

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Minutes** (approved 10/21/10)

**Cafetorium**  
**Douglas School**

**September 16, 2010**  
**7:30 p.m.**

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<i>Members Present:</i>	Michael Coppolino, Herman Kabakoff, Xuan Kong, Sharon Smith McManus, John Petersen
<i>Members Absent:</i>	Terry Lindgren
<i>Others:</i>	Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deb Bookis, Liza Huber, Beth Petr, Steve Mills

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The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by John Petersen, Chair.

**STATEMENT OF WARRANT**

Warrant #201105 dated 9/7/10 in the amount of \$175,209.17 was approved and circulated by the Chair for signatures.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JULY 28, 2010**

The minutes of July 28, 2010 were approved as amended (agenda included as list of documents used). Xuan Kong abstained because he was absent.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Becky Neville spoke from the audience as a staff member about new health care legislation taking effect on 9/23/10 that changes coverage for young adults. The Health Insurance Trust had previously decided to implement the provision that provides coverage for 19 to 26 year olds who are not full time students, at the school districts' annual yearly renewal on July 1, 2011. Full time students are covered, as they have been in the past. Staff members' children who were full time students last year, are covered on Harvard plans until Oct 1, 2010 or on Blue Cross plans until Nov 1, 2010 under the rules currently in effect. At the annual open enrollment in May, employees will be able to add any adult children, aged 19 to 26, who do not have access to health insurance through their own employer, effective July 1.

John Petersen will bring this question up again at the next HIT meeting and report back.

**EDUCATION REPORT** – Douglas School, *Principal Chris Whitbeck*

Dr. Whitbeck presented on ways that he uses technology to communicate with the Douglas students and families. As with all of our schools, Connect ed calls and emails are used. He also has a Douglas blog and twitter site that he controls and a facebook page maintained by a volunteer. Dr. Whitbeck said that these are worlds where our constituents are living so we need to be there. By participating, we control the brand that our school is about. Digital student portfolios for K-6 to collect work for teacher and parent/guardian viewing are coming soon. These are 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that teachers and students should have and use. Two out of 490 Douglas families do not have

internet access. These families are invited to use the school equipment after school, or access the internet at the town libraries.

Dr. Whitbeck said that supporting professional development, giving the staff time and funds to work on these kinds of activities, and supporting educational tech initiatives with Amy Bisiewicz would be helpful. Xuan Kong reminded everyone that “It’s all about instruction.” He asked if any of Douglas’ activities were being posted online and/or shared with our other elementary schools. Short lessons or “excellent moments” in the classrooms could be video taped and shared. Sharon McManus noted that this technology is a great way to bring in discussion about core values, and that Dr. Whitbeck is trying to post “models of our values”. John Petersen emphasized that we should drive everything we do with how we connect with the kids. The Committee hopes the technology will become more of an education enhancement than support. Finally, Mike Coppolino mentioned the downside of instantaneous multiple inputs and not giving the brain enough time to respond and form synapses. When children turn to the web for answers, they often come up very quickly (and not always correctly). They often don’t have to think and look hard for answers, and that can be detrimental to learning.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **1. Update on Collective Bargaining**

John Petersen read Brigid Bieber’s statement from the 9/2/10 Regional School Committee meeting announcing the settlement of three-year contracts with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and Office Support Association (OSA), two of the three school unions. (Appendix A) The significant accomplishments achieved were:

1. Important structural changes to health insurance and longevity
2. Severance benefit eliminated from contracts for OSA and AFSCME

Steve Mills thanked the School Committee and the OSA and AFSCME unions for being so reasonable to work with.

The contract increases represent both pay raises and expected increases in the districts 75% share of health health insurance premiums (14% over three years). The rate of increase of our bill slows down with more funding, but it still keeps rising. Steve explained that at this time, the teachers union is working without a contract and even so, it costs 4 – 5% more to continue, due to commitments in the contracts. While increased contributions by employees are much appreciated, unfortunately it does not mean no increased costs. John Petersen thanked Marie Altieri and Don Aicardi for their extensive efforts in preparing for the negotiations. The Negotiations Subcommittee is continuing talks with the Acton Education Association (AEA). Appendix B summarizes the OSA, AFSCME and Hourly Staff Salary and Health Insurance Changes for FY’11 – FY’13.

