

PETERSHAM CENTER SCHOOL AGENDA

JANUARY 27, 2013

LIBRARY

6:30 p.m.

AGENDA

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chuck Berube, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:29pm.

Members Present: Chuck Berube, Lynn Peredina, and Russell Fontaine.

Members Absent: None

Others: Superintendent Tari Thomas, Principal Chris Dodge, and Alyssa Roberts.

II. HEARING FOR VISITORS-

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *Russell Fontaine moved to accept December 10, 2013 Advisory Finance Committee meeting. VOTED: Unanimous.*

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Transportation Bids-** Tari Thomas stated that Ann Degnan should be awarded for an amazing catch because she found that the original bid from three years ago included an option for two years at the same rate of \$103,740. Tari is recommending that the committee move forward with the extension because it is \$9,660 less than previously quoted. Chuck Berube and the rest of the committee commended Ann Degnan on this great catch.

Russell Fontaine moved approval to accept the two year extension of the F.M. Kuzmeskus Transportation contract for school years 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 in the amount of \$103,740. Lynn Peredina seconded. VOTED: Unanimous.

- b. Information from MSBA-** Tari Thomas stated that she called Diane Sullivan at MSA on January 17th to learn what the expected response time would be for our letter of inquiry dated December 11th. Diane was going to check with their legal department and get back to us in the next week or two but she stated that inquiries such as these take often more than a month's time to research and respond to.
- c. NESDEC Enrollment-** Ann Townsend had a question regarding the NESDEC enrollment study. Ann asked about the 35 students that were school choice out in FY13/14 as stated on Ken Roche's handouts. Tari stated that according to our monthly database we only have 4 students choosing out in Petersham. Tari will have to look into this for Ann and get back with an answer at next month's meeting. Tari stated that Chris Dodge and Ann Degnan are going to be making phone calls to students that are not accounted for and being a public school it is our responsibility to make sure every student is accounted for and being educated. Ann Townsend asked in long range planning is there any data about percentages that you can anticipate. Tari stated she thinks it is harder with a small town like Petersham to anticipate.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **FY 15 Budget-** Tari Thomas stated that they started to take a look at the FY15 budget. The big rock is looking at the professional staff and seeing if they are a good fit. The second rock is professional development with the teachers and keeping them up to date with the changes. The third rock is assessment and developing a successful assessment plan and we need more data to drive our decision making process with this. The last rock is technology and what are the many and varied ways that we can incorporate 21st century skills. Tari stated that these are the four areas they have been looking at. Mr. Dodge has been working with his staff on getting feedback and where we need to grow and what we might find some efficiencies and where they can make some cuts. Tari stated that we are really looking for the committee to give us the next steps that they would like to see especially in terms of the actual budget format. Tari explained that the working draft for FY15 came in slightly under the FY14 figures. Tari explained that the paraprofessionals will be going down from 6 to 5 in FY14-FY15. Tari explained that there are some increases regarding professional development, technology, and assessment. Mr. Dodge stated that they have looked at the classrooms with his staff to see what they can reduce and only ask for the most essential things they will need for the next school year. Mr. Dodge credits them for the hard work they have been doing. Tari Thomas stated that they have worked with a better vendor to get better heating costs which is East River Energy. Chuck Berube asked if she is asking the committee to adopt the old way of budgeting where they have the town appropriation budget and the school choice budget which are completely separate. Chuck Berube stated that it took us 10 years to get away from that way of budgeting. Chuck stated that whether or not you have 10 or 15 sources of revenue he thinks it should be on 1 budget. Chuck stated that he wants this to be transparent to the community. Tari stated that a lot of townspeople are interested in what does it really cost the town and this would be able to show them that. Tari mentioned that this show the Advisory Finance Committee the core budget. Anything that maintains the facilities for the additional students coming in through School Choice will be in the School Choice Budget and would like to add that this is the proffered way of budgeting. Lynn Peredina thinks that this is much clearer but she can see where Chuck is coming from. Tari stated that it is a MGL that the school committee has the choice to do what they would like with the school choice funds. Jim Regan stated that you should clarify with your attorney and that people need to be aware at the town floor meeting that the total budget is going up but these costs are being absorbed in the school choice budget. Jim stated that being up front and clear as to what it is you are doing is what they want to hear. Ann Townsend stated that because school choice is an issue that comes up at town floor she thinks it would be easy to explain to the people who are going to argue against school choice that these specialist salaries would not be able to happen without school choice. Chuck stated now when he looks at the numbers he will have to look at 2 books. Russell thinks it would be beneficial. Chuck stated that in the past the committee has not always had sufficient oversight on expenses. Chuck stated that the lack of oversight cannot happen again. Tari reminded Chuck that a couple years ago Mr. Baldassarre had them take a vote to not many any expenses other than what is appropriated through the budget without being voted on by the school committee ahead of time. Tari also recommended that even though they are a small committee if they wanted they could always have a Finance and Facilities subcommittee. Chuck stated that he doesn't feel like he needs to be doing other people's jobs he just needs to fulfill his own

