

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

Acton Public School and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committees Open Budget Hearing
with Acton & Boxborough Finance Committees

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 3, 2011
7:00 Joint Exec Session
7:30 pm Joint SC Meeting
followed by AB SC Meeting

Members present: Brigid Bieber, Mike Coppolino (8:00), Herman Kabakoff, Xuan Kong (left at 8:00), Terry Lindgren, Sharon Smith McManus (7:15), Maria Neyland, John Petersen, Bruce Sabot (7:45)

Members absent: none

Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deb Bookis, Mary Ann Fleckner, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

The Joint School Committee was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Brigid Bieber and John Petersen, respective chairs.

JOINT EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:10 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, Kabakoff, Kong, Lindgren, Neyland, Petersen)

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, and that the Open Meeting would reconvene at approximately 7:30 p.m..

At 7:10 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 (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, and that the Open Meeting would reconvene at approximately 7:30 p.m..

At 7:35 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Executive Session.

JT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING / OPEN BUDGET HEARING
with the Acton and Boxborough Finance Committees

Mary Ann Ashton called the Acton Finance Committee to order at 7:40 p.m. In attendance were: Clint Seward, Brandy Brandon, Steve Noone, Bob Evans, Bill Mullin, Mary Ann Ashton and Kent Sharp. Gary Kushner represented the Boxborough Finance Committee.

APPROVAL of MINUTES

The minutes of 1/6/11 and 1/22/11 will be voted on at the next meeting.

STATEMENT of WARRANT

AB Warrant #11-016 dated 1/27/11 in the amount of \$2,699,517.60 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

JOINT OPEN BUDGET HEARING with the Finance Committees

(Budget Binders from 1/22/11 were referred to, and are online at <http://ab.mec.edu/about/meetings.shtml>)

1. ALG Report

John Petersen reported on the 1/13/11 and 1/31/11 meetings.

2. Acton FinCom Report

This report was skipped because no one attended from the School Committee.

3. BLF Report

Maria Neyland reported that the BLF had not met recently.

4. FY'11 and FY'12 Budget Update

Dr. Mills updated information from the 1/22/11 presentation including important slides #11 (FY'12 Budget Status Review) and #12 (Strategic Decisions from FY'10 and FY'11 - How Do They Affect FY'12?). He emphasized the "needs" lists, not "wish" lists, and outlined his recommendations starting on slide #31 for a proposed budget of \$39,021,769 for FY'12 for ABRSD and \$26,374,059 for APS.

Bill Mullin asked how the total state aid number was calculated. Don Aicardi said that it incorporated several different numbers, such as enrollment, growth factor, etc. Closely comparing FY'11 to FY'12 is dicey. Marie Altieri pointed out that the ALG spreadsheet included a significant change. The governor's budget fully funded foundation numbers so they were higher than what was expected. These things all had an impact.

Herman asked about the capacity generated in FY11 that resulted in money being available to pay forward for FY12. Don said that this came from ERI, prepaying some Out of District tuitions and ARRA money. The budget wasn't lowered, but the actuals were moved against the grant funds. The grants came in after Town Meeting and had to be spent. Steve Noone commented that we did tax citizens because of Town Meeting's timing but in effect what happened created a type of reserve. One alternative is to let it flow, the other is to spend it before it gets there to the reserve. He stated that there is nothing wrong with that, but it should be clear that it would normally fall into Free Cash or E&D. One use could be to close the deficit.

Bill Mullin referred to the Enrollment Study and asked if there will be 15 or 16 Kindergarten sections and what it would cost. Marie Altieri said that a decision will be made soon, after registration in March. \$67,000 for one year is the cost.

Brandy Brandon asked about raises based on performance evaluations. Dr. Mills said that this is a controversial subject. Raises are not currently performance based but the State is about to release some new guidelines based on it. Steps and lanes are currently used for teaching staff compensation.

Bill Mullin said that instead of calling ERI an “Early Retirement Incentive”, it really is a retirement notification incentive. He asked if any of our local communities provide this type of benefit, and Marie Altieri said that they really do not. Bill stated that we have spent \$2.5 million over the last seven years on this and he urged the School Districts to be competitive about this.

