



Superintendent's Corner

Gary S. Reese, Ed.D.

Superintendent

February 17, 2017

School Committee/City Council

On Tuesday evening, the school committee and municipal council held a joint meeting to select an individual to fill the school committee seat vacated by Tom McGee last month. I am appreciative of Mr. McGee's contribution to the school community and wish him well in his new community. I am sure he will find ways to contribute to the community just as he has done here in Amesbury.

Three candidates expressed interest in filling the opening through the end of Mr. McGee's term (the end of this year). Those individuals, Ms. Tana Brennan, Mr. Tim Osgood and Ms. Amy Sherwood, had the opportunity to address the joint committee and share their thoughts on education in Amesbury. Each identified a unique skillset that they could bring to the position. Following their introductions, each candidate answered questions from the joint committee prior to the committees taking a vote on the successful candidate.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Ms. Amy Sherwood as the newest member to the school committee. Ms. Sherwood has been very committed to the schools and community and has worked at the state level to advocate for adequate state funding for education. I look forward to working together with Ms. Sherwood and all the school committee member to continue to advocate for the needs of all of our students.

At the conclusion of the joint meeting, the municipal council held their regular meeting. One of the items for these meeting was the approval of funds (\$900,000) to use towards a feasibility study of the Amesbury Elementary school. This study will examine various grade-level configuration options (prek-4, k-5, and a pre-k-2 and 3-5 grouping – which could also impact Cashman Elementary) as well as different construction options (new construction, addition, and renovation). At the conclusion of the study, the preferred option will be presented for consideration to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for consideration and approval. Once approved for funding through MSBA, both the city council and school committee will need to vote whether or not to move forward with the proposed project. This process will take approximately 2 years to complete. During the meeting on Tuesday, the city council unanimously approved the funding for the study.

School Committee – Personnel Subcommittee

The personnel subcommittee met on Thursday evening as a committee of the whole to discuss administrative structures at the high school and the most effective ways to support student learning. It was a very lively discussion that will help the leadership team as we make recommendations in the upcoming budget.

School Committee – Finance Subcommittee

The same evening, the finance subcommittee met as a committee of the whole to review the budget proposals for the following areas: Student services, central office, facilities, and technology. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the incredible work of our Director of Finance and Operations, Ms. Joan Liporto. Ms.

Liporto has done an amazing job refining our budget documents and restructuring our accounts so that the budget is easier to understand and the types of spending within each line item is clearly identified. I look forward to presenting the entire budget and sharing the budget documents with the school committee and the community in the beginning of March. I am sure you will find the document easy to follow; however, it may be difficult to make comparisons from last year's budget numbers to this year's, as Ms. Liporto has realigned many of the figures into more appropriate line items. I also want to acknowledge the work of John Dubuc, Director of Technology and Mary Houde, Director of Student Services for their well-organized budgets and ability to articulate the needs of their department. Being surrounded by such skilled professionals makes my job so much easier!

DESE Spring Convening

On Wednesday, I attended a day long workshop series presented by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. As part of the day, participants heard from the commissioner of education, Mitchell Chester. Mr. Chester shared his thoughts about the current state of education in Massachusetts and offered insight into the areas where we need to continue to make progress. Two specific areas he identified were reading achievement in the elementary grade-levels and math progress in the middle schools. He specified these areas because state-level testing data for the past years have suggested somewhat flat growth. The elementary grades are so critical for reading development as critical reading skills is a gateway to future success in all content areas. In terms of math, the particular concern was due to the fact that skills taught in the sixth grade become the foundation for future success in the various pathways for achievement in higher level courses. It was interesting to hear the commissioner speak and identify these areas as state level areas of need. I was very interested when the commissioner addressed the six state level goals that he felt would result in continued growth in these areas. These goals were in direct alignment with the three strategic objectives that we have been working on as part of the strategic plan development (the strategic plan will be presented to the school committee for review at an upcoming committee meeting).

Mayor State of the City Address

Wednesday evening, I attended the Mayor's State of the City address. During this evening, Mayor Gray spoke about the current trends with taxes in Amesbury, economic development and the schools. I am very appreciative of his continued support of our schools and look forward to the continued work with the city and the school committee.

Leadership Team Meeting

Friday morning, the administrative leadership team met to discuss the following topics:

- Budget development – We discussed various budget requests and how these requests fit into the overarching goals for the district. While we recognize that adding new programs and services may be challenging given our current budget calculations, we are committed to working together with the school committee to present a budget that is both fiscally responsible and addresses current needs in the district.
- Bullying and Harassment Prevention – The leadership team discussed the current procedures for both preventing incidents of bullying and harassment, as well as the steps currently taken to address incidents as they are reported to us. We are going to establish a committee to refine our practices, reporting procedures, etc. to better serve our students.
- Strategic Plan – We are finalizing the draft to submit to the school committee for approval in March. We discussed how our overarching strategic objectives align with state-level goals, yet are specialized to address the needs of our community.

