

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

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 2, 2017
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik, Eileen Zhang (7:20 p.m.)
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chair Mary Brolin.
2. **Chairman's Introduction** –
 - 2.1. Annual Spring Town Elections
 - Acton deadline to submit papers - February 7
 - Boxborough deadline to submit papers - March 28
3. **Statement of Warrant & Approval of Minutes**
 - 3.1. The minutes of the ABRSC Meeting of 1/12/17 were unanimously approved as written.
 - 3.2. The minutes of Budget Saturday on 1/21/17 will be reviewed at the next meeting.
4. **Public Participation** - none
5. **Acton Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) Contract Update** – *Maria Neyland*
 - 5.1. 2017-2018 Elementary Early Release Thursdays – Second Read – **VOTE**
 - 5.2. ABEA Side Letter

Maria Neyland reported that very little feedback was received on this topic since the last meeting. Kathleen Neville moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED:** to approve the Letter of Agreement between the ABRSC and the ABEA to modify the ABEA contract to include Early Release every Thursday for all elementary school students with teachers required to attend meetings and professional learning, and to extend the elementary school day by 20 minutes each day.

Eileen Zhang arrived after this agenda item regarding early release on Thursdays for elementary schools. She had recused herself from this discussion at the previous meeting.
6. **FY17 Second Quarter Financial Report through 12/31/16** – *Clare Jeannotte*

At mid-year, favorable revenues of up to \$600,000 for the year are being projected. This includes favorable \$320K state aid and the possibility of unbudgeted revenues of \$281K. As of 12/31/16, 87% of budgeted expenditures are expended or encumbered.
7. **FY18 ABRSD Final Budget Recommendation** – *Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte*
 - 7.1. FY18 ABRSD Budget and Assessments voted on 1/21/17 and proposed **VOTE** on revision
 - 7.2. ALG & BLF Update (*oral*)
 - 7.3. FY18 Budget Updates
 - 7.4. Excess & Deficiency Discussion
 - 7.5. Question, comments and input
 - 7.6. FY18 Budget Hearing on 2/16/17 at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library, followed by ABRSC meeting

It was reported that the Health Insurance Trust reduced their increase to zero, saving \$374,239 of budgeted expenses for next year. The Committee wants to build up E&D again, so this is helpful. Paul Murphy asked when the next Moody's review would be because if another update is imminent, this could give the District a more favorable rating. Clare explained that the District's credit rating is largely driven by the underlying credit rating of the two towns. Moody's was concerned that E and D was being used in growing amounts to sustain the budget. They did not like this because it was unsustainable. The District is not doing this as much now.

Kristina Rychlik appreciated the great news that the budget increase would decrease from 4.25% to 3.63% and that the District can move forward with lower assessments. She noted however that on Budget Saturday the Committee heard about some areas that the District is not doing as much as they could. Kristina asked if more money was available, could these areas be considered in the future.

Maria Neyland moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: that the total appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 be set at \$86,090,491 and that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Regional Agreement and amendments thereto as follows: Acton \$57,938,160, Boxborough \$11,635,677 remainder to be accounted for by the Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$14,804,931 Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$25,350, Anticipated Regional Bonus Aid in the amount of \$49,000, Anticipated Miscellaneous Receipts of \$30,000, Anticipated Federal Medicaid Reimbursement of \$100,000, Anticipated Chapter 71, Section 16C Transportation Aid, in the amount of \$1,307,373 and a transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$200,000.

8. **FY18 Revolving Budgets and Fees**

8.1. Food Services – Second Read – **VOTE** – *Glenn Brand*

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve no change in the Lunch Prices for the 2017-2018 school year as proposed on 1/12/17.

9. **Seal of Biliteracy Presentation** – *Sinikka Savukoski, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis*

A very interesting presentation was given on the new Seal of Biliteracy that recognizes graduates who speak, read and write proficiently in another language in addition to English with a seal on their high school diploma. The District is considering joining other communities in piloting this program.

Maya Minkin called this “amazing work” and asked if it takes more of teachers’ time to assess the students and teach in this manner. Sinnika replied that it does take more time, however teachers can see students’ growth and that is very rewarding. Amy Krishnamurthy sees her 7th graders excitement about their Spanish class. She is very impressed with these new techniques for teaching. Paul Murphy loves that this is “success oriented”. He is concerned that the ELL students are coming in with the perception that they are missing something and now this recognizes that they have something great. Mary Brolin was concerned that this might be adding stress because it is more testing but Sinikka explained that a student does not study for this test. It is about their proficiency and rewarding what they know. Diane Baum called this a “win-win”.

