

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
OPEN MEETING MINUTES (approved 6/22/17)

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R.J. Grey Junior High School

June 13, 2017
6:30 p.m. Executive Session
7:30 p.m. (approx.) Open Meeting

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O'Sullivan (left at 8:33 p.m. and returned at 9:15 p.m.), Kristina Rychlik, Eileen Zhang (7:27 p.m.)
Members Absent: Mary Brolin
Others: Beth Petr, Attorney Peter Ebb (until 7:50 p.m.)

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chairperson Amy Krishnamurthy.

2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 6:35 p.m. it was moved by Amy Krishnamurthy, seconded by Katie Neville and unanimously **VOTED by roll call:** that the Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee enter executive session under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §21(a)(1) to discuss complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual

(YES – Baum, Bieber, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O'Sullivan, Rychlik)

Amy stated that the Committee will reconvene in Open Meeting at approximately 7:30 p.m.

3. **RETURN TO OPEN MEETING**

The ABRSC returned to open meeting at 7:54 p.m. Amy Krishnamurthy stated that the meeting was being taped for broadcast by Acton TV.

4. **Chairperson's Introduction** – *Amy Krishnamurthy*

Allen Nitschelm read an email sent to the School Committee the night before from 6 members of the public, who had asked for the opportunity prior to the meeting. They outlined 7 requests to the Committee as they try to attract top candidates for the Superintendent Search. They were thanked for their input.

5. **Public Action, if any, in Relation to Immediately Prior Executive Session** (*passed over*)

6. **FYI - Structure of the Current Central Office**

More detail was provided for the current Deputy Superintendent and two Assistant Superintendent positions.

7. **Discussion of an Interim Superintendent vs. a Permanent Superintendent** - **VOTE***

8. **Discussion of an Internal Candidate vs. an External Candidate** – **VOTE***

The Committee discussed the upcoming searches and how to proceed.

The Committee agreed that the permanent search will take too long not to have an interim in place. Brigid Bieber said that the interim would preferably be someone from the outside who is qualified and could at least work part time to help with the work load right now. As previously discussed, their responsibility could be to help with administrative issues as they come up, not necessarily take on the current large initiatives going on in the district, as the deputy and assistant superintendents could probably continue to handle those. Paul Murphy pointed out that this would depend on who the interim is. The Committee agreed that it was most

important to attract the very best candidates possible for the permanent search. Eileen Zhang advocated for starting the permanent search right away, as well as the interim search.

The Committee agreed that a subcommittee should be created to work on the interim search, and that it should be a fairly quick process, abbreviated from a full search. Brigid Bieber asked if the Committee agreed that the interim candidates should be external, not from within the AB District. Eileen asked why they would not consider internal candidates. Paul explained that Marie Altieri is the Deputy Superintendent so by default, she is the Acting Superintendent until an interim is chosen. Paul likes this because Marie thoroughly understands the district.

Rather than have the Committee decide whether to restrict the interim search to external candidates only, it was suggested that an interim search subcommittee be established and charged with making this decision. Paul Murphy, Diane Baum, Deanne O'Sullivan and Tessa McKinley volunteered for the subcommittee.

Although the Committee agreed not to officially start the permanent search right away, they could begin some of the preparations, such as establishing members of that search committee, timeline, materials, etc.

Katie Neville moved to establish a subcommittee to look for an interim superintendent. Paul Murphy seconded. Brigid Bieber asked for clarification of the motion and confirmed that it was to nominate Paul Murphy, Diane Baum, Deanne O'Sullivan and Tessa McKinley to serve on a subcommittee established to look for an interim superintendent. Eileen Zhang volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Katie accepted a friendly amendment to her motion to include Eileen as a member and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to nominate Paul Murphy, Diane Baum, Deanne O'Sullivan, Tessa McKinley and Eileen Zhang to serve on a subcommittee established to look for an interim superintendent

Paul Murphy stated that they would bring interim superintendent candidates' names before the School Committee for a decision as quickly as can be done appropriately.

The Committee discussed whether to restrict the interim superintendent from applying for the permanent superintendent position. Diane Baum felt that it makes sense that someone would have a leg up if they were the interim so she wants to prevent this by restricting the interim. Katie Neville stated that if the Committee is looking for an external candidate, that might not be such a big deal. Deanne O'Sullivan questioned whether the Committee should limit themselves by saying the interim cannot apply. She noted that considering retired superintendents for the interim, could prevent the issue. Kristina Rychlik does not want to limit the candidate pool. She stated that whomever applies is confidential, and anyone in a district this large should assume that there would be multiple internal candidates. Tessa McKinley and Paul Murphy agreed.

