

ACTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

December 21, 2006
7:30 p.m.

Members Present: John Ryder, Marie Altieri, Jonathan Chinitz, Michael Coppelino,
Terry Lindgren, Sharon Smith McManus
Also Present: William Ryan, George Frost, Susan Horn, Elizabeth Huber,
Sharon Summers, citizens and press

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by the Chairperson, John Ryder.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #2007-13 in the amount of \$220,797.65 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the rest of the Committee for signatures.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of November 16, 2006 were approved as written.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Cell Tower Concern

- Citizens Jim Monahan, Will Tuffin and Joe Higgins brought a concern about the possible erection of a TMobil cell tower near school/town land on Arlington Street. They also wanted the Committee to be aware of a flawed proposal to place a tower on the Church of the Good Shepherd property at the corner of Arlington and Newtown Rds. They asked for the Committee's support in not allowing this project to go forward. TMobile has also come up with property on Jackson Drive, access to which would have to pass through school/town land. There would be a big fence and loss of trees, in addition to possible health hazards, which would be bad for a residential or school area. Citizens have submitted a warrant for Town Meeting in April to change the bylaws as to where cell towers are located.
- Bill Ryan noted that this was brought up at ALG, but the school has not received any request from TMobile or the town about the proposal. As to any future project involving the school's Arlington St. land, Bill Ryan felt that it would not be sensible to put restrictions on land that would prevent future use.
- The Committee thanked the citizens for their comments.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Douglas School Modulares - Report/Discussion

- Bill Ryan gave an update on mold issues at the Douglas School modulares. He reviewed the history of the problem and offered several solutions. We need to move forward with a plan. The schools have hired a consulting firm, ATS, to address the mold problem, and Bill reported that we have also gotten information re: leasing or purchasing two replacement modular classrooms. We have submitted a draft warrant article for Town Meeting to purchase two new modulares at Douglas. Bill Ryan has also met with the elementary principals to discuss options. He recommended that the Committee make a decision no later than January 18.
John Cox and Lou Leone, ATS, made a presentation about the benefits of successfully and proactively addressing the indoor air quality issue so that the modulares are safe and healthy. Modifications include installing HEPA filters, improving air circulation, constant monitoring, and installing UVC light emitters inside the HVAC systems. These steps would provide better air quality in the

modulars than in most of the classrooms in our schools.

- Bill Ryan recommended that we move forward with this plan. The air quality in the modulars would be the best in any of the schools, and mold would not be a problem.
- Several Douglas parents raised questions about previous heat problems in the modulars, who was responsible for the faulty construction/installation of the modulars and any recourse we might have, how air testing would be done, and the cost of previous remediations.
- The Committee stated they would like to see the recommended steps taken.
- Bill Ryan presented three options for the future. Option 1 was to replace two existing modulars for 2007-08 via lease (A) or purchase (B). Option 2 took Modular 1 and 2 off-line in September 2007, and Option 3 took Modular 1 off-line in September 2007 and Modular 2 off-line in September 2008.
- George Frost noted that, according to the Ashton enrollment projections, we will begin to see decreased enrollment, and it will affect all the schools, not just Douglas. We need to plan for this prospect.
- Marie Altieri recommended purchasing two new modulars. She based her recommendation on the need to increase space at Douglas, as well as the ongoing mold problems.
- Jonathan Chinitz agreed, and said it is about risk mitigation. On doing the math, he estimated the cost would be about \$7 per house in increased taxes.
- Other Committee members agreed that new modulars are needed.
- It was moved (Lindgren), seconded (Chinitz) and

VOTED: To purchase two new modulars for Douglas School, according to Option 1(B) as proposed, and to submit a warrant article to the April Town Meeting according to that Option. (Vote: 5 - 1 (Coppolino))

2. **ALG Report**

- Because the Committee chair is not available to attend the next several ALG meetings, Jonathan Chinitz will represent the Acton School Committee.
- Marie Altieri reported on the last meeting. Discussion centered around revenues and the town/schools split. Jonathan Chinitz reviewed how the 'Windfall' calculation worked. After discussion about changing the split, the group recommended a split of 68.75% / 31.25%. Estimates show that free cash is in the \$2M range, possibly more. It was suggested to potentially use \$1M in free cash, but that may be modified. Marie asked if the Committee was comfortable using E&D funds.
- Terry Lindgren said he was not happy with the 'windfall' decision. The Chapter 70 increase was meant for the schools.
- Michael Coppolino was also not comfortable with the ALG proposals.
- Jonathan Chinitz said he was comfortable with this arrangement, and he thinks that given other sources of revenue in this model, we can meet our budget and move .6% of the levy over to the town. Essentially, we have moved \$300K over to the municipal side. He asked that the Committee support the ALG consensus agreement.
- Bill Ryan agreed that this agreement seemed fair.
- The E&D discussion will be held at the regional meeting in January.
- It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To support the consensus agreement at ALG - to take an additional \$86K from the tax levy in FY'08 and move it over to the municipal side, and in addition, move \$179K of the tax levy to the municipal side in FY'09.

3. **FY'08 Budget**

- Bill Ryan will present a draft at next month's School Committee meeting.
- Bob Evans, Fin. Com, asked that Mr. Ryan meet with the town to get together on utility numbers.

Bill replied that we will be glad to share our estimates with the Fin. Com.

- Michael Coppolino asked about the ABA program, and if it draws people into the schools in some way.
- Pat Easterly, Fin. Com., suggested that the subject of the SPED deficit be discussed at the budget workshop for the Fin. Com.

4. Health Insurance Trust Report

- Marie Altieri reported on the recent audit meeting. Last year ended with a slightly negative balance. This year, we started in a slightly negative balance, but we will finally start to build fund balance this year. Savings have been realized due to many employees moving out of Master Health Plus. The trust is seriously looking into offering a PPO program next year.

5. Conant Principal Search Update

George Frost reported that we have 28 candidates. A schedule has been set for 11 interviews.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Recommendation to Accept Gift from Friends of the Acton Libraries

It was moved(Coppolino), seconded (Altieri) and unanimously

VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the generous gift from the Friends of the Acton Libraries - \$2500 for each of the five elementary schools - for a total gift of \$10,000.

NEXT MEETINGS: January 18, 2007, 7:30 pm, R.J. Grey Library

January 20, All-Day Budget Workshop , R.J. Grey Library, APS after lunch

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah T. Lawton, Secretary