10. **ABRSD Master Plan Update** – *Glenn Brand*

10.1. District Master Plan Review Committee (DMPRC) Update –*Mary Brolin*

10.1.1. Meetings held on 1/17/17 (see minutes) and 1/25/17

The Committee is reviewing the pros and cons of each of the options to consider how to most effectively present them in the public forums. The plan is to go out to the communities in March and April with a recommendation based on public feedback by the end of May. DMPRC would present at the first June School Committee meeting, then a vote at the second June Meeting. Fall Special Town Meetings would be held in both towns to vote funding for feasibility studies.

- 10.2. Community Presentation by Dore & Whittier, 12/8/16
 - 10.2.1. See <http://actontv.org/on-demand/post-video/master-plan-visioning-phase-2-12-8-16>
- 10.3. Capital and Future School Needs Committee Update
 - 10.3.1. 1/24/17 presentation:
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3n84HCIIJh8WjJISIZvdFBwZVE/view>

Dr. Brand said they continue to analyze the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The next phase of sorting the CIP was to identify on 1/24/17 a break down of the areas into scope packages. Currently, they are looking at things to do in the next 3-5 years, and grouping together some tasks that would be efficient to do at the same time cost and construction wise. This is consistent with the medium term bucket. Lee Dore said he will have their report by end of February or March so going into the spring, they will bring a sense of the scope of this work to School Committee.

Katie Neville asked if Lee's work was still part of the original funding. It is not. Dr. Brand brought a proposal to the budget subcommittee awhile ago, with a cap of \$10,000 for Lee to move forward with this task. All of the information is organized on the website at <http://www.abschools.org/district/school-capital-and-space-planning>.

11. Subcommittee Reports

- 11.1. Budget – 1/25/17 meeting – Maria Neyland (oral)

The subcommittee reviewed the Budget Saturday Meeting and shared feedback that has come in. Prep was done for Boxborough's 3 Board Meeting and comments from the fincom were considered. Capital planning was discussed.
- 11.2. Policy
 - 11.2.1. Equal Educational Opportunities, File: JB – Second Read – **VOTE** - Dawn Bentley

This policy needed to be updated for the Coordinated Program Review to align it with the nondiscrimination policy and the regulations.

Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the policy as proposed.
 - 11.2.2. Consent Agenda – First Read
 - 11.2.2.1. English Language Learners, File: IHBEA – Dawn Bentley

This revision was really to make the language consistent with current terminology, including changing from NCLB to ESSA, also we are obligated to assess students in Preschool – 12 now.
 - 11.2.2.2. Health Education, File: IHAM (and new procedures) – Deborah Bookis
 - 11.2.2.3. Health and Sex Education Parent Notification, File: IHAMA (and revised procedures) Deb Bookis
 - 11.2.2.4. Studying Controversial/Sensitive Issues, File: IMB Deborah Bookis

Brigid Bieber noted that she got a comment on this revision that it does not really say very much. The sample from MASC was much more complicated than what our District has had. The policy subcommittee was not comfortable telling teachers how to run their classrooms. Brigid will take the examples back to the policy sub and they will add more specifics for the Committee's consideration.
- 11.3. Outreach (including PTO Co-chairs) – January 2017 Update - Kristina Rychlik

The Committee discussed the most effective way to distribute the monthly updates. Although positive feedback has been received, they are not being shared consistently every month. Kristina asked if the School Committee should try to communicate directly with the parent/guardians, instead of through the PTOs or if Dr. Brand should send it out. Maria liked the idea of communicating directly with parent/guardians directly. Dr. Brand offered to assist in whatever way the Committee would like.

12. School Committee Member Reports

- 12.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – Amy Krishnamurthy

12.1.1. Materials from 1/26/17 meeting

Amy reported that the Fincom does not want to tax beyond 2 ½%.

12.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) – *Mary Brolin*

12.2.1. Boxborough Three-Board /BLF Meeting on Wed, February 1, 2017 at 7:00 pm

This meeting was followed by a productive BLF meeting where medium term budget items were discussed.

12.3. Health Insurance Trust (HIT) – meeting on 1/27/17 - *Mary Brolin*

The HIT voted the rate at 0% increase. Medex will be voted in January.

12.4. Acton Board of Selectmen – *Eileen Zhang*

Arlington Street neighbors are asking for a conservation restriction to be added to that town site, but there is not a final decision yet. This piece of land used to be owned by the schools and went back to the Town of Acton as part of regionalization.

12.5. Boxborough Finance Committee- *Mary Brolin*

The School Committee was invited to present the school budget at the meeting on February 13.

