

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Approved Minutes

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

Thursday, March 1, 2018
7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O'Sullivan, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: none
Others: Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Amy Krishnamurthy, Chairperson.

2. **Chairman's Introduction** – *Amy Krishnamurthy*
The meeting was taped and will be broadcast this week.

3. **Interview of ABRSD Superintendent Finalist Peter Light**
Mr Light introduced himself and stated that being a leader is about relationships with people. Trust and accountability are essential. Leaders have an obligation to make connections with the kids. There has to be a core value of equity, regarding access to the curriculum, culturally responsive and making sure to provide opportunities to all students given all socio economic backgrounds. He has worked with a very active student wellness advisory council, developed an arts academy and many other programs. He established a donated bioscience lab that led to professional development for some teachers and great job opportunities and internships for students. He developed a week long "camp" for freshmen before they started the High School to alleviate anxiety using older students as guides. He wants to look for what is next in education and appreciates that AB has the same attitude - achievement through innovation.

The Committee asked a series of questions of Mr. Light.

Rather than commenting on challenges he thought he might face at AB, Mr. Light reframed the question into "What are you curious about now?" He heard a lot about the relationship between student wellness and achievement and how they are similar. He would love to explore this topic in his entry plan. He also heard it come up around the homework policy and beliefs. The number of different leaders that the District has had in a short amount of time is something he would like to consider. Typically there would be cultural healing that needs to go on in that kind of a situation. He talked about the various teams that the superintendent interacts with and must built relationships with, including the School Committee. A new person has to be sure the teams are strong. He talked about being able to celebrate the two cultures of Acton and Boxborough, and the consistency of the framework vs the personalization of the individual schools as something he'd like to explore. He would explore how capital planning is done at AB using E&D because that is a little different.

Mr. Light addresses conflict starting with a mindset that conflict is healthy. He begins by letting people know that conflict shows there is a level of trust in the group. He does not judge success by lack of conflict.

Regarding how he would foster meaningful inclusive learning environments and opportunities for students in the high needs category as well as all students, Mr. Light said he would ask if our schools' culture reflects what we want it to. Focus groups should talk about what inclusion means to all of the different groups. He gave an example of hanging flags from all of the countries that students are from in the school lobby so it's a celebration. Be sure families' cultures are included in the curriculum. The more you tie your values into the curriculum, the better. This is about achievement and socio-emotional learning and includes making our communications culturally inclusive as well. Sufficient translations should be available to all. The more students are engaged to become leaders in this for the younger children, the better.

Communication must be 2-way. A good communicator is also a good learner who listens for emotion and with perspective, and deeply understands where someone is coming from. Listening is the start of communication, then something must be done about it. Being able to articulate back to people about what is going on is important - accountability and then action. The best communicators are able to tie in changes and then effect it. If change cannot happen, then follow up should at least be done. Respect is also essential. A leader is the primary example of being respectful in the community and must be able to call people out when they are not respectful.

When asked about the process he would use to develop a school budget, Mr. Light said he would talk with the School Committee about his approach first because it is their budget. Establishing the budget timeline is the first step for a Superintendent to be sure that it is clear. His first year would really be about learning what the current process is. Effective leaders don't come in the first year and make changes. He would make sure the Central Office team is meeting with all of the building principals to hear about the individual schools. He would want to know about our capital funding process, because it matters to the MSBA and others. He will need to understand the regional transportation budget. Credibility with the community must be established. Mr. Light talked about his experience with teacher negotiations. After a difficult process using a traditional approach, he and his team tried interest based bargaining, with much success.

As the principal at Franklin High School, after the district had 3 principals in 5 years, Mr. Light described his success as not easy. Although he made mistakes he was never afraid to own up to them and talk about how to move forward. He stated that no one will be a perfect leader. Ultimately, people think he is a real person. They know they can talk to him about what is wrong and he will listen. When he started at the High School, they needed a real human being. His decisions were not always popular, but they always put students first.

Mr. Light thanked the Committee for a great day. (He had been in the district all day meeting with various groups.) He found everyone passionate about education and considers that a wonderful attribute. Although there are issues that the community will disagree on, with listening and synthesizing the information, the passion is still there. That is what excites him about coming to AB.

4. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Mary Brolin moved, Katie Neville seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the minutes of 1/11/18, 11/16/17, 11/9/17 and 10/19/17 as written.

5. **Open Meeting Law Complaint**

Amy Krishnamurthy reported that a complaint was received on February 20, 2018 regarding the timeliness of the approval of minutes for the meeting on January 11, 2018. The minutes were just approved and will be posted to the website tonight. A response will be sent to Mr.

Ballard including the minutes and explaining that there have been 6 school committee meetings in the 7 weeks since January 11th that have kept the staff very busy. Attention will be paid to approving meeting minutes in a timely manner.

The ABRSC adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: Agenda, memo with 2 finalists' resumes, list of questions, draft minutes, Open Meeting Law Complaint

Next Meetings (all in the Jr High Library):

ABRSC Meeting to interview Superintendent Finalist Anthony Parker, February 28 at 7:30

ABRSC Meeting to discuss and vote on the new Superintendent, March 12 at 7:00 p.m.

ABRSC Meeting, March 15 at 7:00 p.m.