

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
MINUTES (approved)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

November 16, 2017
7:00 p.m.
8:45 p.m. (approximately) Executive Session

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O'Sullivan
Members Absent: Diane Baum, Eileen Zhang
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Bill McAlduff, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino (left at 7:20 p.m.)

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairperson Amy Krishnamurthy.
2. **Chairman's Introduction** – *Amy Krishnamurthy*
3. **Statement of Warrants & Approval of Minutes**
 - 3.1. Meeting minutes of 11/9/17 will be done at the next meeting.
 - 3.2. The warrants were reviewed and signed by the Committee members. See list.
4. **Public Participation** - none
5. **Presentation: FY17 Annual Audit** – *David Verdolino*
 - 5.1. FY17 End of Year Audit Reports (*posted with 11/9/17 ABRSC meeting material*)

Dave Verdolino introduced Richard Sullivan, CPA with Powers & Sullivan. This is their second year of auditing our district. He was initially concerned about the transition to a new Business Director, but has found everything to be very smooth. The standard tests that Mr. Sullivan ran were just fine, noting that it was significant that the district closed the books on August 29th. He stated that the business office was “office ready” and extremely responsive when the auditors came in, which was appreciated. Mr. Sullivan explained the process. Regarding the financial results, the budget to actual statement is the most pertinent report for the Committee to review. Medicaid reimbursement and transportation both came in higher than expected. GASBE 74 needed to be implemented because we have an OPEB account, meaning that the district will report on the OPEB trust in the same way that pension liabilities are reported on. Mr. Sullivan reported that overall, no adjustments are required to the books, meaning that the information that the School Committee received all along was accurate. The audit opinion was unqualified, which is “what you want to hear”. There were also no issues related to internal controls, another important point for the governing body.

Regarding capital projects, the bond market looks at the ratings for the district members and both are good. Standard and Poor and Moody's always wants to know what is being done regarding OPEB and how reserves are used. AB is in excellent shape in both regards. Mr. Sullivan also noted that the district has many policies and procedures in the financial area, which is great to document what is being done. These are all bond rating factors.

In January, the student activity accounts will be audited as required. Mr. Sullivan spoke to Dave Verdolino and Claire Jeannotte about a question that was not resolved involving the

management of some federal grants. Uniform guidance about the documentation of internal controls came out last year and he will share this with David. He also suggested a cash investment policy.

Mary Brolin thanked retired Finance Director Clare Jeannotte for serving in her position so well. Deanne O'Sullivan asked if our district has been moving away from the manual aspects of our payroll system. Marie Altieri replied that in last year's management letter there was mention of duplication between some of the departments because it is fairly manual, including paper timecards. The process is being streamlined now, but we have not had the staff or the time to make big changes in this area yet. Administrators are talking to other school districts, to see what works for them.

6. **Presentation: Acton Boxborough Regional High School - *Principal Larry Dorey***

6.1. High School Annual Update Slides

6.2. High School Annual Class Size Report

Principal Larry Dorey, Associate Principal Beth Baker and Data Manager Tina Vanasse presented the Class Size, Scheduling and School Goals Report.

Overall, class size averages at the High School have declined slightly, although there are still some large classes including in math. These are usually college level classes taught by veteran teachers like Bill Noeth. The Committee discussed how these high achieving students are supported. There was general understanding that if a teacher needs assistance, they know how to request the support for their students.

Regarding scheduling, the administration typically schedules 100% of the requests for 85% of the students, which is excellent. Larry thanked Tina for taking on scheduling now while he is Principal. They use Power Schedule. The appeals process was discussed. The administration really tries to accommodate change requests and it does impact the various class sizes. Regarding students who override class recommendations, Larry said that over 60% of students are successful with their override, but it is tricky. In order to provide college prep curriculum for all of our students, Larry explained that the district has to differentiate between these levels and colleges recognize that. Having more levels helps with stress levels because there is so much competition within the levels. Room availability and lunch also affects scheduling. The two-week pilot schedule will happen in March 2018 at the High School. This is a focus of this year's professional development.

