

**JOINT  
ACTON/ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

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Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

January 4, 2007  
7:55 p.m.

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<i>Members Present:</i>	Michael Coppolino, John Ryder, Marie Altieri, Brigid Bieber, Jonathan Chinitz, Terry Lindgren, Sharon McManus, Rebecca Neville, Bruce Sabot
<i>Also Present:</i>	William Ryan, George Frost, Susan Horn, Elizabeth Huber, Sharon Summers, citizens and press

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The joint meeting was called to order at 7:55 p.m. by the respective chairs.

### **CHAIRPERSONS' INTRODUCTION**

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The joint meeting minutes of December 7, 2006 were approved as read.

### **FY'08 PROPOSED APS and AB SCHOOL BUDGETS**

- Bill Ryan presented the proposed school budgets. He reviewed the budget assumptions and key decisions. He noted that if we take any School Choice students next year, the administration would recommend taking only siblings of current Choice students and the incoming 9th grade staff children. He referred to the items in the packet: estimated revenues for the local and regional schools, the summary and detailed proposed FY'08 budgets, the personnel changes and costs, the capital plan, and the proposed warrant articles and motions for annual Acton Town Meeting. Using the FY'08 ALG budget calculations, the proposed Acton and AB budget numbers show a negative \$245,394. There are several options. One is to reduce the budgets. We are assuming a 12.5% increase in health insurance, and if the actual increase is even one percentage point less, it will help. Utility increases are significant - we will continue to look to see if we can make reductions there. We are also going out to bid for transportation services, and it is conceivable that we could realize savings. Another option is to use more free cash or other reserves to help with the deficit. We anticipate a 10-11% increase in Chapter 70 funds, assuming the state stays with the formula changes made this year. We've estimated that the SPED Circuit Breaker will reimburse us 73% of any SPED tuitions over \$33- \$34K. Enrollment at local will begin to decline. Bill noted that the Ashton enrollment projections show that enrollment will begin to decline soon at the elementary level.
- There was some discussion about the increase in SPED costs. John Ryder said we would need to see the ABA program's five-year history to project the amounts we need to budget for. He asked about putting SPED transportation out to bid as well. George Frost noted that we are part of CASE Collaborative, which handles the transportation at a reasonable rate, and has provided excellent service, compared to previous experiences. It would be complicated to change this.
- Marie Altieri said one of the important issues MASC is fighting for is increased reimbursement for SPED transportation. Michael Coppolino said we need to do some cost analysis to see what makes sense in terms of our added expenses vs. outside placement expenses. Bill Ryan said costs have been growing over the last several years, especially the ABA program. He was not sure what it will look like in future years.
- In summary, the Acton Public Schools' proposed FY'08 budget is up 5.75%. The main drivers are salaries, health insurance and utilities. Jonathan Chinitz said that any line item with an increase

over 5% merits a discussion on January 20 (budget workshop).

- In summary, the Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools proposed budget for FY'08 is up 7.95%. Bill Ryan noted that the RJ Grey JH enrollment will be basically flat for next several years. ABRHS enrollment will continue to go up for the next several years. George Frost reviewed the personnel change charts at the region. The main drivers of regional budget: salaries, health insurance, pension, SPED transportation, SPED tuition, and utilities. The overall assessments are going up only 3.7% - Acton: 3.49%, Boxborough: 4.28%.
- Bill Ryan recommended only using \$435K of E&D, not the entire amount. This would leave about \$200K.
- Bill reviewed the Capital Plan needs for APS. These are items (replace Conant boiler, Douglas roof, Gates unit ventilators, plus \$100K for technology) that have been put off for several years, and need to be done. John Ryder said that Capital Comm. will not support an override this year, and doubts if there is sufficient time to pull together a team effort.

### **Recommendation to Revise School Committee Policy, File: JRA, Student Records**

- It was moved (Neville), seconded (Ryder) and unanimously

**VOTED: To approve revised School Committee Policy, File: JRA, Student Records, as presented.**

*At 9:25 pm, the Joint Meeting was suspended.*

*The meeting (just APS) resumed at 11 pm.*

### **Continued Discussion of the APS Capital Plan**

- After discussion, the Committee decided not to go forward with the Capital Plan items for FY'08 (except for the Douglas modulars), but it is critical that these items must be included in the FY'09 budget. ALG reps were asked to take this message to the next ALG meeting. There was frustration due to the fact that the schools have had a capital plan for several years, but there has been no ALG consensus on how to move forward with these critical needs this year. The School Committee agreed that they will not be asking for an override this year.
- Regarding funding for the two new Douglas modulars, the Committee asked that ALG move forward with this acquisition for FY'08, not outside of Prop 2 1/2, and that they explore other ways to fund the purchase, e.g., free cash, bonding, and that funding be outside the Acton Schools operating budget for FY'08.
- There was discussion about the NESWC funds, as to when they might be available. Several members felt they qualified for the 'windfall' category.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah T. Lawton,  
Secretary