

ACTON PUBLIC and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEES
MEETING (approved 3/25/11)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

January 6, 2011
7:00 pm Joint SC Executive Session
7:30 pm Joint SC Meeting
followed by AB SC Meeting

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mike Coppolino, Herman Kabakoff, Xuan Kong, Terry Lindgren, Sharon McManus (7:10), Maria Neyland, John Petersen, Bruce Sabot
Members Absent: none
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

The AB School Committee meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Brigid Bieber, chair. The APS School Committee meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by John Petersen, chair.

JOINT EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:04 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED by role call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

YES (Bieber, Coppolino, Kabakoff, Kong, Lindgren, Neyland, Petersen, Sabot)

This was done after Brigid Bieber declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board. She said the meeting was to discuss contract negotiations with the AEA.

At 7:04 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED by role call: that the **Acton Public School Committee** go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

YES (Coppolino, Kabakoff, Kong, Lindgren, Petersen)

This was done after John Petersen declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board. He said the meeting was to discuss contract negotiations with the AEA.

At 7:30 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Joint Executive Session.

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPEN MEETING

APPROVAL of MINUTES

The minutes of December 2, 2010 were approved as amended on page 6 by both Committees.

STATEMENT of WARRANT

Warrant #11-013 dated 12/16/10 in the amount of \$1,343,220.78 and warrant #11-014 dated 12/30/10 in the amount of \$2,069,031.78 were signed by the AB Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

Warrant #201113 dated 12/28/10 in the amount of \$598,724.11 was signed by the APS Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

ITEM TAKEN OUT OF ORDER

Item 6.1 Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Trip to Italy, April vacation 2012 was taken out of order because a teacher was available for questions from the Committee. *See below.*

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Herman Kabakoff announced that he would not run again for School Committee. He appreciated how welcoming everyone was when he was appointed to fill the nine months of Jonathan Chinitz's term leading up to the annual election.

John Petersen announced that he will run for the one year term left on Jonathan Chinitz's seat, creating two openings of three year seats.

Sharon McManus repeated her announcement from the December APS meeting that after 6 years on the Committee, she will not run again. She was thanked and said that it has been a wonderful opportunity to impact children's education and the community.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

JT UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. ALG/FinCom Report

John Petersen reported on the 12/6/10 ALG meeting. He asked for comment on the way ALG operates and how an item like COPS funding keeps coming up. He advocated for supporting the municipal budget to pay for programs like police and not to make unusual arrangements. Not everyone at ALG is supportive of that position so John asked for the Committee's opinion. Xuan and Terry agreed with John. Herman asked if the Committee could be informed when the updated ALG spreadsheet is posted. John reported that there has been a lot of discussion at ALG about the recap process. Terry said there was something about the waterfall in the minutes that seems to imply that the waterfall would still be considered in the future. Terry asked John to tell ALG not to support the waterfall going forward.

Xuan Kong reported on the Fincom. Dr. Mills will present an overview of the budget to them next week. Several members asked Xuan to thank the Regional School Committee members for their support of a contingency plan (waterfall).

2. BLF Report

Maria Neyland reported that the BLF met last night. Their shortfall has gone down. She said that a 10% cut for state aid is one of their assumptions.

3. FY'11 and FY'12 Budget Update

Dr. Mills believes that the Districts are in pretty good shape because we have made some smart frugal decisions this past year. We have resisted the temptation to use a lot of the federal money right away. Steve thanked the FinCom, Board of Selectmen and the School Committees for their support. Now he has to look at needs (textbooks, technology) over a 3 year timeframe, July 2010-2012. Unaddressed needs exist and it is his job to inform people. This fiscal work is the first item in a 5 year strategic plan that the Subcommittee is now discussing.

Dr. Mills highlighted slide #5 noting the 1.6 % Change from Final FY'11 for K-12 Level Service Budget as a very significant number. He mentioned slide #9 "Compensation for Salaried/Admin" showing 48 employees to whom he would like to give a \$2,000 increase next year. The current FY'12 budget has a placeholder for a 3% increase for this group. He said that new staff is cheaper than those who have retired. Slide 14 shows a new term called "vacancy factor". This is the difference created when money is in the budget for staff but the person has not been hired yet. It

is not a surplus, but is more accurate to call it a vacancy. Health insurance is a huge budget driver and with 80% of the budget in salaries at APS, it makes it very hard to cut.

