

**Amherst Finance Committee**

**Four Towns Meeting  
Saturday, February 28, 2015  
Amherst Regional Middle School, Library**

**Finance Committee Members in Attendance:**

Bernie Kubiak  
Kay Moran (Chair)  
Janice Ratner  
Douglas Slaughter  
Absent: Steve Braun, Anurag Sharma, Marylou Theilman (Vice Chair)

**School Committee Members in Attendance:**

Rick Hood (Amherst and Region)  
Katherine Appy (Amherst and Region)  
Sarah Dolven (Region)  
Lawrence O'Brien (Amherst and Region)  
Kathleen Traphagen (Amherst and Region)

**District Staff in Attendance:**

Maria Geryk, Superintendent  
Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent  
Sean Mangano, Director of Finance  
Debbie Westmoreland, Assistant to the Superintendent

**Other Officials:**

Select Board, School Committee and Finance Committee members from the Towns of Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury

***DOCUMENTS: Four-Town Meeting Powerpoint Slides; FY2016 Proposed Budget: Presented to Four Town Meeting (Dated February 28, 2015); Five Year Regional Assessment Forecast (Dated February 2015)***

**Welcome and Introductions**

**9:00 a.m.**

Ms. Geryk called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and noted their town and board affiliation.

**Regional Schools Operating Budget**

**9:03 a.m.**

Mr. Mangano briefly reviewed the highlights of the proposed FY16 Regional Budget, including proposed additions and reductions and other changes that have been made since the first Four Town Meeting in December. District staff also reviewed structural changes being explored for both educational and financial reasons. Mr. Morris spoke to the proposed change from a trimester to a semester schedule at ARHS, and Ms. Geryk spoke about exploration of consolidating the middle and high schools in one building. The district is also exploring the potential of expanding the current vocational offerings at ARHS as a way to reduce the vocational tuition impact on the budget and to better serve all students. Clarifying questions were answered regarding the proposed additions and reductions to the budget, the possible expansion of vocational offerings and enrollment trends.

**Guidance from the Member Towns**

**9:33 a.m.**

Rich Brazo, Leverett Finance Committee, noted that the Leverett Finance Committee has asked all town boards to submit two budgets: one at a 3.5% reduction and one at an 8% reduction. This is due to factors including a tax abatement request to the state and water damage to the elementary school. John Trickey, Pelham Finance Committee, reported that the budget situation is positive in Pelham. Becky Torres, Shutesbury Town Manager, said that the budget is not final but there is currently about a \$33,000 shortfall. Town departments are submitting

full requests. Ms. Torres noted that they are continuing to receive comments from community members regarding Shutesbury's assessments. John Musante, Amherst, said that Amherst has a balanced budget plan on the table. He believes they have been appropriately conservative with their forecasted numbers but will know more on Wednesday when the Governor's budget is released. There was brief discussion of the potential consolidation of the middle and high schools, including potential uses of the middle school building, the timeline for study of the change, and financial impacts.

Those in attendance were invited to attend an OPEB presentation at 11:00 a.m. in the same location. The meeting adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland  
Assistant to the Superintendent