12.6. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – *Maria Neyland*

Brigid Bieber added that a question was raised about the Hager Well at BLF. There were a lot of questions on it. Mary advocated for putting a process in place where JD Head and Katie Neville receive a monthly update on Hager Well from Boxborough so the School Committee has timely information.

12.7. Acton Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) Update – 1/25/17 meeting - *Kristina Rychlik*

The Committee talked about the school and town's short and medium capital plans.

13. **ABRSC Statement of Purpose Update** – *Mary Brolin*

Katie Neville offered two choices. One focused on the mission, and one on the vision, but alternatives were welcomed. Kristina likes the vision one because it is broader and more what the School Committee does.

There was general agreement on the vision approach. This will be voted on at the next meeting.

14. **2017-2018 School Committee Meetings** – DRAFT – Second Read – **VOTE** - *Mary Brolin*

Last time the Committee talked about the September meeting being held on Tuesday September 19th and Budget Saturday on January 27 which does not conflict with MMA.

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY18 School Committee Meeting calendar as proposed.

15. **Recommendation to Accept Alliance Energy LLC Grant of \$500 from the East Acton Mobil to the R.J. Grey Junior High School** – **VOTE** – *Glenn Brand*

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

VOTED: with gratitude to accept the Alliance Energy LLC Grant of \$500 from the East Acton Mobil to the R.J. Grey Junior High School.

16. **Recommendation to Confirm Indigenous Peoples' Day on 10/9/17 on the FY18 School Calendar per Committee Discussion at meeting on 12/15/16** – **VOTE** – *Mary Brolin*

It was confirmed that there had not been a motion voted regarding the Indigenous Peoples' Day proposal to the calendar at the meeting on 12/15/16.

Deanne O'Sullivan wanted to emphasize that this change to the school calendar was based only on a School Committee discussion. Going forward with similar agenda items, she advocated for surveying the public and asking how they feel before the Committee makes a decision. Kristina Rychlik stated that at the last meeting, she abstained and wanted to explain why. In her opinion, it is not that the issue is not important, but simply listing it on the school calendar might not make much of an impact and if it is important, maybe an article for the paper or a rally would be more appropriate. She is concerned that listing it on the calendar may confuse people, and asked that an asterisk be added stating something like, "formerly known as Columbus day".

Kathleen Neville moved and Brigid Bieber seconded,

MOTION: that for the 2017 -2018 school year, we represent Monday, October 9th as “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” on the school calendar with an asterisk noting that the legal holiday is Columbus Day.

There was some clarification about what the motion meant. Deanne O’Sullivan stated that there is already an Indigenous Peoples’ Day and the students learn about it in school and are familiar with the meaning. (The United Nations declared it to be August 9th in 1994.)

The Committee **VOTED** on the motion:

- **YES** – Brigid Bieber, Kathleen Neville, Mary Brolin, Paul Murphy, Maya Minkin, Amy Krishnamurthy (10.5 votes)
- **NO** – Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Eileen Zhang, Diane Baum (8.5 votes)
- **ABSTAINED** – Kristina Rychlik

The motion was approved.

17. Superintendent’s Report/Updates – Glenn Brand

- 17.1. Director of Finance Search Update – to be voted at the 3/2/17 School Committee meeting.
- 17.2. Dr. Brand reported that the Interschool Council met recently.

18. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- 18.1. Challenge Success Newsletter, February 2017: <https://www.smores.com/js6mv> -
- 18.2. Letter re DeVos nomination for US Secretary of Education from Local Progress, 1/29/17
Mary Brolin explained that there was an “Open Letter from Local Leaders Around the Country” opposing Betsy DeVos’ nomination as US Secretary of Education included in the packet from a Littleton School Committee member. It is set up to be signed by individuals, not the Committee. We are not sure exactly when the full hearing will take place. School Committee members cannot speak to the media, but should refer people to Mary Brolin and/or the Superintendent. Maria Neyland noted that Rep. Jen Benson is starting to get involved around circuit breaker and fully funded, if people want to participate in that. Deb Bookis mentioned that the MCAS accountability piece is something that people could get involved as well if they are looking for something to do regarding state testing.

The ABRSC adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda and list of warrants

NEXT MEETINGS:

- February 16 – ABRSD Annual Budget Hearing at 7:00p.m. in the Jr High Library, followed by regular School Committee Meeting (material posted February 10)
- March 2 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (material posted Mon, February 27)
- Acton Town Meeting begins on Monday, April 3
- Boxborough Town Meeting begins on Monday, May 8