

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High

December 7, 2006
7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Michael Coppelino, Marie Altieri, Brigid Bieber, Jonathan Chinitz, Terry Lindgren, Sharon Smith McManus, Rebecca Neville, John Ryder, Bruce Sabot

Also Present: William Ryan, George Frost, Susan Horn, Elizabeth Huber, Sharon Summers, citizens and press

Michael Coppelino, chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. The Committee met in joint session until 8:04 p.m. Then the ABRSC meeting continued as follows.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #2007-010 in the amount of \$1,656,322.15, warrant #2007-011 in the amount of \$1,466,870.56, warrant #2007-012 in the amount of \$1,600,653.57 were signed by the chairperson and circulated to the rest of the Committee for signatures.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of November 2, 2006 were approved as amended.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. BLF Report

- Becky Neville reported that Boxborough is starting the FY'08 budget process. If the regional budget comes in as projected, Boxborough should be all right, and the town will not need an override. Free cash amount was just certified.

2. Acton State of the Town Meeting/990 Hour Requirement

- Michael Coppelino reported on the Acton State of the Town meeting held in November. One of the major topics discussed was the DOE's requirement that each ABRHS student must have 990 scheduled hours of instructional time per year. Most of our students do not meet this requirement. Most citizens at the meeting felt that the School Committee members should 'push back' in some way to the Department of Education re: this requirement. The chairperson asked for School Committee thoughts on this matter. Jonathan Chinitz asked about how the credits for band were determined. He also asked about credit for athletics. George Frost said the DOE will not accept athletics credit. Bruce Sabot noted that we have a legal obligation to comply with the law, and he wanted to see what else we could do to explore other options out there. John Ryder agreed and said we also need to deal with the political side of the issue. Terry Lindgren didn't like the idea of having to move toward a more traditional school. He said the goodness that we have is not in the mind of the legislators. Bill Ryan referred to the memo from Mark McQuillan, former Deputy Commissioner of Education, regarding Acton's reaction to 990. It must be followed - it is the law. In Andover, 990 was enforced. No exceptions will be made. Bill and Steve Donovan met with Mark McQuillan, and he approved the direction in which we were going. Marie Altieri asked what would we be doing without 990? Class sizes have grown, and we have lost a lot of variety in our courses.

We would be doing what we could to restore diversity of curriculum anyway. The positive side of 990 is making us do that. She sees this as a process, starting with increasing course offerings. It will help kids only taking four core courses. We can be a model for other schools in the same position. We might want to push back later, if it starts to push our culture to change. If kids already taking lots of courses already are over stressed, then we should revisit this for those students, if it happens.

- Michael Coppolino referred to a list of items to consider. In general, Committee members supported the items, and the suggestion was made to use the list as a basis to start a dialog with the legislators and DOE. Terry Lindgren commented that the 990 requirement is really addressing dropout and low performance districts. He felt it would be sensible to advocate with the state, but wait to see how it plays out. As we get a better handle, then we can focus creatively on a solution and bring that to the state.
- Student reps commented about how the 990 changes were affecting them. One said their life style would never be the same. Another suggested that a DOE rep. come to hear students concerns. Another student said the initial panic has calmed down, students are getting used to it, and felt that banking hours will be good.
- Sharon McManus reported that she had talked with other EDCO districts. There are districts that meet 990, and others that don't and don't want to be noticed. Maybe we can propose some changes to time and learning requirements down the road to make it more flexible. Mark McQuillan said DOE may be open to some flexibility and alternatives. DOE seems to be tying academic performance to number of hours. EDCO encouraged Acton to come back with a proposal/draft, and it could be discussed further.
- Pat Easterly, Acton Fin. Com, asked about graduation requirements. If the number of credits required for graduation was increased, it would help underserved kids take more hours. She felt kids who perform well academically should get credit for athletics. Bill Ryan noted that the administration is discussing increasing the graduation requirements, and the School Committee will be discussing it.
- The administration will bring the DOE's response to the Dec. 15th report back to the Committee when it comes in. Steve Donovan will come to the January SC meeting with an update.

3. ALG Report

- Michael Coppolino reported on the last two meetings. The main topic of discussion was a fair allocation of total revenues. Discussion will continue at the next meeting
- Bill Ryan has talked to Roger Hatch, DOR, about assumptions for FY'08 local aid, but we have a new governor, and therefore he has an additional month to present a budget. Bill referred to the numbers we shared with the town. Becky asked about Boxborough's money. Bill said that we need to agree on new revenues, put them into the 'Stone formula,' see how it works out, and see what the split needs to be. Marie clarified that the issue will not be how to split Chapter 70 money but how to split the general tax revenues. Bruce asked to see budgets before they go to ALG, so Boxborough will be informed.

