

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 9/1/16)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

Monday, August 8, 2016
7:00 p.m. Open Meeting
Followed by Executive Session

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan (7:10 p.m.), Kristina Rychlik, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

1. Chairperson Mary Brolin called the ABRSC to order at 7:01 p.m.
2. **Chairman's Introduction**
 - 2.1. Dr. Dawn Bentley was welcomed as the new Assistant Superintendent for Student Services.
 - 2.2. Mary Brolin referred to the Alternative Posting Letter and Confirmation found in the packet. Meetings will now be officially posted on the school website as opposed to by the Acton and Boxborough Town Clerks. The Town Halls may continue to post ABRSD meetings as a courtesy.
3. **Statement of Warrant & Approval of Minutes**
 - 3.1. The warrants were read by the Chair (see attachment) and circulated to the Committee for their review and signatures.
 - 3.2. Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept the minutes of the ABRSC Workshop Meeting of 6/29/16 as written.
The minutes of the meeting held on 6/23/16 will be reviewed at the next meeting.
4. **Public Participation - none**
5. **Enrollment Planning for the Capital Master Plan – Dore & Whittier**
 - 5.1. Master Plan Enrollment Recommendations and slides
 - 5.2. Historical Enrollment
Representatives from Dore & Whittier led a discussion of their Master Plan Enrollment Projections. After meeting with the Ashtons regarding the Ashtons' enrollment data from November 2015 and the NESDEC projections from May 2016, it was agreed to use updated NESDEC projections from July 14, 2016. This data accounts for the increase in real estate turnover, but does not include choice students. This is recommended by Dore & Whittier because it is how the State would look at enrollment projections. The MSBA process uses a ten year enrollment average for building project submissions. Based on this, a project submitted by ABRSD for MSBA reimbursement would require space for 2,527 students even though it is projected that 5 – 10 years later, the District expects 2,700 – 3,000 students. Lee Dore stated that it is unique that in our district that the 10 year period is the low period.

Several Committee members expressed concern about this situation. It will be difficult to propose a building plan to the Towns that will appear to be too small for the years following the 10 year period. Lee Dore replied that a Master Plan could prioritize options that have multiple steps/stages so that the District can adjust as enrollment changes. He suggested that that might be discussed in the Working Group meeting the next day (8/9/16).

A hypothetical question was asked if the Committee agrees that 3 of our school buildings have significant challenges, if the Committee declared that one of them would be closed, would that make a stronger case for what the District asks of the MSBA. Lee Dore replied that it does not change the enrollment data but it does change how the District looks at things. Mary Brolin and Paul Murphy spoke in favor of using the highest enrollment projection figures that are appropriate. Maria Neyland advocated for having a longer view of enrollment (2032) when discussing the Master Plan.

Lee Dore emphasized that the Committee needs to look at the numbers as the MSBA would look at them to understand how the project might unfold. He recommended that the School Committee come up with a plan with multiple steps and increased flexibility so it can be explained successfully to the public.

Kristina Rychlik stated that if that is true, the Committee needs to consider a multi-step process, not just addressing one school. Brigid Bieber agreed with looking at a multiphase scenario to increase flexibility. She also stressed that information cannot be over-communicated. Paul Murphy is frustrated that they are not looking at a longer scenario to see the whole enrollment picture.

Next Steps:

At the upcoming working group meetings, they will prioritize multi-step options over single step. Lee said they should walk away from the meeting with a short list (5 or 6) of options from the 16 options that currently exist. The next meeting will test if the options will work on the different plots.

Dr. Brand stressed that as the work unfolds, there will be continued opportunities and meetings for people to be involved. He cautioned the public that the final meetings in late Fall will present options, not decisions. The next step is for costs to be evaluated by the School Committee followed by the two towns. Economics will be an important piece of the successful project.

6. **ABRSD Athletic Department Financial Update** – *Athletic Director Steve Martin*

Steve Martin updated the Committee on the progress made since his last financial report. He thanked everyone for supporting many of the small changes to the Athletic Program that have added up significantly. FY16 revenue was up \$50,557 from FY15, partly because boosters' gifts are now included. Waivers decreased by 60, from 132 to 72 total, which Steve said led to a number of valuable conversations with families about resources. Increasing the athletic fee to \$250 for FY17 remains important to help support a balanced Athletic Budget.

