

**JOINT RETREAT of the Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional School
Thursday, August 27, 2015
Lewis-Sebring Room, Amherst College**

In Attendance:

Trevor Baptiste, Pelham & Region (Chair)
Katherine Appy, Amherst (Chair) & Region
Tara Luce, Pelham (Chair)
Kip Fonsh, Region
Rick Hood, Amherst & Region
Vira Douangmany Cage, Amherst & Region
Dan Robb, Pelham & Region
Phoebe Hazzard, Amherst & Region
Stephen Sullivan, Region
Kathleen Traphagen, Amherst & Region
Emily Marriott, Pelham

Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Mike Morris, Assistant Principal
David Singer, Facilitator
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

Absent:

Darius Modestow, Pelham

1. Call to Order and Agenda Review

5:21 p.m.

Mr. Baptiste called the Regional School Committee to order at 5:21 p.m., Ms. Appy called the Amherst Committee to order and Ms. Luce called the Pelham Committee to order at 5:21 p.m. There was discussion regarding the best process for discussing the committee members' self-evaluation. Mr. Hood moved to remove School Committee Self-Evaluation from the agenda for tonight, Ms. Traphagen seconded and discussion followed. The motion failed with all opposed with the exception of Ms. Douangmany-Cage, who abstained. Ms. Luce moved that each Chair collect and analyze the self-evaluation for their respective committee for discussion at a future meeting. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was approved with all in favor with the exception of Mr. Robb, who abstained.

2. School Committee Self-Evaluation

5:35 p.m.

Mr. Baptiste asked each member to speak for a moment regarding what he or she believes is going well and what needs improvement. As the first invited to speak, Mr. Fonsh declined noting that he does not want to start the meeting with negative comments. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that agenda setting and communication around setting the agenda needs improvement. Ms. Traphagen stated that people attending the meetings and genuinely trying to discuss and debate the issues is what is working well, noting that she believes all member have the best interest of the students at heart. She said the committee needs to work on having a more inclusive, transparent process for setting the agendas and sticking with the topics, and needs to be careful in the way the members treat each other in and outside of the meetings. Mr. Sullivan likes the discussions in which the committee engages, and noted that there needs to be improvement on the time crunch at meetings since they often have to rush out when more needs to be said or done. Ms. Marriott said that, for Pelham, and area for improvement is engagement of the public. Also for Pelham, Ms. Luce noted that improvement is needed in the efficiency of running the meetings and in improved public relations. Ms. Hazzard said that the committee needs to work on developing the school committee's vision and having it guide everything they do. She noted that the community does not have a lot of trust in the committee and that needs to improve by finding ways to engage the community. Mr. Hood noted that he believes the budget process goes well and the superintendent evaluation process is good. He believes things will improve by being much more formal in meetings. He suggested that each member should have an opportunity to speak before anyone speaks twice, and members should always address the chair instead of other members. Mr. Hood noted that the committee needs to constantly reread and remind themselves of the policies. He believes that there are not enough meetings scheduled so the committee gets stuck on some issues and lets other topics go. He also noted a lack of good survey data from community input. Mr. Hood suggested that the committee needs to improve on knowledge of how Roberts Rules of Order work around motions and voting. Ms. Appy agreed that the committee needs to improve on following the rules of a meeting in order to increase efficiency, noting that School Committee meetings are business meetings in public, not public meetings, and that

line gets blurred. She stated that the members' job is to engage the communities in a variety of ways, and the School Committee meetings are not the time for that. Ms. Appy believes that the budget process has been great. She also noted that how the committee members treat each other is important, and the committee needs to be better about public face of the School Committee. Mr. Robb agreed that the budget process goes very well and noted the quality of the information provided. He believes the committees do a good job of supporting the Superintendent and allowing her to be the executive and to do her job. Mr. Robb believes the superintendent evaluation process is good. He noted that the committee needs to improve the way new School Committee members are brought in and oriented and needs to improve community relations because some of community members seem to feel heard and others do not. Mr. Baptiste agrees that the School Committee has respect for each other, but they are mired in interpersonal squabbles. He believes that both the budget process and the superintendent evaluation process need improvement.

2. Develop Norms

5:58 p.m.

Mr. Baptiste reviewed the items the School Committee members believe are working well and those that need improvement. The facilitator, Mr. Singer, introduced himself and provided some background about the relationship of the School Committee with the public. He noted that members can disagree about the substance of what is talked about; however, the members must work together in such a way that no one is leaving meetings with personal bad feelings about each other. Mr. Singer asked each member to speak to what they would like to see as normative behavior and their suggestions for the norm that would make this happen. Through an extensive facilitated discussion, each member provided their input about potential norms; however, no final list of norms was agreed to. At the end of the discussion, Mr. Fosh made a motion that the Amherst Pelham Regional School Committee appoint a parliamentarian versed in Roberts Rules of Order by the end of October. Mr. Hood seconded and discussion followed. At approximately 7:10 p.m., Mr. Robb called the question, Ms. Appy seconded and discussion was ended. The original motion passed by a vote of six to three with Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Douangmany Cage and Mr. Baptiste opposed. There was brief discussion of the need for additional retreats to continue the conversation.

3. Adjourn

7:20 p.m.

Mr. Hood moved to adjourn the Regional School Committee at 7:20, Ms. Hazzard seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Appy moved to adjourn the Amherst School Committee at 7:20, Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Luce moved to adjourn the Pelham School Committee at 7:20, Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland