

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
OPEN Minutes (approved)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 19, 2017
7:00 p.m.
9:25 p.m. (approx.) Executive Session

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce (8:05 p.m.), Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O’Sullivan (7:10 p.m.), Eileen Zhang (7:05 p.m.)
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Bill McAlduff, Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairperson Amy Krishnamurthy.
2. **Chairman’s Introduction** – *Amy Krishnamurthy*
The Chairperson thanked the Principals for being in attendance. She also thanked the Boxborough Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee for their unanimous vote of support of the Building Project warrant article for the 12/4/17 Special Town Meeting.
3. **Statement of Warrants & Approval of Minutes**
 - 3.1. The meeting minutes of 10/3/17 were approved as amended.
 - 3.2. The warrants were reviewed and signed by the Committee members. See list.
4. **Public Participation** - *none*
5. **Presentation: Gates School** – *Principal Lynne Newman, Assistant Principal Priscilla Kotyk*
The theme of the presentation was “Civility, Respect & Kindness: Growing a Caring Community”. Brigid Bieber noted how education has changed over the years. It includes so much more than it used to, including a focus on building a community. She stated that it is an important time in our society to build these values.
6. **Presentation: Acton Finance Committee** – *Steve Noone*
 - 6.1. Point of View Document, 9/28/17
 - 6.2. School Committee presentation to Finance Committee, 10/10/17
Steve Noone invited everyone to the Town Manager Search Committee forum on Oct 26th. The Acton Finance Committee is charged with looking beyond the current year and making recommendations, including gathering feedback from the public. He emphasized slide 7 showing the affordability of the town of Acton and how the average single family tax bill has increased by 15.52% from 2010 - 2015. Slide 25 recommended that for FY19, the operating budget should grow by no more than the 3% increase in revenue to be sustainable. It was confirmed that Amy Krishnamurthy took Kristina Rychlik’s place on the Acton Planning Capital Group, although they have not met yet.
7. **Enrollment Update** – *Marie Altieri*
 - 7.1. October 1, 2017 Enrollment Report
 - 7.2. NESDEC Preliminary Projections

7.3. NESDEC Acton and Boxborough Individual Enrollment Data

The official enrollment report will be given at the next School Committee meeting, but Marie wanted to get the most current information out asap. Housing sales have become a big driver, with a 65% housing turnover in 2 years. In Boxborough this went up 33%. The MSBA is engaged with the district in reviewing all of this information. NESDEC projections separate by town were received yesterday. Marie briefly reviewed the Oct 1 numbers. They are looking at staffing patterns based on some of the numbers. She reported that 9 ½% of our students overall are economically disadvantaged. Marie asked the Committee to review these charts again prior to the next meeting when the annual enrollment presentation will be done.

The Committee discussed how ELL students are assigned to our classrooms, including how they are handled in the lottery process. Members felt that they need to be spread out, no school should have significantly more of these students than another. All ELL learners cannot all be put in one school. Marie confirmed that the administration is working on this. Most ELL students move in after the lottery so they have to be placed where there is space available, or we add a class due to need in the summer and that is where many of the ELL students are placed. Also kindergarten screening happens in September after students are placed and this year 40% of the kindergarten students who were ELL screened needed services.

Marie reported that several years ago we were 55-60% over class size guidelines, but now we are 12-15% over guidelines so there has been improvement there. Members discussed the inexact science of enrollment projections and how although they have been quite accurate in the past, we have had some surprises recently. Bill McAlduff agreed with Marie that housing patterns are a phenomenon that is happening all over. Economics affects it but every 20 years or so there is a generational shift of houses occupied by seniors that move and young families move in with kids. The question was asked at what point does self-segregation become an issue? The school not being addressing by the building project is the one with the fewest white students. Marie said that they spoke to the Department of Education about this and it is difficult to address. Concern was expressed about the staff case overload and some students not receiving the services they need.

8. **Elementary School Funding Update** – *Marie Altieri*

In September 2016, a goal of examining elementary school funding was approved by the School Committee. Elementary principals and members of the Senior Leadership Team met throughout the year and a report was presented to the School Committee in June 2017. If approved by the Committee, the goal is to implement these changes in 2018-2019.

The Position Statement on slide 13 was discussed. Bill McAlduff asked that the School Committee vote Recommendation #1 to bring all Before and After School programs into the Community Education division.

Bill noted that Recommendation #2 and the first 2 bullets of the Additional Recommendations are administrative functions so no School Committee action is needed. The third and fourth bullets of the Additional Recommendations are School Committee policy issues.

The Committee thanked Marie for her extensive work on this topic, including reaching consensus from the administrators. They discussed what it meant to double the number of assistants (or the funding level) at a time when enrollment was decreasing, although given the diversity of the students that was the best solution at the time. Deanne O'Sullivan commented

that if we say we will have 1 assistant per classroom for 12 hours, if a class has a large ELL population, that falls on the PTO to fund more assistance because the paid assistant will be pulled in many directions with that student population. She did not consider this equitable. Marie responded that the districts does have other supports for ELL, but she acknowledged Deanne's comment. The Blanchard School has been able to provide assistants without PTO funding, and Tessa McKinley was frustrated that Acton PTOs have been paying for it. She emphasized that the conversation should be about what the real need is for assistants and how the district will pay for it. She stated that PTOs can continue to fund things, but not positions that are educationally needed for the students. Katie Neville advocated for the next step to be the School Committee getting behind some common policy language. Members agreed. Mary Brolin was stunned at the imbalance when she first saw these numbers. Brigid agreed that PTOs should not be depended on for operational expenses. She asked for more knowledge around who decides what amount of assistants is appropriate. Marie confirmed that this discussion is only about regular education assistants, not Kindergarten assistants or special education assistants.

