

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

**Library**

**January 22, 2011**

**R.J. Grey Junior High School**

**9:00 a.m. – 1:40 p.m. Joint SC Budget Presentations**

**12:15 – 12:45 Joint Exec Session**

**1:40 – 3:00 Acton Public SC Budget Presentations/Meeting**

*Members Present:* Brigid Bieber, Mike Coppolino, Herman Kabakoff, Xuan Kong, Sharon McManus, Maria Neyland, John Petersen, Bruce Sabot

*Members Absent:* Terry Lindgren

*Others:* Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

The AB School Committee meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Brigid Bieber, chair. The APS School Committee meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by John Petersen, chair.

9:00	<b>Superintendent's Introduction</b>	Steve Mills
9:15	<b>Finance Overview</b>	Don Aicardi
9:30	<b>Human Resources Overview</b>	Marie Altieri

The goal for the day was to explain the budget status, recommend strategy to get to level service, educate the community about unmet educational needs, and recommend to the School Committee prioritized purchase requests if funding is available later in FY' 11.

As the upcoming weeks go by, numbers will become firmer, including projections like kindergarten enrollment and the corresponding number of sections. (Registration is in March.) Although School Choice has not been voted on yet by the Committees, it is the recommendation of the Administration that new choice students not be accepted.

John Petersen emphasized the need to recognize that the schools' primary funding source (80%) is our taxpayers. The School Committees need to find that balance of services that continue to provide an excellent educational service while also maintaining municipal services like plowing roads, etc. Sharon McManus stressed that there are a lot of unmet needs that should be addressed, and it is important to understand the role that E&D plays.

10:00	<b>Pupil Services</b>	Liza Huber
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Mike Coppolino asked for a thorough review of special education student transportation and urged the Administration again to consider taking more of these services inhouse to save money. Liza Huber said that this line item was reduced by \$100,000 and buying a van to transport a certain group of students was considered. After realized that three vans would be needed as well as more drivers, and the cost savings would take three years to be realized, the decision was reversed. The CASE program has been asked to relook at their budget. Dr. Mills said that the Superintendents agree that these transportation costs need to be addressed. He has charged JD Head with addressing this issue.

Liza Huber said they are addressing 200+ students per year for mental health issues who are not eligible for special education services. These young people require services, including academic, psychological and counselor support due to the substantial needs they have and this number is growing. As a result, Alixe Callen is advocating for another counselor and psychologist at the High School.

10:30	<b>Curriculum</b>	Deborah Bookis
10:40	<b>Technology</b>	Amy Bisiewicz
10:50	<b>High School</b>	Alixe Callen
11:10	<b>Junior High</b>	Craig Hardimon

Bruce Sabot pointed out that some of the lists contain items that are ongoing costs, while others are not. The textbook replacement cycle would be ongoing and that is important to note. He also suggested that, as Boxborough has done, the Districts should try to have companies subsidize Smartboards and other technology. Brigid Bieber appreciated the prioritized needs lists, but asked how they would be prioritized if the lists were combined. Dr. Mills said that this would happen eventually but the immediate focus is to support the level service budget.

Deborah Bookis described how EDC has been hired for some professional development and the District also encourages learning from each other. Mike Coppolino wanted to be sure that Amy Bisiewicz has considered a variety of technology, not just Smartboards, which she has. Mobile Interactive Whiteboards (MOBIs) are being considered, in addition to Smartboards. Alixe said that Smartboards get used more when they are mounted in the classroom, not being mobile as they initially tried to do. The High School currently has only 12 Smartboards. New teachers are trained to use this technology and are disappointed when they get to AB and they are not available. Mike also wanted to be sure that additional psychological or counseling staff be used for more than just testing. Dr. Callen agreed.

Dr. Mills said that part of the reason why our students are doing so well now, is that School Committees of the past looked ahead and anticipated what would be needed. He said that it is our job now to be sure that the foundation does not erode and anticipate how we will continue to provide the level of education that our students deserve and need.

Nancy Sherburne spoke from the audience and said that professional development is important to the Special Education Parent Advisory Council, and that she agrees with the need to increase the effort to keep children in district and to look at transportation.