Bill asked how the numbers should “cascade” given the foundation increase and incremental revenue. Steve Mills said that we still have an \$845,000 problem and he would get this to zero if more came in. Steve expects to be having this conversation in a month or so. At this time, he is proposing to take \$686,000 of extra capacity for next year to cover the APS/ABRSD share of the deficit to achieve a level service budget for tonight’s vote.

Gary Kushner asked about the assumptions used. Currently the Governor’s budget shows a 3% increase in the Chapter 70 funding. Steve said that we are assuming a 5% cut in the Governor’s Chapter 70 number. When asked about capital items, Steve said the Long Range Strategic Planning Subcommittee will be looking closely at these. No large capital items are planned for next year. Gary asked the Committee to keep everyone informed about capital items for the upcoming years for planning purposes.

Clint Seward asked how the FinCom will be able to explain the budget increases to the public, given these tough economic times. Dr. Mills said that our increases have been very modest. Brigid Bieber added that the two unions that we have settled with took significant cuts in health insurance that is an important long term structural change.

Bill Mullin asked why cash flow will be used instead of EdJobs funding to fill the gap of \$650,000. Don Aicardi said that we have the option of using these funds in the future. If we utilize them in FY’12, we lose the protection it could give us in FY’13 if future funding gets worse. Bill expressed concern about the current taxpayers, and suggested that we consider reducing the tax rate.

Bruce Sabot moved and John Petersen seconded the motion:

to accept the Administration’s recommended proposal for the FY’12 ABRSD Budget and Assessments (addendum 5.4.2):

that the total appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012 be set at \$39,021,769 and that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Agreement and amendments thereto as follows: Acton \$25,307,490, Boxborough \$6,324,093, remainder to be accounted for by the Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$6,285,614, Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$37,268, Transportation Aid, Chapter 71, Section 16C in the amount of \$564,346, a transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$502,300, and a transfer from the Junior High School Project Premium on Loan in the amount of \$658.

The Committee discussed the merits of “giving back” to the taxpayers. Some members felt it would be a relatively small amount that would be meaningless to citizens. Other members felt that any amount returned would be valuable. The point was made that a budget vote taken tonight is amendable in that the amount could be reduced, but not increased. It is a statutory requirement that a vote be taken tonight to satisfy the requirement that the assessment be voted 45 days prior to the start of Acton Town Meeting. John Petersen stated that every member of the School Committee fully appreciates the burden that they place on the public.

Mike Coppelino said that although a 3% raise for administrators is not a significant amount, he suggested that it be reduced. Secondly, he said that ERI is flawed in that the differential in the

payback does not make sense. Lastly, he stated that while most of our staff is superb, going forward some performance aspect will need to be looked at.

Terry Lindgren wants the 3% increase removed because a consistent message is essential. Brigid Bieber pointed out that these people received less than others two years ago and received nothing last year. On average she feels this is fair and wants to give Dr. Mills the discretion to give this group this raise. Maria Neyland agreed. Herman Kabakoff said that this is in effect a reduction to what is being moved and we can vote later on the 3% if we choose.

Herman asked that what to do with the extra money left over from last year's grant be put on the next meeting's agenda. He wants to discuss if it should go back to E&D, as well as what to do if we get additional money from the Governor. Maria Neyland emphasized that this budget number is only for level service. If there are additional funds, we need them for textbooks, technology, counselors and other things presented at the Saturday 1/22/11 Budget meeting.

Bill Mullin asked if FinCom members could comment. Brigid said they could. He asked what the School Committee thought the assessment should look like if the ALG plan changes, and specifically, should the additional revenue be split. Bill advocated for spending the EduJobs money this year and excess revenues above level service would be split based on an agreed upon level and use with some put toward tax relief. Maria Neyland said that this is a waterfall question in different words and the conversation should be at another meeting. She asked when the FinCom will vote so the School Committee can discuss and decide on this before then. To appear in the warrant, the Acton FinCom meeting on March 8 is the last chance. Mary Ann Ashton said that the FinCom has not had time to fully discuss this either, but they will.

Clint Seward said that we need to live within our means and stop the deficit spending. He disagrees with Bill Mullin and does agree with Steve Mills about saving the EdJobs money for the future.

The Chair asked for the VOTE on the motion.