4. FY'07 Budget

- Bill Ryan noted that we are keeping track of the deficit in the SPED Out of District account.

5. FY'08 Budget

- Bill Ryan referred to the newest spread sheets, which increased the percentage of health insurance from 10% to 12.5%. He referred to the new assumption - to address Douglas School's modular problems. He also noted a new 5-year lease to replace school buses, and we will go out to bid and

consider contracted services as well as lease purchase for transportation. Bill met with the drivers yesterday to inform them of this.

We need to make this decision by February 2007.

- Marie Altieri reported that we need to keep an eye on the state's five-year Chapter 70 plan and the new formula to see how it works out. DOE needs to lay out percentages for the schools, so they have an idea of what aid they will be getting. She said we need to keep 'drumming the drum.' Rep. Jamie Eldridge has been a big help, and we need to keep encouraging him, Representative Cory Atkins and Senator Resor to back education aid in the future. Marie will draft a letter with this message to our legislators from the Committee.

6. Health Trust Report

Marie reported that some fund balance has been built back, and the trust balance is a little ahead of what was planned. Re: projections for next year, the inflation rate anticipated is 10-12%. The Trust is comfortable with 12.5% in the FY'08 budget. Audit will come in next week. Marie asked that someone shadow her at Health Trust meetings.

7. CAFY Report

Terry Lindgren reported on Middlesex Partnerships for Youth program, which offers many excellent resources. He hopes CAFY and the community can get more involved.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Ashton Enrollment Report

George Frost referred to Peter Ashton's enrollment projections for the region, based on the October 1, 2006 numbers. JH enrollment is at the peak this year, and continues at this level for several years. HS population is projected to grow through 2010, then stabilize.

2. Recommendation to Accept Gift from West Acton Merchants, Business and Professional Association

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the generous gift of \$525 from the West Acton Merchants, Business and Professional Association.

The funds were given to Proscenium Circus from the proceeds of the annual Octoberfest to purchase a second section of the stage to be used by ABRHS and Octoberfest.

3. Recommendation to Approve Two ABRHS Field Trips

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the ABRHS Track Team Field Trip to Dartmouth College, January 5-6, 2007.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the ABRHS Field Trip to attend the Harvard Model Congress, February 22-25, 2007.

4. Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB Community Education

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the gift of \$18,160 from AB Community Education.

This donation is from fall term classes that were conducted for more than one session.

5. Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB Swim Boosters

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the generous gift of \$1,500 from the AB Swim Boosters.

The funds will be used to hire an assistant boys coach.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- The Superintendent referred to several items.
- Tess Summers reported that changes in the administration of the Middlesex County Retirement system are coming. They may become part of the state's retirement plan. Michael Coppolino asked that this topic be brought up at the next ALG meeting.
- Liza Huber reported that over 100 parents came to their first Parent Workshop. Speakers were well received. She thanked Temple Beth Elohim for providing space for the event.
- Susan Horn commented on the Curriculum Action Plan, which gives us the opportunity to measure goals and see all the activity going on in the district.

ISSUES OF THE COMMITTEE

- Bruce Sabot gave a midyear assessment of the Committee's meeting procedures and goals. Overall, the running of School Committee meetings have improved. Agendas have gone out via email ahead of time, subcommittee meetings have been posted. All subcommittees should take minutes of meetings which will be included in the School Committee packet. Goals will be discussed at the January SC meeting.
- Committee members congratulated Marie Altieri for being awarded MASC School Committee Member of the Year in our division.
- It was suggested that when the school campus is tied up with a superbowl game or other big events that the public be notified in some way, perhaps using the Acton Neighborhood email system. Traffic and parking approaching and within the campus can be extremely difficult.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 10:30 p.m. it was moved, seconded and

VOTED: To go into executive session to discuss strategies relative to litigation under Chapter 39, Section 23 B, paragraph 3. Each member was polled individually and each member voted to go into executive session for the stated purpose.

The Committee returned to open session at 10:40 p.m. and adjourned.

NEXT MEETING: January 4, 7:30 pm, RJ Grey Junior High Library

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah T. Lawton, Secretary