

Minutes

Select Board

Stephanie O’Keeffe (Chair), Jim Wald, Alisa Brewer, Aaron Hayden, and Diana Stein

Staff: John P. Musante, Town Manager; Sandy Pooler, Finance Director; and Kay Zlogar, Health Claims Trust Manager; Amherst-Pelham Regional School District Superintendent of Schools Maria Geryk, Director of Finance and Operations Rob Detweiler, and Benefits Manager Maggie Yaeger.

Other: Ed Martin and Linda Michaud, Pelham Select Board; Katherine Appy, Anne Marie Foley, Rick Hood, Kip Fonsh (Chair), and Lawrence O’Brien, Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee members.

Presenters: Ken Lombardi, EBS Foran, Consultant; Patrick Brock, Retiree Representative and Amherst Pelham Health Claims Trust Insurance Advisory Committee; Paul Lazar, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care; Patricia Kaplan, Blue Cross, Blue Shield; and Pat Robinson, MetLife Dental.

Consider Revoking Acceptance of MGL c32B §11E To Remove Retired Teachers from Health Insurance Coverage through Commonwealth GIC for Return to Amherst Pelham Health Claims Trust

Meeting was called to order and the Public Hearing opened by Ms. O’Keeffe at 6:44 p.m. It was noted for the record that of the 5 retired teachers from Pelham, one was in attendance; of the 97 retirees from Amherst, 36 were in attendance and of the 126 from the Amherst-Pelham Regional District, 53 were in attendance.

Ms. O’Keeffe welcomed all and thanked attendees for coming. She noted that Amherst Media was recording this evening’s event for rebroadcast on the public access channel over the next several days. Ms. O’Keeffe noted that this hearing was being held pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 32B, Section 11E and that the purpose of tonight’s hearing was to inform affected retired teachers and the public of the Amherst Pelham Regional School Committee, the Town of Pelham and the Town of Amherst’s consideration of revoking acceptance of the statute cited, thereby removing retired teachers from health coverage through the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), and returning them to coverage through the Amherst Pelham Health Claims Trust. It was further noted that the matter will be voted by the respective authorities at a future date; for the Regional School District retirees, that authority is the Amherst Pelham Regional School Committee; for Amherst Elementary School retirees, that authority is the Amherst Select Board; and for Pelham Elementary School retirees, that authority is the Pelham Select Board.

Ms. O’Keeffe noted that at the conclusion of tonight’s hearing a vote by affected retired teachers in attendance would take place. Attendees were advised if they had not received a ballot to see one of the staff members in the lobby area. After this evening’s public hearing, the respective authorities will take the matter under advisement, and any vote of the Select Boards or the Regional School Committee on this matter will take place at a future meeting.

Ms. O’Keeffe noted that on the agenda, there were to be presentations by a number of individuals which will be followed by a public comment period. Ms. O’Keeffe asked retirees to raise their hands to be recognized during that time and a microphone would be brought to them. Retirees were asked to refrain from asking specific questions about coverage or plan design; these questions should be addressed on an individual basis by the Health Trust Manager, Benefits Coordinators, or with the Insurance representatives presenting this evening.

Kay Zlogar, Amherst Pelham Health Claims Trust Manager was introduced. Ms. Zlogar thanked everyone for coming, introducing Maggie Yaeger as the primary contact for retiree benefits from the School District. Ms. Zlogar acknowledged the Insurance Advisory Committee members in attendance, noting the tremendous collaborative effort that had occurred. Ms. Zlogar introduced the other presenters, and also noting each would provide a short presentation as to their role here this evening. She reminded attendees that at the conclusion of presentations, there would be an opportunity for questions.

Ken Lombardi, EBS Foran Insurance and Advisory Services came forward. Mr. Lombardi reported on his role in the process, as a consultant for the Trust, noting it had been his company's recommendation that the Towns and District move forward with the process, assuring significant savings for all involved. Mr. Lombardi noted another benefit of the change is that local control is returned, which can mean a lot to plan design.

Patrick Brock, Retiree Representative and Amherst Pelham Health Claims Trust Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) member spoke next. Mr. Brock reported he is also a retiree of the system having served as a firefighter, noting he also now serves as Chair of the Hampshire County Retirement Board. Mr. Brock noted his extreme pleasure that the Town's management team had turned to the IAC, which includes representatives from both Union and non-union members, further noting his appreciation for the collaborative process that had taken place, noting it was a unanimous vote by the IAC.

Paul Lazar, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Patricia Kaplan, Blue Cross, Blue Shield spoke next, providing information on the two plans available to retirees through the Trust.

Mr. Lombardi came forward, indicating there was to be a representative from MetLife Dental who was not able to present this evening. Mr. Lombardi provided information on the plan costs and benefits available, noting differences between it and that of the GIC program. While it is more expensive, it provides a much greater level of benefits. Mr. Lombardi reminded folks that he and the other presenters would be available at the conclusion of tonight's hearing for any questions on plan benefits.

Ms. O'Keeffe opened up the hearing for public comment. Retired teachers who spoke during the public comment period included Dale M. Carew, Paul R. Carlson, Michael D. Gallagher, Michael L. Greenebaum, Regina E. Gulliver, Kathleen McKay, Brian J. McNamara, Roy W. McNiven, Mary E. Melonis, Annette E. Pfannebecker, William M. Read, Karen L. Schmitt, Betty J. Turner and Amy S. Wolpin (Amherst Elementary Retirees); Cathleen S. Neale (Pelham Elementary Retiree); and Frances A. Caporello, Anne E. Mathieson, Naimah A. Muhammad, Jane W. Price, Carlene V. Riccelli, Maureen Romano, Elissa H. Rubinstein, Janet E. Saulsberry and Carole Schweid (Amherst Pelham Regional School retirees).

At the conclusion of the question and comment period, retirees were reminded to cast their advisory vote to either remain with the GIC coverage or change to the Amherst Pelham Health Claims Trust by depositing their ballot in the ballot box upon exit from the meeting.

Amherst Select Board members agreed without formal vote to take the matter under advisement for vote at their next meeting scheduled for June 18, 2012.

The public hearing was closed and the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John P. Musante, Town Manager

List of Documents Presented at the Meeting - Available in the Online Packet for the Meeting Date
2012-06-13 Agenda
Retired Teacher Hearing Notice
FY 13 comparison Retirees including Dental and Medicare
IAC Recommendation and Town Manager Response
FAQ Updated June 2012