

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
Minutes (approved 10/19/17)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 3, 2017
6:30 p.m. Executive Session
7:00 p.m. (approximately) Open Meeting

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O’Sullivan (6:36 p.m.), Eileen Zhang (7:00 p.m.)
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley (6:50 p.m.), Deborah Bookis (6:50 p.m.), Bill McAlduff, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino (6:50 p.m.)

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chairperson Amy Krishnamurthy.
2. **Enter Executive Session**
At 6:33 p.m., Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was, **VOTED** by roll call: that an executive session be convened under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §21(a)(3) to conduct strategy with respect to pending litigation. An open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board.
(YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville)

Amy stated that the Committee would return to Open Meeting at approximately 7:00 p.m.
3. **The ABRSC returned to Open Meeting at 6:50 p.m.**
4. **Chairman’s Introduction – Amy Krishnamurthy**
 - 4.1. There was a moment of silence in memory of the recent tragedy in Las Vegas and Puerto Rico.
 - 4.2. Amy read the following statement about the student incident last week:

Late last week, a high school student reported receiving an anonymously written note containing a racially charged remark. In light of this I would like to again emphasize that our district is committed to the ideals of inclusion, human dignity and respect for others. We model this everyday as we try to live our core values of equity, wellness and engagement so that every member of our community feels safe and supported. The high school leadership team has taken this incident and engaged students in identifying what they can do today, tomorrow and this year to ensure everyone in the school is safe, cared for and respected.
5. **Statement of Warrants & Approval of Minutes**
The meeting minutes of 9/19/17 were approved as amended.
The Committee reviewed and signed the warrants. See list.
6. **Public Participation - none**
7. **Permanent Superintendent Search Process – Amy Krishnamurthy**

(Marie Altieri left the room for this discussion.)

Amy Krishnamurthy suggested to the School Committee that the Superintendent be asked to request proposals from several search firms and then the Committee could decide if they would like to consider hearing more from them, and possibly hire one for the search.

Bill McAlduff agreed that hiring a search consultant would be a good idea. He questioned whether the District has the capacity to do such a labor and time intensive search on their own at this time. It was noted that a firm was used for the previous permanent superintendent search at a cost of \$19,500. Bill offered to be the administrative support for the screening/search committee. He outlined a possible timeline taking advantage of what will be a lull in the MSBA Building Project work during December and January (assuming successful votes on 12/4/17). He suggested beginning the process for selecting a screening committee on November 30, pending search firm input.

Paul Murphy stated that after the recent interim search process, he is sure that the staff could do this search well, but it would take away from focusing on the students now that school is in session. For that reason, he agreed with using a firm. Several members agreed. Diane Baum stated that Hazard Young did the search for Concord Carlisle. Bill McAlduff said that HY is a bit different in that they do all of the initial review of materials including identifying the semifinalists and then give the list to the screening committee to interview. Bill noted that NESDEC recently provided search services to the district for the Director of Finance position. He suggested asking for proposals including a scope of services to be provided, a menu and description of the process intended to be used, and their fee structure. He stated that hiring a firm would be money well spent to be sure it is all done properly.

Mary Brolin expressed concern about the search timing because it seemed late. In her work, they lost good candidates because their process was late. She asked if proposals could be brought to the next School Committee meeting. Bill replied that they could if that is the direction the School Committee wants to go in. Mary was in support of using a search firm and moving quickly, as appropriate. Deanne O'Sullivan agreed, but was concerned about doing the outreach between December 15 and January 15. Bill agreed that the timeline is tight but the consultant would be relied on to make it most productive. The Committee agreed that they need to be strategic due to the Building Project forums being done, as well as those being done for the Acton Town Manager search. Bill clarified that the purpose of the focus groups is to create a candidate profile. That profile becomes the major tool that the screening committee uses to review the applications.

Dennis Bruce asked if it is a requirement that a School Committee member be on the screening committee. Bill replied that it is the School Committee's decision who is on the search/screen committee, but he feels that it is important to have a member on this committee. It was noted that there is an obligation to have an ABEA representative on the screening committee.