Beth Baker spoke about the Driving Question, "How can staff, students, and families support wellness and balance within a rich learning environment that provides opportunities for all students to experience success?". She stressed that staff, students and families are key words this year, and the idea that ALL students deserve success. She highlighted the professional learning being done as well as the goal of putting students' wellbeing at the center of teaching and learning. Student Clubs and the AB Because You Matter Campaign (sponsored by Acton Boxborough United Way) are an important part of this focus.

The Committee appreciated the concern for students' stress levels and how the administration is trying to address the topic. They asked Larry how these goals can be measured, particularly since wellness was a goal last year. The senior survey asks about wellness and related questions. There is a faculty survey, data from the Challenge Success survey, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, internal surveys on workloads and stress, and other survey questions are always being discussed. Dennis Bruce suggested that they be sure that all parts of the community understand the goals, and there be a measuring component to show the needle moving toward success or not.

7. **Presentation: Acton Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council**
 Amanda Bailey updated the Committee on the 2017-2018 goals discussing accessibility, inclusion and adaptation vs accommodation. She emphasized the need for more handicap accessible playground equipment at our schools, describing it as “a civil rights issue” for some kids. Amanda spoke in support of the upcoming building project as a way to address some of these issues for all children. Brigid Bieber thanked Amanda for her support and described the accessibility of the playground for younger children as “heartbreaking”.

8. **School Building Committee Update – Mary Brolin**
 - 8.1. MSBA Enrollment Meeting on 11/14/17 (*oral*)
 Bill McAlduff updated the Committee and thanked Marie Altieri for an excellent job at this meeting communicating what has happened in our community. As a result, more enrollment information was requested from the district. The Ashtons’ information was important and had an impact on our statement. MSBA also asked for some floorplans of our elementary schools in relation to the overcapacity of the buildings. Additional information, including housing sales, will be sent to the MSBA by the end of this week. After their review, the district will receive a design enrollment letter from MSBA stating what they will support. It helped that we had two sets of projections – NESDEC and the Ashtons’. The feasibility study agreement and timeline were clarified. AB is scheduled to be on the MSBA Board meeting agenda for 2/14/18, assuming positive votes at both Special Town Meetings next month.

 - 8.2. Community Forums & Updated Slides
 A members asked if the playground accessibility consistency issues as described by Amanda Bailey are included in the presentations. It is included, but Mary Brolin noted how effectively Amanda stated it. The upcoming forums and tour were reviewed. Members were asked to educate and encourage their friends and neighbors to come to the Town Meetings next month. Mary stated how fortunate we are to have Mary Ann and Peter Ashton and their daughter, Amanda, as part of our community.

 - 8.3. NEW! Douglas School Video Tour: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOacBQzs-rA>
 - 8.4. FYI
 - 8.4.1 Draft Minutes of Building Committee Meeting on 11/8/17
 - 8.4.2 Special Town Meetings in Acton & Boxborough on **Monday, 12/4/17** at 7:00 pm
 - 8.4.3 Building Committee’s presence on social media – Please share!
 - 8.4.3.1 Twitter - [@ ABSBP](#)
 - 8.4.3.2 Instagram – [abschoolbuildingproject](#)
 - 8.4.3.3 Facebook - [abschoolbuildingproject](#)

9. **FY19 School Calendar – First Read – Marie Altieri**
 Marie reviewed the proposed calendar. The 2018 start date was relatively clear cut this year due to how Labor Day falls. Katie Neville invited members of the school committee to advocate for the observance of other religious holidays, given the proposal to continue having Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Good Friday off. Tessa McKinley was not in disagreement with Katie, but her issue is the half days. The chopiness of these weeks makes it very hard for teachers. For that reason, Tessa does not want to see any more days off. Maya Minkin noted that there is better cohesion with this calendar now and the ABEA agreement. Deanne O’Sullivan reported that this year was less choppy according to her friends. Aligning the Junior High half days with the elementary schedule was very helpful. A second read and possible vote will be done at the meeting on 12/14/17.

10. **Subcommittee Reports**

10.1. **Budget Subcommittee**

10.1.1. Meeting on 11/15/17 – Brigid Bieber reported that they talked about capital planning, building project update and implementing purchase cards for the district. Discussion of the cards will be at a future meeting. Next meeting is December 8.