### **2. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Report**

Free cash is being certified, and is increasing beyond expectations for a few reasons. There is \$1 million in overlay and \$1.2 million in project closeout. \$4.6 million Free Cash total. EdJobs funding is coming and the Committee

needs to decide when and how to spend it. Bill Mullin wants to spend according to the waterfall proposal that came about with the uncertainty as Chapter 70 money was going to come in. He wants to send some of the money back to the taxpayers and lower the tax rate. This is an important part of our FY12 budget discussion. A new ALG spreadsheet is being developed. Mary Ann Ashton will take comments/questions about it. Herman Kabakoff asked about timing. The tax rate is set at the first Selectmen's meeting in December. The Acton School Committee meets twice before then on Oct 21 and Nov 18. This must be on the agenda for the next School Committee meeting.

**3. Acton Board of Selectman Report**

Herman Kabakoff attended the meeting and reported that discussion included a proposed registered sex offender bylaw and the Special Town Meeting on Oct 12. An Educational Forum is being planned on sex offender issues for the community.

**4. Acton Finance Committee (FinCom) Report**

Sharon McManus reported that the majority of the 9/7/10 FinCom meeting was the presentation by Steve Mills, Don Aicardi and Marie Altieri (slides included in packet). The schools combined have been very good about giving back a good amount over the past few years, but "a storm coming" for FY12.

**5. Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Update, 8/26/10**

School Committee membership on the HIT will be on the 9/23/10 agenda. The Trust will also discuss their decision not to cover the gap in young adults' coverage and how to better communicate more clearly to constituents.

**6. FY'10 Final Budget Close Out**

Don Aicardi reiterated that the year end balance was slightly over \$200,000 in APS, which is very good. The region reported a \$225,000 balance. These have both been factored into the Free Cash and E&D respectively.

**7. FY'11 Budget**

This year's budget has really just started. There will be talk of state cuts after the November election. ARRA IDEA money will result in \$600,000 funding for this year. EdJobs money may only be spent on instructional staff. Fincom and ALG brought up applying the waterfall formula to this money. This will be discussed next month. Large class sizes jump out at Steve Mills every time he visits the schools. Cutting teachers is not an option, in his opinion. Real challenges lie ahead.

**8. Student Enrollment Update**

The October 1<sup>st</sup> Enrollment Report is considered the official numbers for the school year. NESDEC project 274 Kindergartners and this is 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row we have gone significantly over the projection. We have 326 Kindergartners and are lucky that we have 16 sections (20.4 average class size). We are over class size guidelines in 1<sup>st</sup> grade now (22.1 average class size). 2505 students are in K-6. Our total students this year is less than last year. With the exception of last year's growth, we seem to be at a plateau. Enrollment projections will be done in November for next year.

## 9. Staffing Update

Marie Altieri reported on the new hires for FY11. In response to a question, Marie offered to report on why staff leave, although there have been no concerning trends. Principals do exit interviews. Most departures are retirements; some are for higher level positions or more hours. Sometimes we do not reappoint a staff member.

## NEW BUSINESS

### 1. MCAS Updates

- a. Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Update
  - i. Parent/Guardian Letters to McCarthy-Towne, Merriam, Conant
  - ii. Pupil Services Response to Anticipated MCAS Results
  - iii. Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SpedPAC) Letter
  - iv. *"Schools Missed the Mark"*, [www. Boston.com](http://www.Boston.com)
- b. Enclosure Letters
  - i. 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders' Parent/Guardians Letter
  - ii. 4<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Graders' Parent/Guardian Growth Model Letter

Steve Mills began by asking, "How do we attempt to measure student academic growth over time?" He emphasized that his job is to be sure that "all students, in every classroom, every day" are learning. This is also the job of every staff member in the school system.