The Committee agreed to vote on the recommendation at their next meeting.

Marie explained that Community Education will continue to run enrichment programs as in the past as long as there is interest. The schools will not be running their own enrichment courses. The drop in option is a little complicated because it is hard to staff when the number of children is not always determined. She added that breakfast is now offered in the elementary schools through our Food Services, and this will be part of the extended day program in all 6 schools next September. Erin Bettez spoke about her enthusiasm for the Extended Day Programs. As soon as it is voted, she will talk with the other schools' program directors and see what they are doing and how. Their shared goal is to make the best programs for all students in all of our schools.

Dennis Bruce asked what has changed in the 6 years since the district tried to do this last time. Marie replied that the numbers have kept growing and the disparity kept growing as well. The changes in our student population and equity have become more and more important. Collaboration and working together with the principals has made this proposal possible.

9. Donations to the School District

9.1. Recommendation to Accept FY18 Donations from the PTOs, PTSOs, PTF to the Schools
– **VOTE** – *Bill McAlduff*

Mary Brolin moved, Diane Baum seconded and it was

VOTED: to accept the FY18 donations from the PTOs, PTSOs and PTF to the schools.
(YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville,
O'Sullivan, Zhang)

Tessa McKinley abstained, stating that it was due to the inequities in the schools' funding. Mary Brolin stated that she voted it because she cannot pull this money out of the operating budget.

9.2. Recommendation to Accept Grant from Danny's Place Youth Services for the A-B
Community Education Summer Leadership in Training Program – **VOTE** – *Bill
McAlduff*

Amy Krishnamurthy abstained because she is on the Board of Danny's Place. Brigid Bieber ran this agenda item.

Paul Murphy moved with gratitude, Mary Brolin seconded and it was

VOTED: to accept the Grant from Danny's Place Youth Services.
(YES: : Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O'Sullivan, Zhang)

10. School Building Committee Update – Mary Brolin

10.1. Building Committee Meeting on 10/11/17

10.2. Community Forums & Materials / Slides

The recent forum at Douglas was “great”. Chris Whitbeck gave a very informative tour of the building. A video is being created as well as a taped presentation with Acton TV. The Boxborough Selectmen and Finance Committee are in support.

10.3. FYI

10.3.1. Special Town Meetings in Acton & Boxborough on Monday, 12/4/17 at 7:00 pm

10.3.2. Building Committee's presence on social media – Please share!

10.3.2.1. Twitter - [@ ABSBP](#)

10.3.2.2. Instagram - [abschoolbuildingproject](#)

10.3.2.3. Facebook - [abschoolbuildingproject](#)

11. Permanent Superintendent Search Update – Amy Krishnamurthy (Marie Altieri left for this agenda item)

11.1. Memo from the Superintendent Regarding Search Firm Proposals

11.2. New England School Development Council (NESDEC)

11.3. Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC)

11.4. Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA)

11.5. Presentation Slides re the Search Process from ABRSC meeting 10/3/17

This was a follow up from the last meeting where Bill McAlduff was authorized to request proposals from Search Firms. He contacted 5 organizations. Two of the 5 did not respond with proposals. In reviewing the 3 proposals received, the scope was fairly similar, all have staff and community feedback involved, all had a degree of warranties. Each offered cost proposals. He asked the Committee to discuss the 3 proposals and to either choose one to employ, or have one or all present to the School Committee before they decide.

The Committee discussed the pros and cons of the services offered by NESDEC, MASC and HYA. HYA has a lot of language translation services and does a lot of outreach to minority organizations, which could be beneficial. HYA is a lot more expensive than the others. HYA's pre-screening process does not seem appropriate for AB as it removes some control, although it could be helpful to try a different approach like this. Several members were not interested in MASC given some prior experience.

Bill Guthlein and Steve Noone (who is on the ActonTown Manager search) shared their thoughts about the process.

The Committee agreed to meet on Monday, Oct 30 at 7:00 p.m. for presentations by NESDEC and HYA. Bill McAlduff will contact the search firms.

12. Subcommittee Reports (oral)

12.1. Budget Subcommittee meeting, 10/11/17 – *Brigid Bieber*

This was the first meeting. They will bring back to School Committee that the Budget Subcommittee never had a formal charge and that should be done. The Acton Fincom Point of View (POV) document was discussed.

12.2. Policy Subcommittee meeting, 10/11/17 – *Katie Neville*

13. School Committee Member Reports

Diane Baum reported that Pam Nourse told her that Minuteman Tech is being commended by the Dept of Education for closing the achievement gap, one of only 7 schools in New England. Paul Murphy attended the Family Learning Presentation on Resilience with Rob Evans and it was wonderful.

Deanne O’Sullivan reported that the Joint PTO met and Marie came and explained many issues which was very helpful.

14. FYI

- 14.1. Donations to the School District (*\$500 or less*)
 - 14.1.1. Grant from Danny’s Place Youth Services for the William James Interface
- 14.2. Acton Town Manager Search Community Forum, Thurs, 10/26/17 at 7:00 p.m. in Acton Town Hall Room 204
- 14.3. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Meeting minutes of 9/28/17
- 14.4. No School/Delayed Opening/Emergency Release procedures and memo
- 14.5. Family Learning Series - FY18 Calendar of Presentations
 - 14.5.1. What Parents and Caregivers Can Do to Nurture Lifetime Readers, Steven Layne, Ed.D. Nov 7 at 7:00 p.m. in the ABR High School Auditorium

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

At 9:41 p.m. Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to convene an executive session in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, section 21 (a) purpose 3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation, an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the District’s bargaining or litigating position.

(YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O’Sullivan, Zhang)

The Chair stated that the Committee would return to open meeting only to adjourn.

The ABRSC returned to open meeting and adjourned at 10:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda, list of warrants