

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES (Approved 10-15-09)**

**Cafetorium
Gates School**

**September 17, 2009
7:30 p.m.**

Members Present: Jonathan Chinitz, Xuan Kong, Michael Coppelino, Terry Lindgren,
Sharon Smith McManus, John Petersen
Others: Marie Altieri, Susan Horn, Liza Huber, Stephen Mills, Beth Petr,
Tess Summers, citizens

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 by Xuan Kong.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of August 6, 2009 were approved as amended. Xuan Kong abstained because he was not at the 8/6/09 meeting.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #201005 in the amount of \$560,200.06 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the Committee for approval.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

EDUCATION REPORT - Gates School, *Principal Lynne Newman*

Mrs. Newman described the Writing Initiatives included in last year's School Improvement Plan. The reading specialist and teachers participated in a year-long school-based professional development offering that focused on writing. Teachers developed writing prompts and adopted rubrics for assessing student work. They also met between grade levels and discussed the writing continuum, and determined targeted skills to be mastered at each grade.

The School Improvement Plan for 2009-2010 includes Reading Initiatives. The reading specialist will lead teachers in Literacy Assessment, a school-based professional development offering. Teachers will review current reading assessments and explore new assessment tools and will determine which assessment tools best measure student progress and guide instruction.

Mrs. Newman concluded with the Gates School Core Values:

Generosity: Community Service

Acceptance: Celebrating diversity

Trust & Respect: "Everyone has the right to a good day"

Enthusiasm: School Spirit

Scholarship: High Academic Standards

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. ALG Info-Report/Acton Fin.Com. Report

Sharon reported on the Acton Finance Committee meeting of 9/8/09. A memorandum on Solar Panel leases was discussed. A copy of this memo will be in the 10/1/09 AB SC Meeting packet for discussion by JD Head. FinCom wants to review FY '10 and start looking at FY '11 now. They are planning to schedule some pre budget meetings with the Board of Selectmen and School Committee. The first one is scheduled for October 13th. The goal is to talk about FY09 closeout, FY10 budget update, and priorities and initiatives for FY 11.

The Acton Leadership Group (ALG) met on 9/9/09. The Town reported that some additional tax money came in - \$150,000. Instead of a \$600,000 problem, we now have a \$450,000 problem. Details are being worked out. The regional assessment reduction will be voted on at the 10/1/09 meeting. ALG's consensus is to assume a 10% reduction of state aid for next year's budget planning. Lastly, there is a \$1.275 million surplus in the overlay account. The Board of Assessors will make a decision on releasing the money. It will either be appropriated or go to Free Cash. ALG will wait to see what the Board of Assessors decides.

Terry Lindgren asked why ALG used the 10% state aid reduction assumption. Sharon McManus said that this was consistent with the level of recent state aid cuts in the last 12 months. Terry wants to see a 3 year plan and Sharon said that she would ask ALG about that.

2. Health Insurance Trust Update

This group met this morning (9/17/09):

- Trustees voted to recommend that budgets assume a 10% increase in health insurance costs in FY11.
- Year-to-date expenses are slightly higher than revenues.
- The Health Insurance Trust reviewed alternate plans (MIIA, GIC, Nashoba Health Group) and none of them have Master Health Plus (MHP).
- Cook & Co will provide an alternate analysis of copay impact at next meeting.
- Demographics of pool will be reviewed at next meeting.
- Next meeting Thurs Oct 22nd

Xuan Kong asked how other municipal entities transition out of Master Health? John Petersen said that has to be done through contract negotiation.. Tess Summers said that we could stop enrolling new members into MHP, but we would have to negotiate that.

3. Student Enrollment Update

Marie Altieri reviewed the Sept 1 Enrollment Report, although official enrollment numbers are Oct 1st. 140 new students enrolled this year. 59 withdrew for a net increase of 81. Kindergarten and 1st grade had the most activity and most variation from projection. With 340 Kindergartners, we are fortunate that a 16th section was added.

Kindergarten has an average 21.3 students, which is within class size guidelines. We have to watch the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades to see whether or not we need a 16th section. All 3 of those grades are now over School Committee class size guidelines.

Every single grade had a positive increase in number of students from last year. The point was made that even though we say we are within class size guidelines, we still have large class size guidelines, primarily due to budget issues.

4. School Email Addresses for School Committee Members

Steve Hall was asked to provide School Committee members with school email addresses. This would allow members to handle their School Committee business emails more clearly and some felt it was more transparent to the public.

A second issue was who is contained in the School Committee “shell” address. John Petersen said it is important to let the public know that if they use the shell as it is now, the Superintendent and his Administrative staff receive a copy of the message, in addition to the six School Committee members. Jonathan Chinitz said, “Any transmission to the School Committee is a matter of public record. The staff are our record keepers so they should be getting a copy of the email. They should always be included.” Sharon agreed.

A motion to establish two clearly labeled APS SC shells, one with only the six members, and a second shell with the Superintendent and Administrators included, was tabled for further discussion at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Preparing For the Flu

Steve highlighted the information posted on the school website, saying it is a matter of when, not if, the vaccine is available. Steve met with a Board of Selectmen member to discuss. A planned strategy will be used for distribution. The vaccine is expected around Oct 27. Our nurses are planning to offer it to staff in classrooms. The emphasis is to STAY HOME when someone has a fever, sore throat, or cough so infection is not spread. Teachers and school administration will support children who stay home to get well. This is crucial.

ISSUES OF THE COMMITTEE

A Committee member heard from the public, while the meeting was in session, that the audio for people trying to view the meeting live on cable TV was extremely poor. Sharon McManus and Xuan Kong agreed to follow up on this again.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Superintendent reviewed the FYI items, including an invitation to attend an Open Meeting Law Seminar on Sept 24th at 7:00pm at the Sargent Memorial Library in Boxborough.

Terry Lindgren invited everyone to The Acton Democratic Town Committee Annual Picnic on September 20th. Bill Ryan is being honored for his many years of service to our community.

NEXT MEETING: October 15, 7:30 pm, at Merriam School

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr
Secretary