Deborah Bookis, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, emphasized that no single assessment measures everything. MCAS is one piece. Most assessments are to guide instruction but the feedback loop has to be provided very quickly. This is not the case with MCAS. She has started an all school analysis. Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) is calculated by meeting four criteria. There is concern about the increasing number of schools that are not making progress according to MCAS data. Schools are given three months to adjust their School Improvement Plans if they fall in that category.

Mike Coppolino is currently a math teacher and on a panel of the Math Frameworks. He wants us to look at the Student Growth Profile (SGM) in terms of the effect that a certain teaching style can have on results.

Xuan Kong asked what a consultant might do differently to improve our performance level. Deborah said that she would start with math and the content level. Professional development is costly, but important. The professional wealth and talent in our school district is extraordinary. It is vital that we share this but time is an issue. Different ways of sharing our best practices are being considered, including using technology such as videotaping. R&D professional development does go on in the summer, but there is a difference between reading about it, and actually watching these practices in action. Time to discuss and reflect is also an important part of the process. Xuan Kong noted that this is helpful information to have as the FY12 budget process begins. Mike Coppolino agreed that targeting some money for professional development should be a priority.

Herman Kabakoff expressed frustration with the inconsistent message. At the last meeting, 3 legislators congratulated us for being the 2<sup>nd</sup> best small school in the country. Now, the newspapers are highlighting the number of schools missing their MCAS targets and being labeled “needs improvement”, including those in Acton and Acton-Boxborough.

Nancy Sherburne, co-chair of the AB Sped PAC, spoke from the audience. She advocated for the District’s plan to include a lot of what Deborah is considering, as well as measurable goals. She urged that the Student Growth Model be a focus because it is a valuable tool for all students to measure progress and learning. Professional Development for staff is also an important priority for the special education families.

John Petersen concluded that a clear theme is that we have been weak in our commitment to professional development. This should be kept in the forefront as we begin the budget process for next year.

**2. Recommendation to Appoint Stephen Mills as APS Representative to CASE, 2010-11**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED** : to appoint Stephen Mills as APS Representative to CASE, 2010-11

**3. Recommendation to Appoint Xuan Kong as Acton Representative to EDCO as a Voting Board Member**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED** : to appoint Xuan Kong as the Acton Representative to EDCO as a Voting Board Member

**4. Recommendation to Approve McCarthy-Towne Field Trip to Merrowvista**

It was moved, seconded and

**VOTED** : to approve the McCarthy-Towne Field Trip to Merrowvista,  
10/20/10 – 10/22/10

Xuan Kong abstained. All others voted yes.

**5. Recommendation to Approve Conant Field Trip to Sargent Camp, N.H.**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED** : to approve the Conant Field Trip to Sargent Camp, N.H. , 11/8/10  
– 11/10/10

**6. Recommendation to Accept Gifts from Community Education to Conant, Gates and McCarthy-Towne Schools**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED** : to accept these three gifts to the schools as proposed.

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

**1. Parent Communication Map**

Dr. Mills highlighted the importance of this communication document.

**2. SMART Goals**

These will be voted on at the 10/7/10 Joint School Committee meeting. Measurable outcomes will be emphasized.

**3. Website Links to School Newsletters:**

4. ELL Student Population, September 2010
5. Pupil Services – On Team, August 2010
6. Fall Open House Schedule
7. Douglas Walk for Peace – Sept. 23
8. Invitation to Annual O.D.P. (Occupation Development Program) Coffee  
Steve Mills and Mike Coppolino were enthusiastically supportive of this special program’s annual event.
9. Attorney General’s Request for Comments by 10/1/10 regarding the Open Meeting Law Remote Participation  
This ruling went into effect July 1<sup>st</sup>. The Attorney General is trying to figure out what is appropriate to expect. A ruling is expected soon. Individuals may send comments by Oct 1 to the AG.
10. Monthly APS Financial Reports
  - a. Object Summary and Special Education  
The Principals’ salary line is off because the Assistant Principals’ salaries came from two positions that no longer exist. The special education figures are coming from the state next week, so those numbers also appear unclear.
11. Warrant Q and A