Allen Nitschelm spoke from the audience advocating for prohibiting the interim superintendent from applying for the permanent position because they would "have the inside track" and in his opinion, it would be perceived as biased. He strongly urged the Committee to not allow an interim to apply for the permanent job and to state that on the advertising materials.

(Deanne O'Sullivan left the meeting at 8:33 p.m.)

Steve Ballard spoke from the audience and apologized for the comments he made at the last meeting on 6/8/17. He has given the Chair the name of someone he feels could be a strong interim candidate. Amy will give the name to the subcommittee. He asked the subcommittee not to limit their search to "external vs internal" candidates but to keep their options open.

Seeing no disagreement, Amy Krishnamurthy charged the subcommittee with developing the criteria to use and returning to the School Committee with their recommendations when they were ready. They were asked to report back at the 6/22/17 School Committee meeting on progress, even if it was just that they had a

meeting to begin. The subcommittee was reminded of the Open Meeting Law requirements to post all meetings, record minutes, etc.

9. ABRSD Permanent Superintendent Search

The previous search was done in the late fall, November/December. The one before that ended in January, although that timing was difficult with Budget Saturday in late January. Final interviews could be held after Budget Saturday, which would allow the District to get through the December Town Meetings for the Building Project. If the search is on the late side, good candidates might accept other positions. If a search firm is used, they will have advice on this. There is a lot of prework that needs to be done. Some of the administrative tasks could be done this summer. Public interest is expected to remain high.

They discussed when to establish the permanent superintendent search committee profile and members, and when to consider whether a search firm should be used. They considered if there should be a separate meeting specifically to talk about the permanent search and search committee.

A member of the public asked about the possible financial impact of going through the interim process and permanent search, given the cost last time. She asked where the funds would come out of the existing budget. Amy Krishnamurthy replied that the last search firm cost \$20,000 and there is room for that in the budget if necessary. Brigid Bieber said that they will have to review current salary rates for Superintendents to see that cost. The budget is being reviewed to see what items for next year can be paid for out of this year's final budget to shift some costs.

Steve Ballard stated that the community group wants Rip Martin to be on the Search Committee. He agreed with Rip and Eileen Zhang that the permanent search should start right away.

The Committee agreed that it was premature to discuss whether the interim search members should try to continue on the permanent search committee. This will be part of the summer workshop when subcommittees and members' commitments for the new school year are decided.

Members of the public spoke. They appreciated how thoughtful the SC was being, but felt there should be a sense of urgency to the search to get the right leadership (for the search) started.

A member of the public advocated for an external interim superintendent, because many parts have to come together quickly in the fall. She felt that an external candidate would not be wedded to what was already being done. They could help streamline the process to what was integral to the district. She'd like to see this as part of the charge.

(Deanne O'Sullivan returned at 9:15 pm)

The Committee discussed how to move forward. Paul wanted time to think about the process. Kristina reviewed the last search's makeup, and read the community email requests. She asked if there were other things that the Committee feels are important to include in the permanent search.

Brigid described the last search that had 15 people, including professional staff, principals, 3 school parents, and others. She stated the importance of having professional staff on the committee. She is ok with adding more parents but it is hard to have a larger group of people to schedule around. The number and length of meetings needs to be explained as well as when they would occur. People must understand the time commitment involved and that some meetings cannot be missed.

Last time, the search committee created an online survey for the public, before any of the interviews were done, and this was very valuable. There were also 2 public forums for people to meet with the search firms so the firms could hear what the community was thinking and wanted.

One request from the public was that a member of the community be the chair or vice chair. Amy Krishnamurthy was not sure if that was possible, but either way, she felt the School Committee should not abdicate this responsibility because it is such an important part of what the School Committee does. Kristina agreed.

Eileen agreed with Brigid that although lots of parent input is necessary, if there are too many people it's too hard to schedule meetings. She asked if a channel can be established to really connect with the community to hear their requests and questions. Amy pointed out that the outreach subcommittee is appropriate for that purpose.

Diane Baum stressed that the discussion really aligned with "open government". The traditional way to do this is to invite community members onto a committee and then they are disseminators of the information. With this, at every stage there are meaningful steps to move this process along. This search won't look like the traditional search but at the end of the day, she hopes the community and stake holders feel like they've made a meaningful contribution to this process.