### **JOINT EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 12:08 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, McManus, 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 12:09 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, McManus, 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 12:50 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Joint Executive Session.

### **JOINT OPEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING RESUMED**

**12:50 Facilities**

JD Head

JD Head is confident about meeting his SMART goal of a 3-5% energy reduction. Our main projects are done and are trending as they should. The Districts have had no trouble with our vendors. We've been in front of the tide on the important energy issues. JD was thanked for his efforts and particularly for the success of the new Douglas roof. John asked JD to revisit the layout of the main campus. 4000 people show up in 30 minutes in the 7:30 AM time frame and the roads and walkways could be safer.

**1:10 Community Education**

Erin Bettez

Steve Mills asked the School Committee to periodically review the Community Education fees and policies because it is part of the District. Community Ed is run as a revolving account with a \$3m budget and reserve of 15-20%. In the past, some big ticket items were paid for with Community Ed money, but now that we are giving more back to the schools, Community Ed is not funding these other items. Xuan Kong said that Community Education is a great example of school and town working together.

### **STATEMENT OF AB WARRANT**

Warrant #11-015 dated 1/13/11 in the amount of \$1,562,322.37 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

Brigid Bieber thanked Don Aicardi and Marie Altieri and their staff for putting together the extensive information binder for today.

**AB Regional School Committee adjourned at 1:30 p.m.**

**APS SC Meeting continued.**

Deborah Bookis and Amy Bisiewicz presented with principals Damian Sugrue, Christopher Whitbeck, Lynne Newman, David Krane and Edward Kaufman. They emphasized this year's theme, "It's all about effective instruction."

Superintendent Mills concluded by referring back to slide #23 for the APS prioritized list. He stated that it is doable to get to the level service budget now and that Don Aicardi will have more final numbers at the February 3rd Joint SC meeting. Dr. Mills said that he will not spend a penny without School Committee guidance, but he does expect to come back in March or April with spending requests to cover some of the prioritized needs.

Committee members asked about how technology purchases would be distributed and emphasized that the focus should be on the education, not the tool or the technology. One member wanted to know more about Robert J. Marzano's research involving students' use of electronic Smartboards, as mentioned by Damian Sugrue. They talked about the value of having

one Smartboard per grade vs. one in every classroom of only certain grades. This presented equity/inconsistency issues for staff and students according to the principals.

The Committee also asked about the training that the proposed math assistants would have. Deborah Bookis stated that a full time math specialist is what is really needed, but given our resources math assistants would be suitable at this time. A math coach who could consult to the schools and the assistants would also be valuable. Principals are considering sending staff to math training offered by EDCO and the District would pay for part of it.

Staff professional development continued to be an important topic. Deborah Bookis said that most of her budget is professional development, with the exception of travel and supplies/equipment. Grants are not reflected in the budget when trying to figure total professional development. The elementary schools also have line items for this. Dr. Mills agrees that the Districts should spend more on professional development but he cautioned about how some of the DESE reports are interpreted. Some districts may report numbers in different ways.

Concern about the increasing amount of PTO funding and what it is spent on (i.e. assistants) was expressed. The principals would really like the budget to support one assistant in each classroom so that pressure on the PTOs could gradually be relieved for these types of needs.

Nancy Sherburne spoke from the audience about Smartboards and stressed that excellent teachers are still required in the classrooms. She questioned what doctors think about young children spending more time in front of a screen and whether Smartboards are best developmentally. Damien Sugrue said that the Smartboard does not eliminate the need for other materials and a great teacher. It replaces a white or blackboard making a lesson more interactive and engaging for students. Lynne Newman said that \$1000 of consumables can be eliminated from her annual budget if a Smartboard is used.

Chair John Petersen thanked the staff who worked to make the day so valuable and noted the effectiveness of having all of the elementary school principals presenting together with the Directors of Curriculum and Technology. He urged the public to send their questions and input on the school budgets to the Chairs.

**STATEMENT OF APS WARRANT**

Warrant #201114 dated 1/11/11 in the amount of \$145, 804.65 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

Documents Used: See 1/22/11 Budget Binder Table of Contents attached

Acton Public Schools  
Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools

**FY'12 Budget Information**

**January 22, 2011**

**9:00 a.m. – R.J. Grey JH Library**

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