

# ACTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

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Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

January 18, 2007  
7:30 p.m.

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*Members Present:* John Ryder, Michael Coppolino, Terry Lindgren,  
Sharon Smith McManus

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

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

## **CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION**

### **STATEMENT OF WARRANT**

Warrant #2007-15 in the amount of \$617,221.94 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the rest of the Committee for signatures.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of December 21, 2006 were approved as written.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** - None

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **1. ALG Report**

- John Ryder reported that free cash has been certified at an amount that is more than anticipated.

### **2. Health Insurance Trust Report**

- Tess Summers reported that the FY'06 audit has been completed. The trust has been building back fund balance, and is in good shape so far this year. They began discussing rates for FY'08, and also the possible addition of a PPO plan. Rate increases are greatest for Master Health Plus. Only 27% of our employees are in this plan. The trust hopes to set rates by the end of January. Bill Ryan noted that it would be helpful to have a range, so that we can accurately plan and vote the FY'08 budget.

### **3. FY'07 Budget**

Bill Ryan reported on the projected budget deficit at the state level, referring to the MMA newsletter.

### **4. FY'08 Budget**

- Bill Ryan referred to the budget workshop packet of information for January 20. He reviewed the budget information. The APS/ABRSD schools' budget in the ALG plan is \$49,651,000. The estimated Minuteman assessment number is \$779,657 and using \$158,873 from E&D, we still have a \$352,267 problem. The Superintendent will suggest some reductions to solve this deficit at the Saturday workshop. If we can lower health insurance costs, it would help to determine what cuts we will have to make. In utilities, we can only make small reductions. In transportation, we went out to bid for contracted services, but received no bids. We did receive bids on bus leases, and will make a recommendation at the February School Committee meeting. At this point, with reductions, we are still over the ALG number, K-12, by \$100K.
- John Ryder mentioned the Fin Com's resolution, which stated the intent to use free case and other

revenue sources to avoid increasing taxes in FY'08. John said perhaps we could use NESWC funds in FY'08. He said the problem is that we may have to have an override next year, resulting in a significant tax increase. He suggested further discussion at the budget workshop.

- Terry Lindgren applauded the Fin Com for acting in the interest of taxpayers. He added that the ALG process is the right place to work this out.
- Mike said the process feels backwards. He felt the Committee shouldn't take a stand before it plays out in the big picture, particularly beyond the first two years. We need to get the parameters, have ALG vet the plan, then disseminate to town boards.
- It was suggested that Jonathan Chinitz write up his assessment of what is on the table.
- John Ryder summarized the COPS grant situation. It takes \$58K-\$61K out of our budget. He felt that we cannot back out of our commitment. The region pays 2/3 of the cost, APS pays 1/3. Bill Ryan noted that we have no choice, and money needs to shift to the town.
- Terry Lindgren asked about the status of the sewer spill. Bill Ryan said we will be implementing the recommendations of our consultant in terms of training staff. We have never been able to determine what caused the problem at our pump station. Bill said our costs in the matter were not significant.

## **5. Douglas School Modular Update**

- George Frost reported that we have contacted DPC (Design Partnership of Cambridge) and Turner Construction for advice on how to proceed with bid docs on new modulars. They recommend adding two new modulars to the rear of Douglas, leaving the existing modulars in place, in case we can't make the September deadline. Then we will determine what to do with the existing ones. To meet current codes, new modulars are physically larger, and therefore we can't use the existing underpinnings. Reconstructing these bases are not feasible - it would be much more costly. We are currently making sure the back of the Douglas building is OK for the new modulars. George said we will report back when more information is available. In the meantime, we will begin work on the recommendations made by ATS - put in vents below, replace vapor barrier, and continue monitoring.
- Bill Ryan said it was agreed at ALG that if Town Meeting approves the purchase, we would bond for 10 years, and the first payment would be made out of free cash.
- Michael Coppolino suggested that, in the future, when we have emotional votes and large financial decisions to make, that the Committee take a step back to get all the facts and then make a sound decision.

## **6. Conant Principal Search Update**

- George Frost reported that we had 32 applicants. Four finalists are making site visits here this week. He praised the Conant Search Committee for their work. We hope to offer the position the last week of January.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Kindergarten Information Meeting Report**

- Susan Horn reported that the meeting went very well. It was shown on cable TV and the information is on our webpage. School tours are going on now.

### **2. Recommendation to Accept Gift from Conant School PTO**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the generous gift of \$48,615 from the Conant School PTO.**

The gift will pay for assistant positions at Conant.

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

The Superintendent referred to several items.

**ISSUES OF THE COMMITTEE**

- **Letter of Resignation from Marie Altieri/Unexpired Term Fulfillment**

The School Committee must notify the Acton BOS of the resignation. It is not known if we have to replace Marie before Town Meeting. The lawyers are discussing it. John Ryder will send a notification letter to the BOS.

- **LWV Report on November Election Observation**

Sharon McManus asked if a group had been formed to review the situation. As far as anyone knows, it has not been formed. Michael Coppolino asked that the Selectmen notify the School Committee (even informally) if changes in voting locations affect the schools. Terry Lindgren agreed that we expected a more participatory process. Bill Ryan said he would put this on the next ALG agenda, since there is an election in March.

**NEXT MEETINGS: January 20, All-Day Budget Workshop - APS meets after lunch**  
**February 15, 7:30 pm, JH Library - OPEN BUDGET HEARING**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah T. Lawton, Secretary