Acton-Boxborough School Committee:

VOTED: *that the total appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012 be set at \$39,021,769 and that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Agreement and amendments thereto as follows: Acton \$25,307,490, Boxborough \$6,324,093, remainder to be accounted for by the Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$6,285,614, Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$37,268, Transportation Aid, Chapter 71, Section 16C in the amount of \$564,346, a transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$502,300, and a transfer from the Junior High School Project Premium on Loan in the amount of \$658.*

(Yes: Bieber, Coppolino, Kabakoff, Petersen, Sabot
No: Lindgren Abstained: Kabakoff Absent: McManus)

Mary Ann Ashton adjourned the Acton Finance Committee.

Voting on the APS FY'12 budget was passed over until the next meeting.

APS WARRANT

APS Warrant #201115 dated 1/25/11 in the amount of \$136,203.67 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

The APS meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m. and the AB Regional SC meeting continued.

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

AB UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Health Trust Report
John Petersen updated the Committee.
2. Subcommittee Updates
 - 2.1. Policy – *Brigid Bieber*
 - 2.1.1 Recommendation to Approve New Policy on Admission of Exchange Students (File: JFABB) – **FIRST READING**
Maria Neyland explained the revision. The term “working knowledge” could be clarified in the procedures, not the policy. The accepting principal could decide if they have a working knowledge. One member wanted the number of students to be up to 4, another wanted no number in the policy so it would be left up to the principal.
 - 2.2. Class Size – no report
 - 2.3. Long-Range Strategic Planning – Steve Mills reported that it is a strong group that is working on the goals and values. A community survey will be coming out soon.

AB NEW BUSINESS

- 1 Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB Girls Basketball Boosters
It was moved, seconded and unanimously
VOTED: to accept with gratitude, a Gift of \$3,000 from the AB Girls Basketball Boosters for an assistant coach
- 2 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Enterprise Bank
It was moved, seconded and unanimously
VOTED: to accept with gratitude, a Gift of \$500 from Enterprise Bank for Community Service Day
- 3 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Cambridge Savings Bank
It was moved, seconded and unanimously
VOTED: to accept with gratitude, a Gift of \$500 from Cambridge Savings Bank for Community Service Day
- 4 Acceptance of 2011 Danny’s Place Lease
Dr. Mills met with the Danny’s Place Executive Board recently, including Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy, and expressed the districts’ gratitude for such a generous gift to the community. The annual rental lease fee has not changed. Herman Kabakoff advocated for not charging a fee at all. Although everyone agrees that it is a wonderful asset for our young people, there are costs incurred for things like utilities and janitorial services. The schools have felt that it is a fair partnership at that price. Herman publicly wanted to say that the DP Committee should make a case if this fee is onerous for them. John commented that this organization cannot be considered outside of all of the other great Community Education activities, so they have to be fair about charging. He urged the Administration to be sure that there is logic about how organizations like Danny’s Place are charged.
5. School Calendar / Superintendent’s Memo re Cancellations and Last Day
Dr. Mills recently put a memo out about how he decides on weather issues because there is a lot of time and careful effort that goes into making these decisions. DESE is very strict about the 180 days that schools have to be in session. At this time, we have had 5 snow days so the last day of school is scheduled for June 21, 2011.

AB FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- 8.1 ABRHS
 - 8.1.1. Discipline Report, January 2011
- 8.2 RJ Grey Junior High
 - 8.2.1. Discipline Report, January 2011
- 8.3 Pupil Services
 - 8.3.1. ABRSD ELL Student Population, January 2011
- 8.4 Curriculum Update
 - 8.4.1 Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative, Session I Feedback Sampling

- 8.4.2 Giant Traveling Map of Asia Coming to Acton and Boxborough Schools
- 8.4.3 Mapping the Past – Free workshop for Educators and Map Lovers, 3/3/11
- 8.4.4 McCarthy-Towne School Change in NCLB Accountability Status 1/27/11
 - 8.4.4.1 Letter to McT Families from D.Krane re Change in NCLB Status
- 8.5 FY'11 Monthly ABRSD Financial Reports
 - 8.5.1. Budget Status Summary
 - 8.5.2. Budget Status Summary – Special Education
- 8.6 Correspondence from the Community
 - 8.6.1 Snow Days and February Vacation
 - 8.6.2 Thank you from Acton Community Supper and Food Pantry