10.2. **Policy Subcommittee**

10.2.1. FYI: New Procedures for Equal Educational Opportunities – File: JB

10.2.1.1. Students who are Transgender and/or Gender Nonconforming, File: JB-R
Deborah Bookis described the extensive process that resulted in these important new procedures for this existing policy. After the meeting, they will be shared with staff, and then posted on the policy website for the community, as well as the usual letter to families of 5/6 graders. Committee members appreciated how thoughtfully this was done and presented. In response to a request, Bill McAlduff said the administration would consider other ways that might be appropriate to share this information.

10.2.2. Consent Agenda – Second Read – **VOTE** - *Maya Minkin*

10.2.2.1. Graduation Requirements, File: IKF

10.2.2.2. Personnel Records, File: GBJ

10.2.2.3. Philosophy of Staff Development, File: GCIA

10.2.2.4. Professional Teacher Status, File: GCJ

10.2.2.5. First Aid, File: EBB

10.2.2.6. Programs for Students with Special Education Needs, File: IHB – HELD
Mary Brolin requested that Policy IHB be held from the consent agenda. Maya Minkin asked that the policy subcommittee review it because there are differences between 504s and IEPs. Amanda Bailey stated that this policy merges these two documents and they are not the same. She felt the title was not appropriate. Dawn Bentley agreed that Amanda was right regarding the legal aspect but the district has a mandate to speak to special education. She suggested the policy subcommittee create two separate policies and there was agreement.

10.2.2.7. Home or Hospital Instruction, File: IHBF

10.2.2.8. Pregnant/Parenting Students, File: JIE

10.2.2.9. Student Complaints and Grievances, File: JII

Brigid Bieber moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously
VOTED: to approve the consent agenda as amended.

11. **School Committee Member Reports**

Health Insurance Trust met this morning and agreed on a 0 % increase for the budget. They plan to vote a rate in January but want enough data to know where they are going. Marie Altieri reminded the School Committee that working with all of the unions in Acton and the ABRSD, plan design changes were made, a deductible was added and an HSA and that was all very profitable. This really is all due to collaboration. Dennis Bruce questioned whether this decision could put the district in a position where a future superintendent will have to deal with a huge increase. Mary Brolin responded that if rates are raised the district is getting near the cap of where the fund balance can be.

12. **Donations to our Schools – Bill McAlduff**

12.1. Recommendation to Accept \$5,000 from the Regional PTSO to the High School to staff the library after school and extra hours during exams – **VOTE**

Brigid Bieber moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept the PTSO gift to the High School with gratitude.

A member asked why the PTSO is paying for staffing the library after school and what does the district provide? Bill will include these comments in future budget discussions.

12.2. Recommendation to Accept \$3,750 from the Regional PTSO to the Junior High for student handbooks – **VOTE**

Paul Murphy moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the donation from the PTSO to the Junior High with gratitude. Brigid Bieber asked if there a requirement for all schools to have a handbook. All schools' handbooks are posted online now. It was clarified that this donation was for plan books, not handbooks.

13. **FYI**

13.1. Movie Night/Babysitting for Special Town Meetings on 12/4/17

13.2. Family Learning Series - FY18 Calendar of Presentations

Although there is not a need for meeting on November 30, the Committee agreed to wait until the November 20th meeting to make a final decision about cancelling it.

Dawn Bentley mentioned the suicide prevention training on December 5th. We are hosting our first one in district soon at the Junior High.

14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 9:35 p.m. Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to convene an executive session to consider the approval and release of the minutes and related materials from the October 19, 2017 executive session, in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, section 2 (a) purpose 3, to discuss strategy with respect to litigation, as the Chair hereby declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the District's litigating position; the litigation discussed in the minutes involves two complaints under the open meeting law, filed on August 10, 2017, and threatened claims against the Committee for defamation.

(YES: Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O'Sullivan)

The Chair stated that the Committee would return to open meeting for the sole purpose of adjourning.

The ABRSC returned to open meeting and adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, list of warrants