When asked why families have to pay athletic fees in public schools, Dr. Brand explained that fundamentally it comes down to the priorities of the district and how much of the teams' expenses should be absorbed in the appropriated budget. This is similar to the preschool and All Day Kindergarten costs. AB is on the low side of participation fees that communities charge their students. Dr. Brand thanked Steve for the great progress he made in one year. Steve stated that he has worked closely with Clare Jeannotte and appreciated her assistance.

7. **Recommendation to Approve FY17 ABRSC Goals – VOTE** – *Mary Brolin*

Mary Brolin reviewed the proposed goals from the Workshop meeting.

Professional Practice Goal #1:

Mary Brolin and Beth Petr will arrange for a data-driven decision making webinar that School Committee members can watch on their own time and then discuss. Kristina Rychlik suggested that a strong communications plan will be needed asap, so it was agreed not to include this topic in the goal.

District Improvement Goal #1:

The Committee agreed to "Encourage" community engagement as opposed to "Improve".

District Improvement Goal #2:

This goal was accepted as written.

Student Learning Goal #1:

This goal is almost identical to last year's. Although it may not seem directly related to learning, the School Committee puts forward the budget that supports the students' needs.

Kathleen Neville moved, Kristina Rychlik seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY17 ABRSC Goals as amended.

8. **FY17 Staffing Update** – *Marie Altieri*

8.1. New Professional Staff

8.2. Changes in Staff

Marie Altieri reported that 33 new professional staff have been hired and, although the average new staff member's salary (\$57,370) is above the budgeted 3M level, it works out because a number of more expensive staff retired last year.

9. **ABRSD FY16/17 Budget Updates**– *Clare Jeannotte*

9.1. FY16 End of Year Update

9.1.1. Financial Status

9.1.2. End of FY16 Budget Planning

The FY16 End of Year Update is based on preliminary numbers as Clare felt it important to get the numbers out. The annual audit will be done before the FY16 budget is final and presented in October. Paul Murphy asked how the District is covering the High School concrete project now that it could not be done before July 1st. Circuit breaker funds were reallocated in the FY 16 budget, which left funds to cover part of the cost, along with funds in the capital budget for FY 17. Clare noted that the Medicaid reimbursement has been very valuable to the district.

9.2. FY17 Budget Update

9.2.1. MA DOR Notice to Regional School Districts of Estimated Receipts

9.3. Boxborough's Hager Well and the ABRSD Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA)

This well provides water for the Blanchard School and the IMA determines how the District pays the Town of Boxborough for it. JD Head proposes that the District have a legal review of the IMA to clarify what "overall maintenance and operations" means. He believes some efficiencies may be found and that the District may be paying more than necessary. A meeting will take place in August with Selina Shaw and others. The current vendor has been in place since 2005.

10. **Annual Recommendation to set the imprest balance of the 3 Student Activity checking accounts for FY17 – VOTE** – *Clare Jeannotte*

This "housekeeping" vote is done annually. Three of our schools have these funds set up, as do many school districts. The limits are the same as last year. Brigid Bieber asked if the accounts are audited annually. They were with the District's previous auditor, but the new firm will do it on a three-year rotation basis.

Brigid Bieber moved, Kathleen Neville seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to set the imprest balance of the Student Activity as proposed.

11. **Recommendation to accept the MA DOER Vehicle-to-Grid Electric School Bus Pilot Program Grant – VOTE**

Dr. Brand intends to bring all competitive grants over \$500 to the School Committee for a vote of acceptance to ensure that members are aware and in support of the activity.

Paul Murphy moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the MA DOER Vehicle-to-Grid Electric School Bus Pilot Program Grant.

12. **Recommendation to accept the MA DESE Digital Connections Partnership Schools Grant – VOTE** - *Glenn Brand*

Paul Murphy moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the MA DESE Digital Connections Partnership Schools Grant.

13. **FY17 Student Representatives to the ABRSC – Glenn Brand**

13.1. Student Involvement in Decision-making Policy, File: JIB

Dr. Brand does not want to make any changes to the policy for this year. He will coordinate meetings with the students per the policy and the law. In prior years, the students came once a month to the regional meetings. Mary Brolin encouraged subcommittee meetings to invite students if the topic is pertinent. Mary saw it as 2 fold – to get their input and give the students a valuable experience.