Slide #25 is key regarding how year end balances should be used. See slide #29 (ABRSD Summary) and #28 (APS Summary) with recommended amounts for textbooks and technology to be spent based on year end FY'11 status as reviewed in March. Dr. Mills emphasized that he is presenting a "need" list, not a "wish" list. He has never known a school district that did not have in place a textbook replacement policy. The Acton Community Access Television organization (ACAT) has informed Dr. Mills that they intend to move out of the High School and take equipment with them. 140 students a year use the equipment and more take classes using it. Dr. Mills will be meeting to see how this can be handled with a minimum of disruption and expense to the High School. Dr. Mills will continue to work closely with all of the Boards on the budgets.

Questions/Comments from the Committee heading into the All Day Budget Session 1/22/11:

- Please outline the plan to integrate the technology into the teaching plans.
- Questions may be emailed to Don and he will send the answers to the Committee.
- The 6 people that work in Community Education are the only ones funded by CE.
- Xuan stated that it is great that with the temporary funding sources a level service budget and some needs can be achieved, but this is accomplished using \$2m in reserve and one time funding. He asked, "If we take away this funding, what is the gross expense that the two districts incur - last year, this year and going into the future? What deficit structure are we creating with this budget, and at what price that is artificially reduced now?" For example, special education costs look like \$2m but really they are \$2.5 m because circuit breaker pays \$.5m. Marie Altierie said that there is no ARRA money in next year's budget. It was used this year for special education costs, so that is some of what was paid forward. One time grant money has not been built into these budgets. Don Aicardi agreed. Sharon McManus also expressed concern about understanding this point.

4. Health Trust Report

John Petersen reported on the 12/16/10 meeting. The trustees recommend that budgets be based on an 8% increase in health care costs because of the expectation that the voted rates in February will be no higher than 8%.

5. Subcommittee Updates

- a. Policy – Brigid Bieber reported that the subcommittee met on Dec 20 and discussed exchange students, student travel, field trips and corporate sponsorship
- b. Class Size – Amy Hedison reported that meetings have been held with all principals, and continue with students, parents and teachers. She suggested that as budgets are being reviewed, the Committee reframe "class size" because it varies so much by grade, age and subject. She said to consider the accessibility/approachability/availability of trained adults and how much the children feel the adults are available. It was suggested that perhaps the committee should break up class size to focus on younger kids, older kids, middle school and high school kids.
- c. Long-Range Planning – Steve Mills reported that at their first meeting, they discussed how to take the temperature of a community and decided that a survey would be done. They are looking at large chunks of information from various local searches over the past few years, and from other communities.

The APS School Committee adjourned. The AB Regional School Committee continued.

AB NEW BUSINESS

- 1 Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Trip to Italy, April vacation 2012

Materials for this meeting are posted on the schools' website at <http://ab.mec.edu/about/meetings.shtml>.

- a. Field Trip form (same as 12/2/10 packet)
- b. 5.05: Free or Discounted Travel and Admissions
- c. Comparison of costs- ACIS and EF Tours

This item was taken out of order earlier in the meeting because Blake Lochrie (staff member leading the trip) returned to the School Committee a second time to answer questions. When the trip came up at the 12/2/10 AB SC meeting, it was late and the Committee had a number of questions about the cost and the paperwork required from chaperones. Several members questioned why this trip cost \$4,000 per student and whether it should be offered by our school. Blake explained that the trip is run with a student-focus, as opposed to an older adult-focus which would be quite different. It is a very full agenda, day and night, and the accommodations are in a prime location, suitable for young people. Student safety is a priority. Xuan Kong said that as School Committee members, we need to try to make school experiences as inclusive as we can by not costing so much. Bruce Sabot advocated for the trips and perhaps trying to find ways to help kids pay for trip expenses if they really want to participate and are unable to pay for it. Terry said that we are offering lots of valuable experiences that cost money and some kids just cannot do it.