Heather Harer spoke from the audience. She sat on the last two searches and urged the Committee to do due diligence about who has done previous searches and how it has worked out with each of them. She asked the Committee to take the time to interview the firms, noting that Hazard Young's process takes a lot of the control from the School Committee, and they are in it as a business. Angie Tso asked about the kinds of questions and requirements that the consultant firms can be asked. Bill McAlduff explained that there are many ways to get the information that is needed.

Amy Krishnamurthy confirmed that there was consensus from the School Committee to ask the Superintendent to request proposals from the 3 or 4 search firms so presentations and/or discussion could be scheduled for the next School Committee meeting on October 19.

8. Update on School Start Times – Marie Altieri, Bill McAlduff

Marie Altieri presented the proposed current working model found on slide 12. With this proposal the Junior High starts 30 minutes later (8:00 a.m.), the High School starts 44 minutes later (8:07 a.m.) and the elementary schools start 5 minutes earlier than their current late schedule (8:55 a.m.). The Administration plans to return for further discussion at the first December School Committee meeting and then request a vote on the proposal at the next December meeting.

The Committee appreciated all of the effort that has gone into the proposal, and the progress made on a later start time for our students. Some members urged the Administration to do more, given that 8:30 a.m. is the nationally recommended start time. It was generally agreed that the proposal was a good start and eventually the schools may be able to start later. The Committee discussed why some districts start later and end before AB (Ashland and Duxbury). Marie explained that it is due to how the High School does their scheduling. AB also has a longer lunch than most districts.

Brigid Bieber appreciated the decision timeline but expressed concern about the high cost of moving to a single tier of elementary busing to make later start times possible. She described budget decisions as always a statement of priorities. Brigid reminded the Committee that the District also has capital needs, a big building project coming up, and they have not even discussed any educational budgetary items. Because single tier busing is a big decision for the elementary schools, Brigid felt that families need to be engaged in this spending priority, to help the School Committee ultimately make their decision. Diane Baum reminded members that on the survey, the no cost option had the High School starting at 7:50 p.m. It was also mentioned that most of our comparative communities are contracting busing out. Maya Minkin was disappointed that students couldn't start after 8:00 in the morning and urged the District to be more progressive. Several members asked if our bus drivers should be paid more so we attract and retain drivers, given how hard the job here is with school choice. Marie Altieri replied that a salary survey of drivers was done last year and some good changes were made. It is only 30 hours / week and those are school weeks only so it is not a full time schedule.

Tessa McKinley felt it was significant that in the Start Time Committee survey, 56% of the PreK-12 parents/guardians and staff preferred 8:00 JH/JH start to 8:30 (slide 3). It was noted that teachers are often parents as well so if their children's district is not changing times, this could be challenging for them.

Eileen Zhang thanked JD Head for the late bus that has now been running for two weeks. This is very helpful for families. She is happy with the option that does not cost any more dollars given the building project and other things the District needs to do. Marie Altieri explained there was an option starting the Junior High/High School at 7:50 a.m. and the elementary schedule would be as late at 4:00 p.m. This would be a tradeoff if we wanted to keep the 2 tier elementary schedule (with no increased cost for transportation). If there is not enough funding to do it as proposed, the High School is the priority and this option could be considered.

Paul Murphy felt that 8:30 a.m. would be ideal but 8:07 is a good tradeoff given the budgetary impact. Deanne O’Sullivan agreed that although there are budgetary impacts, one of the District’s main goals is mental health and teens’ ability to handle stress, and this proposal addresses that. She encouraged the Committee to “sell it” based on the mental health benefits.

Steve Ballard spoke from the audience stating that to him the obvious solution was to consider when you remove school choice from the modeling, then start times and bus routes all improve, with no extra costs. He questioned whether families would consider giving up school choice if they saw the benefits of it, particularly if the priority is students’ mental health.

