessary to appoint one at this time. Mr. Hood suggested that a vote be taken at the November meeting. Ms. Appy added that the green cards Mr. Hood created months ago were working well as visible reminders of norms.

**F. Fundraising Ideas for Students' International Travel**

**8:53 p.m.**

In respect to time, Mr. Baptiste asked that this item be tabled and placed on a future agenda.

**G. Accept Gifts**

**8:53 p.m.**

Ms. Hazzard moved to accept the gifts and Mr. Hood Seconded. Ms. Hazard read the gifts: \$3,730.00 from Amherst Education Foundation to support Cultivating Our Future and \$4,275.00 from Amherst Education Foundation to support Increasing Diversity & Access in Music at ARMS. The motion passed unanimously.

**6. School Committee Planning**

**8:56 p.m.**

On behalf of Mr. Robb, Mr. Baptiste will call a Policy Sub-Committee meeting prior to the November 10, 2015 school committee meeting. Mr. Hood recommended that a Trends discussion be added to an agenda in 2016. Mr. Sullivan suggested an update from Mr. Vasquez regarding the Student Advisory Council and ARHS as well as updates from Mr. Jackson and Ms. Mendonsa. Ms. Geryk will send committee members the final version of the DIP and SIPs. Ms. Douangmany-Cage asked if Ms. Geryk could respond to the terms "lock down" and "shelter in place." Ms. Geryk stated that the district is currently working with safety agencies to clarify these terms.

**7. Adjournment**

**9:12 p.m.**

Ms. Traphagen moved to adjourn at 9:12 p.m. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kimberly Stender