**NEXT MEETING:**     **October 7, 7:30 pm, AB SC at Jr High Library**  
                                 **October 21, 7:30 pm, APS SC at McCarthy-Towne School**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

Appendix A: ABRSC Chair Brigid Bieber’s Statement re Agreements

Appendix B: OSA, AFSCME and Hourly Staff Salary and Health Insurance Changes,  
FY’11 – FY’13 (dated 9/10/10)

Appendix C: List of Documents Used – Agenda for 9/16/10

Statement read by Brigid Bieber at 9-2-10 AB/JT School Committee meeting:

The Acton-Boxborough Regional and Acton Public School Committees are pleased to announce settlement of three - year contracts with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (which represents, the Custodians among others "AFSCME") and Office Support Association ("OSA"), two of the three school unions. We appreciate the hard work and commitment of all of the individuals represented by AFSCME and OSA. These outstanding school Districts that our children and our communities have come to enjoy and from which we all benefit, are only possible through the exceptional efforts of each school employee.

We would like to thank the Association representatives and each and every person represented by these organizations for their willingness to "come to the table" in a spirit of cooperation so that we could reach these three year agreements in a very uncertain economic environment. We believe each of the new Contracts between the ABRSD/APS and AFSCME and between ABRSD/APS and OSA balance the needs of the Districts for long-term, structural changes in compensation and benefits while meeting the needs of our employees for fair and competitive total compensation packages.

**OSA AFSCME and Hourly Staff  
Salary and Health Insurance Changes  
FY '11 – FY '13**

**A. COLA**

FY '11	No Salary Increase
FY '12	\$1.00 per hour for all hourly employees
FY '13	\$1.10 per hour for all hourly employees

**B. Health Insurance**

Employees will increase their contribution for health insurance from 15% to 25%, effective July 1, 2010.

Effective July 1, **2011**, employees who subscribe to Blue Cross Blue Shield Master Health Plus or Blue Care Elect PPO will increase their contribution to 50% of the cost of the premium.

To help offset the increased cost of health insurance, the School Committee will provide a one time reimbursement each September for three years according to the schedule below for active employees who were enrolled in a district sponsored health plan on June 30, 2010 and who continue to be enrolled in a district sponsored health plan in September of the specified year.

September 2010:	10% of the actual cost of the plan in which the employee is enrolled.
September 2011:	\$1200 for employees enrolled in a family plan \$500 for employees enrolled in an individual plan
September 2012:	\$600 for employees enrolled in a family plan \$300 for employees enrolled in an individual plan

**C. Severance for OSA and AFSCME Employees**

**Delete Severance from the Contract**

In exchange for deleting this provision from the Contract, all current OSA and AFSCME employees who have five (5) or more full years with the school district (s) as of June 30, 2010 will receive a payout in accordance with the severance article as written:

All OSA and AFSCME employees who have five (5) or more full years with the school district(s) as of June 30, 2010 will receive \$50 for each full year of service. If the OSA or AFSCME employee is over age 50 on June 30, 2010, they will receive a check for \$100 for each full year of service.



# ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Cafetorium  
Douglas School

September 16, 2010  
7:30 p.m.

## AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JULY 28, 2010 (addendum) and STATEMENT OF WARRANT
- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- V. 7:35 EDUCATION REPORT - Douglas School, *Principal Chris Whitbeck*
  1. Douglas Financial Report (*addendum*)
- VI. 8:00 UNFINISHED BUSINESS
  1. Update on Collective Bargaining - *John Petersen* (8:00)
    - a. Statement from Chair, Brigid Bieber, at Joint SC meeting 9/2/10
    - b. Summary of Changes
    - c. Negotiations Update Presentation
  2. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Report - *John Petersen* (8:10)
    - a. Draft minutes of 8/17/10
    - b. Packet for 9/17/10 (*addendum*)
  3. Acton Board of Selectman Report - *Herman Kabakoff (oral)* (8:25)  
Acton Finance Committee (FinCom) Report - *Sharon McManus*
    - a. APS/AB Presentation to FinCom 9/7/10  
(includes slides in VI. 1. c. above)
  4. Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Update, 8/26/10 - *John Petersen* (8:35)
    - a. Agenda for 9/23/10 (*addendum*)
  5. FY'10 Final Budget Close Out - *Don Aicardi* (8:40)
  6. FY'11 Budget - *Steve Mills/Don Aicardi* (8:45)
    - a. Memo re New Educational Funding
  7. Student Enrollment Update - *Marie Altieri (addendum)* (8:50)
  8. Staffing Update - *Marie Altieri*
    - a. List of Professional Staff
    - b. Leaves of Absence, Resignations, Retirements
    - c. Information about New Teachers
- VII. 8:55 NEW BUSINESS
  1. MCAS Updates - *Deborah Bookis*
    - a. Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) Update
      - i. Parent/Guardian Letters to McCarthy-Towne, Merriam, Conant
      - ii. Pupil Services Response to Anticipated MCAS Results
      - iii. Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SpedPAC) Letter
      - iv. "Schools Missed the Mark", *www.Boston.com*
    - b. Enclosure Letters
      - i. 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders' Parent/Guardians Letter

- ii. 4<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Graders' Parent/Guardian Growth Model Letter
- 2. Recommendation to Appoint Stephen Mills as APS Representative to CASE, 2010-11 - **VOTE** - *Steve Mills*
- 3. Recommendation to Appoint Xuan Kong as Acton Representative to EDCO as a Voting Board Member - **VOTE** - *John Petersen*
- 4. Recommendation to Approve McCarthy-Towne Field Trip to Merrowvista, 10/20/10 - 10/22/10 - **VOTE** - *Steve Mills*
- 5. Recommendation to Approve Conant Field Trip to Sargent Camp, N.H. , 11/8/10 - 11/10/10 - **VOTE** - *Steve Mills*
- 6. Recommendation to Accept Gifts from Community Education to Conant, Gates and McCarthy-Towne Schools - **VOTE** - *Steve Mills*

VIII. 9:15 FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- 1. Parent Communication Map
- 2. SMART Goals – on agenda for 10/7/10 Joint School Committee meeting (*addendum, unchanged from 9/2/10 AB SC packet*)
- 3. Website Links to School Newsletters:
  - Conant Crier: <http://conant.ab.mec.edu/pto/newsletter.html>
  - Douglas Digest: <http://douglas.ab.mec.edu/index.html?pto/pto>
  - Gates Gazette: <http://gates.ab.mec.edu/gazette.html>
  - McCarthy-Towne Bulletin: <http://www.mctptso.org/bulletin/>
  - Merriam Community News: <http://merriam.ab.mec.edu/newsletters.html>
  - Acton Public School Preschool: <http://ab.mec.edu/Preschool/index.htm>
- 4. ELL Student Population, September 2010
- 5. Pupil Services – On Team, August 2010
- 6. Fall Open House Schedule
- 7. Douglas Walk for Peace – Sept. 23
- 8. Invitation to Annual O.D.P. (Occupation Development Program) Coffee (*addendum*)
- 9. Attorney General's Request for Comments by 10/1/10 re Open Meeting Law Remote Participation (*addendum*)
- 10. Monthly APS Financial Reports (*addendum*)
  - a. Object Summary
  - b. SpEd
- 11. Warrant Q and A (*addendum*)

IX. NEXT MEETING:      **October 7, 7:30 pm, AB SC at Jr High Library**  
   **October 21, 7:30 pm, APS SC at McCarthy-Towne School**

X. 9:20 ADJOURN