AMHERST, PELHAM, & AMHERST-PELHAM
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

E. Xiomara Herman, Ed.D.
"Dr. Xi"
*Superintendent*

***From the Desk of Dr. Xi:*** **Why Caregiver Spaces Matter**

January 30, 2026

Greetings,

Last night's Pelham Caregiver Budget Meeting was, in my view and as expressed by many in the room, a thoughtful, respectful, and productive conversation. Parents and caregivers asked questions, shared perspectives, and engaged directly with district leadership in the spirit that these meetings are intended. It is unfortunate that I now need to interrupt that positive moment to address a false narrative that has emerged regarding the meeting.

I am issuing this statement to correct inaccurate characterizations suggesting that I barred the recording of a School Committee meeting or prohibited press coverage of a public meeting held on January 29. That description is incorrect and does not reflect what occurred.

The meeting held on January 29 was titled the Pelham Caregiver Budget Meeting and was hosted by me, the Superintendent. It was not a School Committee meeting nor a meeting for the general public. The meeting was convened specifically for parents and caregivers of Pelham Elementary School to receive information, ask questions, and engage directly with district administration. No decisions were made, no votes were taken, and the meeting was not subject to School Committee meeting protocols.

It has never been my practice as the Superintendent or that of the district to record parent or caregiver-only sessions, including parent conferences, listening sessions, or meetings between caregivers and administrators. Since my entrance into this district, I have facilitated multiple caregiver meetings around highly sensitive and emotional topics—many of which surfaced at School Committee meetings and in public forums. Those caregiver sessions were not recorded, nor was the media invited, consistent with district practice.

The district does not record caregiver meetings because the primary intent of these sessions is relationship-building. These meetings are designed to give caregivers the opportunity to express themselves openly, ask administrators questions directly, receive information, and engage in dialogue.

If the district were ever to record a parent or caregiver meeting, we would provide advanced notice and explicitly seek consent, allowing caregivers to make an informed decision about whether to attend and participate. That transparency and respect for individual choice is essential and non-negotiable to me as the Superintendent.



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My goal in not recording caregiver sessions is to ensure that caregivers feel comfortable speaking freely and honestly. Recording, even when unintended, can have a chilling effect, particularly in emotionally charged situations. On January 29, caregivers spoke openly, asked questions, and shared concerns. That level of engagement was possible because the space was intentionally designed to feel safe and relational.

Importantly, the media was not barred from the meeting. A reporter from the Daily Hampshire Gazette was present and documented the meeting through notes and photographs rather than recording. This aligns with how the media often covers non-recorded community sessions.

Typically, when media outlets wish to record meetings and need technical assistance, they contact the district through the Office of the Superintendent. In this instance, the individual requesting that Amherst Media record the Pelham Caregiver Budget Meeting did not follow established protocols. The request was made using a personal email account and sent directly to staff members outside of the Office of the Superintendent, the organizer of the meeting. Those staff appropriately responded by directing the individual to contact the Office of the Superintendent, which they did not do.

Additionally, the individual making the request holds multiple roles that complicate the situation as to what capacity they were functioning in, especially by using a personal email. An official communication was later sent to Amherst Media through formal channels from the Office of the Superintendent, clearly stating that this was not a School Committee meeting, that it was a caregiver meeting held in Pelham, and that caregiver meetings are not recorded.

Despite the confusion, the media was present, caregivers participated fully, and the meeting proceeded as intended. In keeping with my communication practices, I have already created additional access by scheduling a virtual follow-up caregiver meeting via Zoom for those who were unable to attend in person. Information about that session has been shared with Pelham families through ParentSquare today.

The district and I remain fully committed to transparency. At the same time, I remain committed to creating spaces where caregivers feel safe to communicate openly and honestly. Caregiver meetings serve a different purpose than formal governance meetings, and they must be structured to support dialogue, trust, and engagement. It is deeply concerning that this issue has overshadowed what was, by all accounts, a productive and meaningful meeting with Pelham caregivers. My focus remains on listening, strengthening relationships, and ensuring that all stakeholders—caregivers, staff, and the broader community—are informed appropriately and respectfully.

I will continue to work with the media while also creating and protecting spaces that build trust, invite engagement, and strengthen connection, where caregivers have choice and feel comfortable engaging openly with me and the district.

Sincerely,

Dr. Xi
Superintendent, Amherst-Pelham Regional Public Schools



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