Brigid Bieber distributed the following emails received the day of the meeting:

 - 8.6.3. Follow Up on Calendar Issue
 - 8.6.4. Request for Feedback from the Acton 2020 Committee
 - 8.6.5. Budget Priorities
- 8.7 Enrollment Report/Class Size Numbers – January 1, 2011
- 8.8 Donations from families to the SHS Community Service Fund
- 8.9 FY'10 AB/APS Food Services Reports, *Kirsten Nelson (See 1/22/11 School Committee Meeting)*
- 8.10 April Town Meeting Report *(See 1/22/11 School Committee Meeting)*
- 8.11 2010 – 2011 District Profile *(See 1/22/11 School Committee Meeting)*
- 8.12 RJGJHS Project Wellness, “Creating Connections” - March 23rd at Merrimack College
- 8.13 Acton Community Access Television (ACAT) - New Executive Director

NEXT MEETINGS:

February 17 at 7:30 pm, APS SC Meeting at RJ Grey JH Library, Open Budget Hearing
 March 3 at 7:30 pm, AB SC Meeting at RJ Grey JH Library

The AB meeting adjourned at 10:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
 Beth Petr

Documents Used: See agenda attached

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MEETING**

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**Library
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**February 3, 2011
7:00 Joint Exec Session
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followed by AB SC Meeting**

AGENDA with addendum

- 1.0 CALL TO ORDER – Joint School Committee
EXECUTIVE SESSION – to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining, AEA
- 2.0 CHAIRMAN’S INTRODUCTION
- 3.0 APPROVAL of MINUTES and STATEMENT of WARRANT
 - 3.1 Minutes of 1/6/11 and 1/22/11 (*next meeting*)
- 4.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- 5.0 **JOINT OPEN BUDGET HEARING with the Finance Committees**
(Please bring 1/22/11 Budget Binder, posted online at <http://ab.mec.edu/about/meetings.shtml>)
 - 5.1 ALG Report – *John Petersen/Xuan Kong*
 - 5.1.1 Meeting 1/13/11
 - 5.1.2 Meeting Agenda 1/31/11 including minutes of 1/13/11 (*addendum*)
 - 5.1.3 Updated Spreadsheets after 1/31/11 meeting (*addendum*)
 - 5.2 Acton FinCom Report – *Sharon McManus (oral)*
 - 5.3 BLF Report – *Maria Neyland (oral)*
 - 5.4 FY’ 11 and FY’ 12 Budget Update – *Steve Mills/ Don Aicardi*
 - 5.4.1 Governor’s FY’ 12 Budget Recommendation with Chapter 70 and cherry sheets
 - 5.4.2 Recommendation to Approve FY’ 12 ABRSD Budget and Assessments – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills (addendum)*
 - 5.4.3 Recommendation to Approve FY’ 12 APS Budget - **VOTE** – *Steve Mills (addendum)*

APS meeting is suspended, AB meeting continues.

- 6.0 AB UNFINISHED BUSINESS
 - 6.1 Health Trust Report – *John Petersen (oral)*
 - 6.2 Subcommittee Updates
 - 6.2.1. Policy – *Brigid Bieber (oral)*
 - 6.2.1.1 Recommendation to Approve New Policy on Admission of Exchange Students (File: JFABB) – **FIRST READING** – *Maria Neyland (revision in addendum)*
 - 6.2.2. Class Size – *Amy Hedison (oral)*
 - 6.2.3. Long-Range Planning – *Steve Mills (oral)*

- 7.0 AB NEW BUSINESS
- 7.1 Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB Girls Basketball Boosters for an assistant coach – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
 - 7.2 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Enterprise Bank toward Community Service Day – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
 - 7.3 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Cambridge Savings Bank toward Community Service Day – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
 - 7.4 Acceptance of 2011 Danny’s Place Lease – *Steve Mills*
 - 7.5 School Calendar / Superintendent’s Memo re Cancellations and Last Day - *Steve Mills*
- 8.0 AB FOR YOUR INFORMATION
- 8.1 ABRHS
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- 10.0 ADJOURN