responsibility. Lynn asked how do you distinguish what is going into school choice and how much do you decide due to what percentage for choice students. Tari stated that it was divided bases on school choice students. Tari stated that this budget that is in appropriation is just for the Petersham students and the School Choice would be the cost just for the Choice students as best as possible. Chuck asked how the special education costs are being able to be divided when he didn't think that was possible in previous discussion. Tari stated that they were divided in half given that they cannot get into details of the Special Education costs. Russell Fontaine stated that if it makes it easier for administration and if it is required from MGL this would be an easy decision to make. Tari stated that she needs advice from the committee on what they are looking for. Russ stated that he would like to see more technology because he doesn't think it is at the level that it could be. Lynn stated that she thinks that after last year we have to aim at the being level funded. Tari stated that due to the teachers contract they are receiving 2.75% increase and they can prepare 2 budgets for the school committee, 1 with 2.75% across the board for all employees, and one with 2.75% for teachers only and 0% for everyone else. Chuck stated that instead of wasting your time doing 2 budgets do the one with 2.75% for everyone across the board. Chuck stated that he thinks we have great potential to stay at level funding and still being able to improve technology especially with a pair of fresh eyes with new administration. Tari stated that at the next meeting they will bring their preliminary budget of both budgets.

- b. **Class Size Discussion-** Chuck Berube stated that one of the reasons we avoided changes in class sizes is because it is critical at a younger age that the class size is small. Chuck is stating that maybe we should have an open mind on being able to relax the class size so that we could have more choice funds and be able to lower town assessments and keep them down in the future. Russ stated that he likes the class sizes where they are but people in town have questioned choice students increasing the cost to the rest of the students. Chuck stated that if we are to maintain that we would have the ability to absorb school choice students without having to spend any additional money. Chuck stated that our demographics are showing us that we are going to have a shrinking Petersham population in the school we might have to make a different decision within the next 10 years. Chuck stated that nobody expected the significant decrease of Petersham students that happened between 6-8 years ago when this school was about 90% Petersham students. Chuck stated that in order to maintain for FY15 that this might need to be done. Wendie LeBlanc stated that some of the concern is that some is that some of our classes get up to 20 kids and if you bring it up that much more they will be even higher than that. This does add costs for textbooks and you could see special education costs go up. Chuck stated that there is a risk that could go along with this. Nichole Ruggles asked if the school committee would want to come around and look to see what some of the classrooms already look like with 19 desks for 5th and 6th graders that would probably be of help to this topic. Nichole stated that she had to get rid of her desk to make room for the student's desks. Ann Townsend asked that 1 of the things that this will lead to no matter how the talk goes is that what is the community willing to fund. Ann thinks that there is never going to be that many Petersham students to fill this building to where it should be. Ann thinks that it is great that parents and students are attracted to Petersham Center School. Ann thinks that you could persuade a community to enrich the school for every student here. Ann does think the idea that if this were to be a community that did not have a school that would be terrible for the community as a whole and detrimental on this town. Ann thinks that this is a really big thing and maybe this is the tipping point. Ann thinks that they

have a chance to say that we can have excellence in education and not just for the children of Petersham. Ellen Anderson wanted to know about the 8% of students that are not coming to school here. Ellen stated that it seems to her for the number of students we have and the fact that there are 2 custodians is something to be looked at. Tari explained that the 8% of students that are not going to Petersham will be researched and brought up at the next meeting. Ellen handed out spreadsheets that correlate with average household income and tax rates and doesn't care how rich you make this school educationally the town will not be able to afford that. Chuck would like to mention that this discussion will be staying on the table.

