

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 12/18/14)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

December 4, 2014
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Deanne O’Sullivan
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

Chairperson Kristina Rychlik called the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Chairman’s Introduction

2. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes

The School Committee meetings minutes will be done at the next meeting.
APS warrant #201511 dated 11/25/14 in the amount of \$399.00 was signed by the Committee members. ABRSD warrant #15-011 dated 11/26/14 in the amount of \$3,583,426.39 was also signed by the Committee members.

3. Public Participation - none

4. Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Presentation

Dennis Bruce introduced Steve Noone from the Acton Finance Committee to discuss OPEB, the future cost of providing post-retirement health benefits already earned by employees and retirees. A recent change in accounting rules requires this amount to be calculated and reported as a liability. This is not just an Acton issue, but across the state and country. Steve’s numbers do not include Blanchard employees, so the District’s numbers will actually be higher than what he used. Marie Altieri pointed out that our average retirement age is 61 so that is different from Steve’s graph. In response to the comment that much of this hypothetical data is based on assumptions, Steve explained that the report is based on our actual retirement information done by actuaries so there is some degree of certainty.

5. Existing Conditions and Master Plan Study

A number of people have mentioned the need for a study like this to be done by the District. JD Head presented stating that we have about a million square feet of buildings that must be maintained. \$145,000 has been budgeted for capital items for this year. The track funding contribution came from this amount last year. While JD has always had a capital plan for our facilities in mind, this study would catch things that he might miss. JD has a good sense of the District’s needs right now based on last year’s Budget Saturday presentations, but a study would be helpful.

Glenn Brand has been involved in these types of projects in the past, and there are multiple things a study can provide. It can assess systems and project life left, as well as assess schooling and how education is changing and how the buildings and the spaces should change as a result. Typically, the question, “What does the classroom environment need to support teaching and learning now?” will be

asked. A Master Plan is an important component of development for a large district with multiple buildings and will address the timing of plans and their costs. It can provide how much of a cost commitment a project would be and how it would escalate. How far the plan lasts depends on how closely the recommendations are followed moving forward. Boxborough did a study about 3 years ago and it was helpful.

The \$200,000 cost is significant, but there appeared to be general approval to put this item on the possible budget list, although not necessarily very high priority. Mike reminded the Committee of the fine line between being cautious and waiting until something breaks and ending up with an emergency. Glenn wanted to get this idea in front of the Committee for discussion. He acknowledged that the companies that do these studies are often very familiar with grant-writing and usually structure their report in a way that facilitates grant applications.

6. **Mass. Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) Financial Review**

Glenn Brand spoke in favor of undertaking this type of review whenever there is a change in leadership as the District has had. It will identify strengths, weaknesses and ways to move forward. The report from this review would become public. Clare Jeannotte agrees that this could be valuable to the District right now. A review was done 4 or 5 years ago. She has tentatively lined up meetings in January and the report would be received in 30 – 60 days. It was the sense of the Committee to agree to this review.

7. **Financial Department Updates**

7.1. FY'15: Impact of 9C Cuts on Table 6

7.1.1. Procedures for Changing Use of E&D Amount

Clare Jeannotte stated that after the Governor's 9C cuts last month, unfortunately the Committee may need to consider changing the use of E&D again, perhaps back to the original \$500,000 amount (from the current plan to use \$300,000). The result was a 26.6% cut in regional transportation. A 2/3 vote of the School Committee is needed as long as the assessment is not being changed. Clare prefers to wait a little longer to see how some of the uncertainty turns out. The Committee agreed. Clare said that professional groups for regional schools are very concerned and considering a legal challenge that the Governor cannot cut regional transportation more than a certain amount. Paul Murphy spoke strongly in favor of supporting that effort.

Acton Selectwoman Katie Green said that while she was working, the Education Committee said it can be cut because it is not in a general appropriation bill. Maria Neyland stated that it cannot hurt to put pressure on them. Clare noted that particularly as a new region, transportation reimbursement was a key element.

7.2. FY'16 Budget Timeline

Clare Jeannotte reviewed the timeline. She said the audited financial information should be available by the January 8th or 22nd School Committee meeting.