9. **ABRSD 2017-2018 Goals – Second Read – VOTE to Accept – Bill McAlduff**

9.1. Slides from 9/19/17 meeting

9.2. Memo with Summary of this year’s Work Focus and District Wide Goals Update

The Superintendent asked for any comments or questions that came up from the last meeting’s presentation. He felt the previous Start Times presentation would be helpful information.

Diane Baum asked why the cultural and climate survey would be started at the secondary level. Dawn Bentley responded that one reason is that not all of the pieces are present at the elementary level. She agreed with Diane that because the scope of the survey is large, they will begin with this demographic. Marie added that they will also look at elementary data from other sources.

The Committee discussed how MTSS would be measured for success because there are no dates or benchmarks. Deanne O’Sullivan asked, “What are we expecting at the end of the year?” (slide 5)

Bill McAlduff explained that when the Administration put the goals together, they wanted to take a step back especially in terms of the number of action items that had specific benchmarks and measureable action items. MTSS is continuing the exploration from last year. He said that they are not sure of the specific outcomes from this year, but on some of the items, there will be periodic updates and with other pieces, there will be more work internally regarding how those updates will be provided. Bill expects that it will not just be a report that comes out in June. The administration is still trying to decide if there will be a consultant used and if so who, and whether to work with regional consultancy office. Dawn Bentley said that they will have deliverables and recommendations, but they are waiting for some information. Deanne expressed concern that the MTSS goal sounds “wishy washy” right now and she doesn’t feel like it can be measured as it is written. Bill referred the Committee to the actual Long Range Strategic Plan’s Goals 1 and 3, noting that they are specific with deliverables. Goal 2 regarding MTSS and in particular the equity audit, are a little obtuse and they are working through that now. This is an iterative process for this year but he feels it is important enough to include in the goals now. Bill noted Deanne’s concern but is confident those concerns can be addressed through the year.

Paul Murphy asked if the district is close to implementing MTSS. Dawn Bentley replied that the district is in lots of different places regarding MTSS work right now. She explained that the senior leadership team, in consultation with the MTSS Consultants, agreed that based on

last year's work, they need to back up to prevent creating three systems of support – general education, special education, and a third system of support

A question was asked if these are the same as the Superintendent's goals and if Bill will be evaluated based on them. Bill replied that the Committee will not be formally evaluating the superintendent this year, but they will do a process midyear to give the Committee practice focusing on these goals and the district's progress. Diane Baum asked if the Committee will be evaluating based on these goals and George Batsche's data, is there something that could be included that could be used to show measurement. Bill agreed with Mary Brolin's suggestion that the document could be populated with some data after working with the goals for a period.

Brigid Bieber moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the goals for 2017 – 2018.

10. **School Building Committee Update – Mary Brolin**

10.1. Recommendation to Approve ABRSD Building Project Feasibility Study
Proposed Funding in the amount of \$1.3 million (\$710,000 after MSBA reimbursement to come from E&D) - **VOTE** – Mary Brolin

Dave Verdolino explained that the MSBA provided the suggested language, including some modification because the district plans to use E&D funds instead of borrowing. It is required by MSBA to vote the entire cost amount. The proposed motions have been reviewed and deemed acceptable by both Acton and Boxborough Town Counsels. Mary Brolin reminded the Committee that they needed to approve the amount first.

Paul Murphy moved, Deanne O'Sullivan seconded and it was unanimously
VOTED: that the ABRSC approve the amount of \$1,300,000 for the purpose of paying the costs of a feasibility study and schematic design relating to the C.T. Douglas Elementary School Statement of Interest.

Dennis Bruce moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously
VOTED: that the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee (the "District") hereby appropriates the amount of \$1,300,000 for the purpose of paying the costs of a feasibility study and schematic design relating to the C. T. Douglas Elementary School Statement of Interest, including all costs incidental or related thereto (the "Study"), said amount to be expended at the direction of the District's School Building Committee. To meet this appropriation, the District is authorized to utilize Certified Excess and Deficiency funds pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws and the Agreement for a Regional School District for the Towns of Acton and Boxborough, Massachusetts (Revised July 1, 2014). The District acknowledges that the MSBA's grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District; provided further that the amount of the use of Excess and Deficiency Funds pursuant to this vote shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Feasibility Study Agreement that may be executed between the District and MSBA.

