

Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 1, 2015
6:00 p.m.
ARHS Library

In Attendance:

Trevor Baptiste, Chair	Maria Geryk, Superintendent
Katherine Appy	Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent
Phoebe Hazzard	Sean Mangano, Finance Director
Kip Fonsh	Todd Bard, Independent Energy Advisor
Vira Douangmany Cage	Public and Press
Rick Hood	Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

Absent:

Kathleen Traphagen
Dan Robb
Stephen Sullivan

A. Call to Order

6:00 p.m.

Mr. Baptiste called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and asked for a moment of silence in memory of Amherst Town Manager John Musante who passed away last week. He then reviewed the agenda and asked if any changes are requested. Mr. Hood suggested adding one or two new members to the Budget Subcommittee, which Mr. Baptiste added to the end of the agenda.

2. Public Comments

6:03 p.m.

There were no public comments.

3. New and Continuing Business

6:03 p.m.

A. Solar Contract

Mr. Mangano utilized a Powerpoint presentation to review the benefits and risks of entering a 20 year contract as an off-taker of a solar energy contract with Lakestreet Development Partners, LLC who are building a site in Deerfield. He noted that the overall savings over 20 years could be more than \$745,000. Mr. Bard, Independent Energy Advisor, noted that his job the off-takers, in this case the Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools, find energy options that provide the best prices. Mr. Fonsh asked what the consequences would be if an off-taker decides to break the contract. Mr. Bard explained that any off-taker can choose not to pay for their credits. The provider could sue, but is unlikely to if it is a small off-taker. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked if the contract is based on the district's current electricity usage. Mr. Bard said it is based on a percentage of the district's current usage. Ms. Hazzard asked if the credits can be used in the middle school if the middle and high schools are consolidated and what the options are after 20 years. Mr. Bard explained that the middle school would still be eligible, and the contract can be renewed after 20 years. With the potential to regionalize Pre-K to 12, Mr. Fonsh invited Mr. Bard to meet with the Leverett Select Board about potentially joining as off-takers on the project. Mr. Baptiste asked who the provider will be for this contract and who the competition is. Mr. Bard noted that it is Lakestreet Development Partners out of Chicago, IL, and while there are many other competitors, the one in Amherst is Sun Edison. Mr. Mangano noted that the proposal from Sun Edison is not as good for the district because it has a lower floor than the one being presented. Mr. Baptiste asked if there would be curricular opportunities for students related to the contract. Mr. Bard noted that he tries to have it mandated in every contract that students can serve as interns on the project. After further clarifying questions, Ms. Appy moved to authorize the district to enter into a twenty year contract for net metering credits with Lake Street Development Partners, LLC. Mr. Hood seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Baptiste expressed concern about rushing to vote on this contract without time to review it. Although he believes solar energy is a good idea, he thinks it is important to have more time to review the contract. After further discussion, it was agreed that the contract should come back to the committee at the October 13 meeting for a vote. Mr. Fonsh moved to table the motion until October 13. Mr. Hood seconded, and Mr. Fonsh's motion was approved unanimously. Larry Kelly, community member, thanked the committee for waiting to vote until they have more information.

B. Regionalization Forum Planning Subcommittee Report

Ms. Geryk reported that she and the Regionalization Forum Planning Subcommittee met with Mr. Mangano, Mr. Morris and Carol Ross to discuss the format for the community forums, develop a Powerpoint presentation and plan what materials will be needed. Ms. Appy reported on plans for the October 6 Amherst Public Forum, noting that it will be facilitated by Amherst Town Moderator Jim Pistrang and members of the RAWG group will be reporting on their areas of concentration. The goal is to make the presentation as brief as possible so the majority of the time can be spent on hearing comments and taking questions from the community. Mr. Fonsh reported that the Leverett Town Forum is scheduled for October 26 and reported on the methods that have been used to get the word out to the community. He noted that they plan to have an hour for participants to share comments. Mr. Baptiste noted that Mr. Sullivan is home sick this evening, but he can report that the Shutesbury Town Forum has been scheduled for November 18 at 6:30 p.m. in the Shutesbury Elementary School library. Mr. Baptiste reported that the Pelham Select Board will be discussing the date for their forum next week and will definitely use the materials developed by the subcommittee. The committee discussed the materials and provided feedback. Ms. Hazzard noted that it would be helpful to highlight explicitly that there are two votes, the first of which is just to allow the towns who want to regionalize to do so. Ms. Appy agreed that this is important to highlight and it will also be spoken about explicitly in the forum. Ms. Douangmany Cage suggested posting the materials on the district website prior to the forums, and Ms. Geryk agreed to do so. Ms. Douangmany Cage also noted that it would be beneficial for people to be able to email questions or have them read for them at the forum if they cannot attend. Ms. Appy agreed, noting that there needs to be other ways for the public to interact and to get information. Mr. Hood expressed concern about whether the timeline of meetings will meet the deadlines for getting the Regional Agreement to the towns in time to be on the Town Meeting warrants. Ms. Geryk noted that she has confirmed that the timeline works for the Town of Amherst. Town Meeting members Janet McGowen and Marylou Theilman expressed concern that the community has not been adequately informed about the date of the Amherst Forum. Ms. Theilman asked why it had not been posted on the Town Meeting website, and Ms. Appy explained that it had been posted by Select Board member Alisa Brewer. Mr. Kelly asked if the town attorney has vetted the agreement to weigh in on whether changing it requires a vote of the Town Meeting or of the full community. Ms. Geryk reported that Mr. Musante had been planning to have that done, and she will check with Interim Town Manager David Ziomek to see if it has happened yet.

C. Budget Subcommittee

Since any new members need to be from one of the towns other than Amherst, and two of those members are absent, it was agreed that this will be brought back on the October 13 agenda.

4. Adjourn

7:12 p.m.

Ms. Appy moved to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. Mr. Hood seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland