

## ACTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

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Cafetorium  
Merriam School

May 17, 2007  
7:30 p.m.

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*Members Present:* Jonathan Chinitz, Michael Coppelino, Heather Harer, Xuan Kong  
Sharon Smith McManus, John Ryder  
*Also Present:* William Ryan, George Frost, Susan Horn, Elizabeth Huber,  
citizens and press

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The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Superintendent Bill Ryan.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S INTRODUCTION**

The Superintendent and members of the Committee thanked John Ryder for ably chairing the Acton Public School Committee this year.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS, 2007-08**

- It was moved, seconded and unanimously  
**VOTED:** That Jonathan Chinitz serve as chairperson of the Acton Public School Committee for the 2007-08 school year.
- It was moved, seconded and unanimously  
**VOTED:** That Heather Harer serve as vice chairperson of the Acton Public School Committee for the 2007-08 school year.
- It was moved, seconded and unanimously  
**VOTED:** That Sarah Lawton serve as secretary of the Acton Public School Committee for the 2007-08 school year.

### **STATEMENT OF WARRANT**

Warrant #2007-23 in the amount of \$115,990.80 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the rest of the Committee for signatures.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of March 29, 2007 were approved as written. (VOTE: 5 yes, 1 abstention [Kong])

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Allen Nitschelm, Fin. Com member, asked where the School Committee workshop would be held. The chairperson responded that a location has not yet been determined.

### **EDUCATION REPORT - Merriam School**

Sandra Wilensky, principal, introduced teachers and parents representing the School Council and PTO. They discussed diversity at Merriam.

Mary Ann Ayers, teacher, said they were proud of the changing demographics in the schools. The PTO has been active in encouraging the multicultural parent community to participate in Community Conversations, volunteering, and discussion of the assessment process at Merriam. Providing child care has proved to be the key factor in getting parents to attend meetings/event.

Merriam has also worked on improving communication with non-English speaking families by translating newsletters, extensive use of email

They have celebrated diversity by having an auction with multicultural entertainment, and co-hosted an international night with McCarthy-Towne.

Merriam's goal is to encourage parent participation and learn how to reach out to the school's diverse population. They have learned much from parent forums where values are shared, and informal discussions on cultural values and educational goals are shared. Kids are also involved in Activity Night. Parent symposiums are a conversation between the principal and parents to share positive school experiences. Questions like 'What do you want your child to be like when they leave Merriam?' and 'How can we help achieve that goal?' are discussed informally.

Teachers are creating a Parent Involvement Brochure, which they hope to have ready for the fall. The school theme this year is *Connections*. An all school field trip, plus two theme days were held in connection with the theme.

Future goals of the staff are to continue work started and to look at curriculum resources to support students with language needs.

Several parents told of their positive experiences at Merriam.

Sandra Wilensky said they will analyze lots of data from parents and will write-up a summary.

Jonathan Chinitz said that a permanent fixture of the school should be to translate information to communicate with its constituency.

Committee members thanked the staff and parents for their informative presentation.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **∫ Health Insurance Trust Report**

- John Ryder reported that Tess Summers will chair the Trust next year. If everything stays the same, we should close out FY'07 with a 20% reserve. The trust plans to discuss rates again in December.

### **2. FY'07 APS Budget**

- Bill Ryan referred to the monthly update in packet. He reported that we have a balance of about 1% of budget at present. By the end of the year, we will be pretty close. Tess Summers will give an update on the new energy consultant possibility. Allen Nitschelm asked whether the All-Day K surplus was included in the budget. Bill Ryan said it is used to pay Kindergarten assistants' salaries.

### **3. FY'08 APS Budget**

- Bill Ryan referred to the MASS memo re: the Senate Ways & Means budget. Hopefully, this budget will be voted by the Senate next week. He reported that Boxborough Town Meeting approved the regional school assessments earlier in the week.

### **4. Douglas School Modular Update**

- George Frost reported that the contract is going to Ropes and Gray for review. Then the modulars will be ordered. We will develop a schedule and begin installation at end of the school year.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Recommendation to Approve Conant School Field Trip to Sargent Camp, Hanover, NH, May 21- 23, 2007**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED:** To approve the Conant School Field Trip to Sargent Camp, May 21-23, 2007.

## **2. Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB Community Education from All-Day Kindergarten**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED:** To accept, with gratitude, the gift of \$120,000 from AB Community Ed from the All-Day Kindergarten program.

## **3. Kindergarten Enrollment Update**

- George Frost reported that 295 students were placed in the lottery yesterday. 95% of the students were placed in their first choice schools. There is a good chance that all students will be in their first choice schools by Sept. 1. 55 families did not get All-Day K, and this is a significant number. George said that All -Day K requests are slightly higher. Bill Ryan said that we should think about some different models, as enrollment numbers decrease and space opens up. Allen Nitschelm asked why another All-Day K was not put in. George Frost said it is a complicated issue, but could be discussed.

## **4. School Building Authority Authorization**

George Frost referred to the SBA statement of interest forms which will be submitted to the state by July 1. The only item we qualify for is HVAC upgrades in our older buildings. He asked the committee to vote to prioritize the list. He noted that this should not take away from the capital plan we have developed.

- It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED:** To prioritize the SBA requests as follows: 1) Conant, 2) Gates, 3) Douglas, 4) Admin Bldg, and to submit the forms, after review for typographical and other errors .

## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

- Susan Horn spoke about the NCLB Report Cards for the elementary schools. She said they are based on whether we are making adequate yearly progress (AYP). We are not making it in some areas, and we are considering plans to improve student progress. Mike Coppolino asked if any school councils are including this goal into their School Improvement Plans. Sue said they were working proactively with curriculum councils to address this.
- Jonathan Chinitz announced that the Acton BOS is seeking volunteers for a screening committee to select a new town manager. He urged anyone interested to contact Acton Town Hall.

**NEXT MEETING:** June 21, 7:30 pm, R.J. Grey Junior High School Library

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah T. Lawton, Secretary