Whittier Tech School Committee Representative

In addition to needing to fill the seat on the Amesbury Public Schools school committee, we are also seeking applicants for an individual to represent Amesbury on the Whittier Technical High school committee for a three year term, beginning April 1, 2017. This position is currently held by Mr. Charles LaBella whose term expires in March. It is the responsibility of the school committee to appoint this individual and then for the city council to accept the appointment. Letters of Interest should be filed with the Mayor's Office no later than February 20, 2017 at 10:00am. The applicant must be a registered voter and a resident of the City of Amesbury. A Hearing will be held to fill the vacancy at the School Committee meeting on Monday, March 6, 2017. All applicants will be expected to attend that meeting.

Meeting with State Rep Jim Kelcourse

Friday afternoon, the central office leadership team met with State Rep Jim Kelcourse for a brief discussion. We wanted to share with him some of the financial challenges of the district, as well as concerns about our school's capacity to appropriately address various unfunded mandates. It was a healthy conversation and I appreciate Mr. Kelcourse's willingness to meet with us and listen to our concerns. Some of the topics included: chapter 70 funding, circuit breaker reimbursement, and early college high school funding.

Upcoming Events

Jeanne Geiger White Ribbon Breakfast

The logo for the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center features the name "Jeanne Geiger" in a large, purple, serif font, with "CRISIS CENTER" in a smaller, purple, sans-serif font below it. The text is set against a light purple rectangular background.

A local organization that provides support to our schools is the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center. On March 21st, the organization will be holding its annual White Ribbon Breakfast. This event is held in recognition of a worldwide campaign for human rights that engages men to help end violence against women, men,

and children. The breakfast is being held from 7:30 – 9:15 am at the Ipswich Country Club. For more information, please go to: <http://jeannegeigercrisiscenter.org/>

AEFI Evening of Giving

On behalf of the Amesbury Education Foundation Inc (AEFI), I would like to invite parents and community members to AEFI's Hall of Honor celebration on April 29th. At this event, AEFI recognizes three individuals for their contributions to the schools and community. This is a special year for AEFI, as it is celebrating 15 years of supporting the schools. I am pleased to announce



that the AEFI board has selected three outstanding recipients for this banner year's celebration. Peter Hoyt (former educator, principal and current school committee member), Graham McKay (AHS Alumni and Executive Director of Lowell's Boat Shop) and Joan Miller (founding AEFI board member). I am pleased with these selections as each person embodies a true spirit of caring and each has made substantial contributions to the students of Amesbury. Watch for more information to come regarding this exciting event.

Please see the attached flyers for some other upcoming events that support our schools and community.

Be well and have a great weekend (as well as a restful school vacation – schools will reopen on Monday, February 27!

Gary



Eat *for a* Cause

Amesbury Educational Foundation Fundraiser

Amesbury Flatbread Pizza @ 5 Market Square



Tuesday from 5-9 pm

March 7th

Love Amesbury Flatbread Pizza? Dine in or Take out your favorite pizza, and Flatbread will donate \$3.50 for each large flatbread and \$1.75 for each small flatbread you purchase to the Amesbury Educational Foundation Inc.

Join us and invite the BIGGEST eaters you know! Funds raised at this event allow AEFI to provide teacher grants and financial and material support to Amesbury's Public Schools so that all children have the skills and knowledge needed to pursue their hopes and dreams. For more information about AEFI go to www.aefionline.com



Amesbury Educational
Foundation Inc.



The Pettengill House, Inc.



invites you to join us for the 6th Annual
Pettengill House Fundraiser

with Honorary Chair, Billie McLane

dancing, two live bands, food, silent and live auctions
and a night filled with fun!!!

Friday, March 10, 2017, 7-11pm

Blue Ocean Music Hall, Salisbury, Ma

Thomas Machine Works Band



Live Music from

Higher Ground



Buy your tickets

at www.pettengillhouse.org or 13 Lafayette Rd., Salisbury

\$50 in advance, \$60 at the door.

*You are invited to support this wonderful event through your attendance, sponsorship
or auction donations.*

For more information visit www.pettengillhouse.org, call The Pettengill Family Resource Center
at 978-792-5205 or email blueocean@pettengillhouse.org

All proceeds to benefit area children and families.

ONE GREAT NIGHT! ONE GREAT AGENCY!

Thank you to Platinum Sponsors:



**Not traveling this vacation? No Plans?
Then come to Flatbread on Tuesday February 21 from 4-9 pm to support the
Class of 2018!**

flatbread



We have several raffle items, including a chance to win tickets to Bruins vs Detroit on March 8, 50/50 and more!



A portion of all pizza sales is donated to the class. This will help us with Prom expenses and you will have good food and a great time! See you there!

Thank you!