Mike Coppolino asked about insurance coverage. Blake said this company (www.ACIS.com) provides a significant amount of insurance. Regarding compensation, Blake said that as the trip leader, he goes for free. If there are above a certain number of kids on the trip, then he would get a free trip, plus if there are an even higher number of students on the trip, they would get some money. Blake said that this is usually about \$50 per chaperone and that they spend it on soda and incidentals for the kids. Blake said that he personally puts in a lot of extra time and effort between now and when they depart, to be sure things go smoothly.

Blake will be responsible for being sure all chaperones file the document required by Ethics Training. Marie Altieri will follow up. Brigid pointed out that the Principal and Superintendent both have to approve a trip before it comes to the School Committee. Xuan questioned whether Blake can accept additional compensation if a higher number of students go on a trip. Blake said that he has gone to France and England with AB students with this company and it has been extraordinary.

It was moved, seconded and

VOTED: to approve the ABRHS Trip to Italy, April vacation 2012

(YES: Bieber, Kabakoff, Kong, McManus, Neyland, Petersen, Sabot

NO: Coppolino, ABSTAINED: Lindgren)

Blake and the staff who volunteer for student field trips were thanked for their efforts and dedication to bringing these wonderful experiences to the kids.

2 Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Trip to AYFP at Merrowvista

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: to approve the ABRHS Trip to the American Youth Foundation Program (AYFP) at Merrowvista on 2/9/11 – 2/11/11

3 Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Trip to China, 6/23 – 7/13/11

It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: to approve the ABRHS Trip to China on 6/23/11 – 7/13/11

(YES: Bieber, Coppolino, Kabakoff, Kong, McManus, Neyland, Petersen, Sabot
ABSTAINED: Lindgren)

Xuan said that the same questions exist for this trip, as they do for the Italy trip. He wants to be sure that our employees are clear about what they can and cannot do regarding these kinds of field trips, as well as the paperwork required.

4 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Qin Wang and Hua Yang to the High School

Materials for this meeting are posted on the schools' website at <http://ab.mec.edu/about/meetings.shtml>.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: to accept with gratitude a gift of \$1000 from Qin Wang and Hua Yang to ABRHS.

5 Recommendation to Accept Current Non-Resident 6th Grade Student from Blanchard School

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: to accept the proposed Non-Resident 6th Grade Student from Blanchard School for FY11

There was discussion about how the Boxborough Teachers' Association contract can guarantee this placement, but it is pending a majority vote of the Regional School Committee.

AB FOR YOUR INFORMATION

7.1 ABRHS

- a. Discipline Report, December 2010
- b. Mathematics Olympiad

7.2 RJ Grey Junior High

- a. Discipline Report, December 2010

7.3 Pupil Services

- a. ABRSD ELL Student Population, December 2010
- b. OnTeam, Dec/Jan 2011

7.4 Curriculum Update

- a. Professional Development memo

7.5 FY'11 Monthly ABRSD Financial Reports

- a. Budget Status Summary
- b. Budget Status Summary – Special Education

7.6 Correspondence from the Community - *none*

7.7 Enrollment Report/Class Size Numbers – December 1, 2010

7.8 Revised School Improvement Plans (*changes in red*)

- a. RJGJHS
- b. Conant
- c. McCarthy-Towne
- d. Merriam

Dr. Mills highlighted these revisions. John stressed the importance of talking about the School Improvement Plans and asked Steve how they are reviewed.

7.9 FY'10 AB Food Services Report, *Kirsten Nelson*

7.10 Proscenium Circus' production of *Urinetown*, Jan 28 – Feb 5, for 2 complimentary tickets for School Committee members see Beth by Jan 20th

7.11 Letter to the Editor: The Beacon, *John Petersen*

7.12 AEA Grant Recipients

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

NEXT MEETINGS:

January 20 - 7:30 pm, APS SC Meeting at RJ Grey JH Library

January 22 – 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, JT SC Budget Presentations at RJ Grey JH Library

February 3 – 7:30 pm, Open Budget Hearing (AB) at RJ Grey JH Library

February 17 – 7:30 pm, Open Budget Hearing (APS) at RJ Grey JH Library

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

Documents Used: See agenda attached

Materials for this meeting are posted on the schools' website at <http://ab.mec.edu/about/meetings.shtml>.