10.2. Recommendation to Approve Proposed Motion Language for the 12/4/17 Special Town Meetings' School Building Project Feasibility Study warrant article -
VOTE- Mary Brolin

Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED**: that the form of the article for the Town Meetings of member Towns will be, “To see if the Town will approve the appropriation of \$1,300,000 from Certified Excess and Deficiency funds of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District, for the purpose of paying the costs of a feasibility study and schematic design relating to the C. T. Douglas Elementary School Statement of Interest, including all costs incidental or related thereto (the “Study”), and for which the District may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (“MSBA”), said amount to be expended at the direction of the District’s School Building Committee. The MSBA’s grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any Study costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District and its member municipalities. Any grant that the District may receive from the MSBA for the Study shall be as set forth the Feasibility Study Agreement that may be executed between the District and MSBA.”

- 10.3. Community Forums – Everyone was encouraged to share the updated flyer.
- 10.4. FYI
 - 10.4.1. Building Committee Draft Minutes of 9/13/17
 - 10.4.2. Special Town Meetings in Acton & Boxborough on Monday, 12/4/17 at 7:00 pm

11. Subcommittee Reports – Amy Krishnamurthy

- 11.1. The Budget & Policy Subcommittees will both meet on 10/11/17.

12. School Committee Member Reports

- 12.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – Amy Krishnamurthy
 - 12.1.1. Meeting materials 9/28/17
 - Paul Murphy asked about E&D for FY18 showing \$450,000 but it does not appear to be correct in Section B. Marie confirmed that this is an error and will be corrected.
- 12.2. Acton Finance Committee – Dennis Bruce
 - 12.2.1. Point of View document, 9/28/17
 - Several School Committee members will go to Fincom next Tuesday night to present on the building project. Fincom asked for feedback on their POV document. Dennis Bruce suggested that Fincom be invited to present the POV to the Committee. Last year there was a tri-board meeting to discuss this document. Mary Brolin was fine if Acton Finance Committee presents to the School Committee and Boxborough Fincom could be invited to do the same. There could be a joint Acton and Boxborough Finance Committees meeting.

13. Recommendation to Accept Donation from McCarthy-Towne PTSO for a water bottle filler – VOTE – Bill McAlduff

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to accept the donation from the McCarthy-Towne PTSO with gratitude especially because it aligns with the Committee’s policy from last year.

14. Recommendation to Accept Donation from AB Regional Parent Teacher Student Organization (ABRPTSO) for the William James Interface – VOTE – Bill McAlduff

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to accept the donation from the ABRPTSO for the Willam James interface with gratitude.

15. **FYI**

- 15.1. Acton Board of Selectmen
 - 15.1.1. Draft New Sustainability Policy (committee comments to K. Green by Oct 20)
The Superintendent invited members to send comments to Beth within the week and they will be consolidated and included on the 10/19/17 agenda for consideration by the School Committee.
- 15.2. All-District Red Cross Fundraising Event, 9/25/17 – 10/10/17
- 15.3. Change to Members of the OPEB Trust Fund Board of Advisors memo
- 15.4. ABCHY and Safety Net combined to form AB Community Resource Network
- 15.5. Family Learning Series - FY18 Calendar of Presentations
 - 15.5.1. Raising Resilient Children in Challenging Times, Robert Evans, Ed.D. Oct 11th at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Auditorium

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, list of warrants

Next Meetings:

ABRSC, **October 19**, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library, Topics include: Before & After School Elementary School Funding, Gates School Presentation (packet posted Oct 13)
Homework Information Night, **October 24**, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library
ABRSC, **November 9**, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library, Topics include: Annual Enrollment Presentation, RJG Jr High Presentation (packet posted Nov 3)