- c. **Sick Leave Bank Committee-** Tari stated that this is part of the union contract that states "There shall be established a joint six member Sick Leave Bank Committee to administer the provisions of this section. The committee shall be composed of three employees appointed by the President of the Association and three persons appointed by the School Committee. The Sick Leave Bank Committee shall act by majority vote of those members present and voting." Tari stated historically you have had the nurse the principal and the Superintendent. Tari stated that she doesn't know if the nurse is the best to have on this committee because it is hard for someone who is not in the union to participate in a committee to grant days to an additional staff member. Tari would suggest the Principal, the Superintendent, and maybe 1 or 2 members of the committee. Wendie LeBlanc wanted to point out that the committee has not had to do anything for a long time. Lynn Peredina and Russell Fontaine along with the Principal will be sitting on this committee.

Russell Fontaine made a motion to accept 2 school committee members and the principal to the Sick Leave Bank Committee. Lynn Peredina seconded. VOTED: Unanimous.

- d. **Consolidation-** Chuck Berube stated that the consolidation of administration services was done in anticipation of regionalization going through which it did not. Chuck stated we have a very big decision to make regarding this. He stated that some of the benefits have been of a surprise to him and he does not even really have a clear understanding of where we have financial benefit from this. Tari will be sending the original consolidation agreement to all three school committees and they are going to give feedback to their chairs to draw up a new agreement. Ann asked where Wendell and New Salem in all of this are. Tari stated that they have Swift River and they are Union 28 at the elementary level. Jim Regan stated that the original consolidation agreement that was done as a part of the original goal to become regionalized was this approved by the DESE? Tari stated that is a great question for our legal advisor and will find this out for the next meeting. Tari stated that they see a lot of advantages in regards to professional development and some disadvantages that needs some restructuring.

VI. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

- a. **Superintendent Evaluation Update-** Tari Thomas stated that within the next couple of days the committee members should be receiving a link to view all of the documents relative to her evaluation as well as her self-reflection on the standards. You will also see her 5 goals and artifacts that that relate to the rubrics. Tari stated that on each page there is an open box for the committee members to make comments, ask questions. Tari stated that this is where she will be uploading documents on a regular basis. Chuck asked at what time she needs the committee to update her. Tari stated that is open but her mid cycle review is sometime in February. Tari also wanted to mention that there is a link on the website for the Superintendents Survey where all stake holders can take this brief survey.

- b. **Superintendent Search Update-** Chuck Berube stated that we have a subcommittee which Russell sits on as well and they have arrived at a unanimous decision to offer a contract to Tari Thomas to remain as Superintendent. Chuck stated that it is pretty amazing that everyone was clearly unanimous. Chuck mentioned that the representative from the MASC was aggressively supportive of making the current Superintendent official. Chuck wanted to let the committee know that the next step is deciding if they are going to do an internal posting or move straight forward with contract negotiations.

VII. REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL- Chris Dodge reported that at the beginning of early December the 5th and 6th graders had conferences with their parents and here at Petersham they have the children present some of their work to their parents. Mr. Dodge stated that they had a state police training for the staff and they asked Trooper Carmichael to come in and they did a wonderful training which was a similar training that was done at Mahar. Lynn Shaw, the chief, and Mr. Dodge have updated the emergency management plan and that is being shared with staff as well. Lynn Shaw stated that Petersham is one of the most prepared schools in the country and she uses this school as an example when she does trainings. Chris stated that they had their annual Holiday Bizarre in December which was really good. The math teachers in 5th and 6th grade had people from the digits program come in and talk to the kids about how math and science are important in their life and they talked about what type of jobs you can do with math and science. Chris stated that they had their Holiday Performance which is always a huge event in Petersham. In January they had their geography bee and Chris had a chance to moderate which was really nice. Chris stated that all year they have participating in professional development through the consolidated community with the most recent one with DSAC where they had a training on how you can get students to talk about math. Chris stated that the 1st and 2nd graders are currently collecting food for a local food bank. In February they are participating in National Heart Day where they all wear red and the students are participating in the jump rope for heart and collecting money from sponsors. Chris stated that looking forward they have an early release day on February 12th for a professional development that will look at helping one another in professional communities, and collaborating with professional growth.

VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING- MSBA, FY15 Budget, NESDEC Enrollment (choice out 35 number), consolidation, Superintendent Evaluation, Superintendent Search.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

X. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS- Wednesday, February 26th at 6:30pm

XI. ADJOURNMENT- *Russell Fontaine motioned to adjourn at 7:57. Lynn Peredina seconded. VOTED: Unanimous.*

The listing of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.