14. **Discussion of Email regarding Lifting the Charter School Cap in MA – Mary Brolin**

Boxborough Committee members received an email from a grassroots organization asking if the Committee is interested in passing a resolution in favor of keeping the cap. Mary Brolin offered to discuss and take a possible vote (if the Committee wanted to) at the next meeting. Kristina Rychlik stated that she is not sure that our communities have experienced all of the situations described in the resolution included. She felt that if the ABRSC takes a stand, it would be philosophical and not based on actual experience. Paul Murphy stated that when the charter school law was enacted, he thought it would serve as a model for innovation and to inform the public, but he does not see that cross pollination happening. He is disappointed philosophically. Unless there is a benefit to the public school system, he does not think he will support this. Diane Baum pointed out that there is a report that says exactly what Paul expressed and agrees with him. She believes that lifting the cap would mean 12 more charter schools, even though it does not directly affect AB, it is not working the way it was supposed to. Diane would like to vote on this. Members felt they needed additional material on this issue if there is going to be a vote.

15. **Subcommittee Reports**

15.1. Policy

15.1.1. FY16 Summary Report – Mary Brolin expressed appreciation for the subcommittee’s work.

15.2. Comparative Communities Study – Diane Baum is scheduling a meeting. She has been collecting a lot of data and expects to present to the School Committee at the meeting on 9/15/16.

15.3. Recommendation to Approve FY17 ABRSC Subcommittee/Other Assignments – **VOTE** –*Brolin*

Eileen Zhang will be the primary liaison to the Acton Board of Selectmen, with Paul Murphy as the secondary. Mary Brolin asked if anyone wanted to join the Wellness Committee with Katie Neville. They usually meet on Wednesday afternoons due to staff involvement. There was no response.

Diane Baum moved, Kathleen Neville seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY17 ABRSC Subcommittee/Other Assignments List as amended.

16. **School Committee Member Reports**

16.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Paul Murphy*

16.1.1. Meeting on 6/30/16, including minutes of meeting on 2/25/16

16.1.2. There is discussion about the 5 Board meeting (not 3 board) coming up. Amy Krishnamurthy reported that people want to do a social event on Thursday, September 8 at 6:30 p.m. at Amy’s house. Mary will publicize that while Amy is away.

16.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) – *Mary Brolin – to meet next week.*

16.2.1. Draft Letter of Support for Boxborough MassWorks Grant

Mary Brolin stated that Boxborough continues to apply for this grant and the Committee supported it with a letter last year. There was a sense of the meeting to support this in another letter signed by Mary.

16.3. Acton Finance Committee –Deanne O’Sullivan reported that Clare Jeannotte and Glenn Brand will present “Basics of School Committee Budgeting” at the next meeting. Paul Murphy stated that he sorted the Capital projects by priorities to help him understand it. He shared this with all SC members fyi. The top 3-5 projects per school came up to \$500,000. JD Head was asked to do this in an organized way for the Working Group on Aug 24. This is running alongside the District Master Plan.

16.4. Acton Board of Selectmen – Eileen Zhang reported that she attended a meeting and read the materials. She is connecting with Paul. She is interested in the transportation issue that the Board is discussing tonight.

16.4.1. Acton Capital Improvement Planning Committee members – Jon Churchill will be the ABRSC, At-Large member. Kristina was thanked for assisting with this decision.

16.5. Minuteman Technical High School (MMT) Update – *Diane Baum*

16.5.1. MMT District Ballot Vote – Tuesday, September 20, 2016 from 12-8 p.m. at the Jr High (Acton registered voters only). Boxborough voters are also going to the polls on that day at the same time.

17. **Superintendent’s Report/Updates – Glenn Brand**

Dr. Brand informed the Committee that 7 members of Central Office have now relocated to the Administration Building (Glenn Brand, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Beth Petr, Karen Coll, Marlene Dow and Anne Vlajinac). The rest of the Finance and Human Resources departments will join them next summer. This is to provide more needed academic space for the Junior High.

18. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

19. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 9:35 p.m., it was moved (Brolin), seconded (Neyland) and unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Office Support Association (OSA), American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA).
(YES – Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, O’Sullivan, Rychlik, Zhang)

Mary Brolin stated that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session solely to adjourn.

At 10:08 p.m. the ABRSC returned to Open Meeting and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda and list of warrants

NEXT MEETINGS:

September 1 - ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (packet posted August 26)

September 15 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (packet posted September 9)