Maya Minkin emphasized the need to acknowledge that this is a huge time commitment and give the public a realistic perspective on the expectations. Many meetings would be day time due to staff involvement. Being clear about expectations will allow more people to get involved.

Amy asked if the Committee was prepared to vote or suggest that the Committee follow the same guidelines for the permanent search committee as was done in the past.

Deanne O'Sullivan liked the previous make up, but now that the District is fully regionalized, the group should be a little bigger. The Committee should gather some information from other schools that have gone through a superintendent search process recently and ask about their experiences. A report could be given at the June 22 School Committee meeting. Due to the very full agenda for June 22, Amy said it would have to be a brief and decisive vote at that time.

Diane Baum asked the Committee to consider a different kind of search. She suggested that a pool of people could be identified who are interested in the search and a plan could be made for how they could all participate. It wouldn't have to be the same 25 or 30 people going to all the meetings. Tessa didn't disagree with more community involvement, but she stated that there are a lot of different understandings about what goes on in schools and the more people involved, the more feelings are involved. She stressed that the people who work for the superintendent should have a strong voice in the search committee because they are very aware of what is needed from the inside. Public voice is important but to increase the number by too much will bog things down, in Tessa's opinion.

Kristina Rychlik liked what Diane and Tessa said. She suggested that as part of the interim search committee, they could propose a draft of a different kind of search committee. Amy asked if the interim search committee members would agree to doing that. Paul agreed, but said that the interim position is a different role than the permanent one.

Bill Guthlein spoke from the audience and was on the last search committee. He felt that the search committee should be composed more of community members as opposed to the last time when it was 50-50 staff and community. He felt the paramount voice should be the community's.

Paul Murphy was ok with a larger committee as long as the meetings are mapped out so members can all participate as much as they can, without missing meetings. He asked if every member needs to be at every meeting. Brigid Bieber said that 7 subcommittee meetings were held last time, with each lasting 3-5 hours. At the point that applications are in and everyone gets a copy of all of them, that is when it needs to be decided if everyone needs to look at them all, and how they will be rated/ranked, etc. She questioned how responsibilities

at that critical point would be split, because it's a balancing act. It was important for her to listen to other members' opinions on the applications as they went through them all.

Susri Anuradha spoke from the public and clarified that their email request to have half of the search committee be from the community, did not mean to make it a much bigger committee. Last time of the 14 members total, there were only 5 community members. In response to a question, it was stated that the School Committee votes who will chair the search committee. A member of the public asked that as much thought be given to that decision as will be given to who is on the committee.

Amy Krishnamurthy stated that the search committee and its chair will be taken up at the summer workshop next month. A call will go out for volunteers over the summer or in early September. Brigid suggested that the outreach subcommittee can note in their plans that the search committee will be formed with a broad outline of the time commitment, and invite community members to contact the chair or secretary if they are interested, but not a commitment yet. It was the sense of the committee that this was a good idea.

9.1. Timeline

9.1.1. Review of Previous Search Timeline (Fall 2013-Winter 2014)

9.1.2. Possible Timeline FY18

9.2. Candidate Qualifications

9.3. Establish New Search Process

9.3.1. Charge to the Last Search Committee

9.3.2. Last Search Committee Profile and Committee Members

9.3.3. Should a Search Firm be considered

10. Next Steps

11. Possible VOTE to Employ Deputy Superintendent, Marie Altieri as Acting Superintendent until an Interim or Permanent Superintendent is Employed, effective 7/1/17 – VOTE

Paul Murphy moved, Katie Neville seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to employ Deputy Superintendent, Marie Altieri as Acting Superintendent until an interim or permanent Superintendent is employed, effective 7/1/17.

12. Recommendation to Authorize the Deputy Superintendent or Acting Superintendent to Approve and Sign District Purchase Orders effective 7/1/17 – VOTE

Paul Murphy moved, Maya Minkin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to authorize the Deputy Superintendent or Acting Superintendent to approve and sign district purchase orders effective 7/1/17.

Diane Baum confirmed that the interim search committee would find an interim, update the Committee on June 22, and put together a few ideas about a possible profile of the permanent search committee.

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, Open Letter to the Acton-Boxborough School Committee dated 6/12/17 from A. Nitschelm, S. Anuradha, S. Ballard, S. Biswas, S. Pepalia, C. Kadlec

*If the School Committee requires more discussion or time, the vote may be postponed and discussion will be continued at a future meeting.