7.3. Recommendation to Appoint ABRSD Treasurer effective 1/1/15 – **VOTE**

Glenn Brand thanked Tess Summers for her many years of service to the School District. She is stepping down effective 12/31/14. The School Committee appoints the Treasurer per Ch.71, Section 16A. The Treasurer oversees all cash flow functions. He introduced Margaret Denehey who has extensive experience, including working in Boxborough. This position is 4-8 hours per week and was posted.

Dennis Bruce moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to appoint Margaret Denehey as the ABRSD Treasure starting 1/1/15.

Marie Altieri stated that the District is very lucky to have Margaret coming into this position and she thanked Tess for her commitment to doing this work through regionalization last year.

8. **Recommendation to Approve Donation from a Parent to the Blanchard Memorial School**

Mike Coppelino moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the donation of \$500 to the Blanchard School.

9. **Subcommittee Updates**

9.1. **Outreach** – *Kristina Rychlik, Kathleen Neville*

Katie reviewed the proposed Mission Statement for the School Committee and asked for feedback. She also asked members to review the website. They are considering a subscription option to send out agendas. Kristina and Amy are discussing management of the Committee's section of the site.

Brigid Bieber asked if the Committee needs their own mission statement given that they support the mission statement of the District. She wondered if this could be restated. She suggested that the policy tab should also be somewhere more prominent so it is easier to find. Another draft of the mission statement will be brought to the next meeting.

9.2. **Budget** – first meeting is 12/10/14 at 8 a.m.

9.3. **Regionalization Financial Oversight** – next meeting is 12/18/14 at 6p.m.

9.4. **Policy**

9.4.1. Consent Agenda #7 – **SECOND READ** – **VOTE** - *Maria Neyland*

9.4.1.1. Use of School Facilities, File: KF

9.4.1.2. Homeschooling, File: IHBG

Mary Brolin will send comments on the Use of Facilities procedures to Beth.

Brigid Bieber moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the Consent Agenda #7 policies as proposed.

9.4.2. Elementary Class Size Guidelines, File: IIBA – **SECOND READ** – **VOTE** - *Marie Altieri*

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the Elementary Class Size Guidelines policy as amended by moving the ranges after the first paragraph.

10. **School Committee Member Reports**

10.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Kristina Rychlik*

10.1.1. Draft Minutes of 11/20/14 meeting

There are a number of inaccuracies that will be corrected and included in the next packet.

10.2. Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Task Force– *Dennis Bruce*

10.2.1. Meeting on 12/3/14 was a discussion of much of Steve Noone's information.

10.3. Acton Finance Committee

10.3.1. ABRSC to present FY14 closeout/FY15 update at meeting on 12/9/14

Clare Jeannotte and Glenn Brand will present.

10.4. Acton-Boxborough SpedPAC – *Paul Murphy*

Update: Letter from ABRSC re Population Trends of High Needs Students

Kristina met with Marie for input. It would make sense to gain support from other districts.

Kristina will put together a plan. She will attend a meeting on Monday night with Rep.

Atkins, Rep. Benson and Senator Eldridge to discuss this.

10.5. Joint PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs – *Maya Minkin*

Maya reported that the co-chairs met recently to review the past two School Committee meetings. There was a lot of interest in the new play space for the schools, however only the Douglas PTO had heard of it. They also discussed the licensing required to show movies in public. Fees involved for inhouse community events were discussed and they asked if those fees could be looked into. Kristina acknowledged that custodial fees to clean up after PTO events are expensive if it is not a big fundraiser.

11. Superintendent's Report

11.1. Update on District Committees

The Superintendent is in the final stages of confirming these committee members. The Safety and Security and Bullying/Harassment groups will be starting soon.

He will update the Committee on regionalization at the next meeting. He invited everyone to his final Community Entry Plan meeting next Wednesday night.

12. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

12.1. Press Release: 2014 Emerson Hospital Youth Risk Behavior Survey –

Glenn highlighted this and will be reporting at a future School Committee meeting.

Glenn concluded that he is very pleased to report that, except for a few minor edits, he has completed his doctoral program. The Committee responded with applause.

The ABRSC adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS:

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meetings, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library:
12/18/14, 1/8/15 and 1/22/15

Superintendent's Entry Plan Community Meeting - 12/10/14 at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library
Plan may be found at <http://www.abschools.org/superintendent/entryplan>