

## ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes (approved 3/17/11)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 17, 2011  
7:30 p.m.

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*Members Present:* Michael Coppelino, Herman Kabakoff, Xuan Kong, Sharon Smith  
McManus, John Petersen  
*Members Absent:* Terry Lindgren  
*Others:* Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, 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.

The three new candidates for School Committee were introduced: Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, and Dennis Bruce. The League of Women Voters' Candidates Night is March 17<sup>th</sup>.

### STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #201116 dated 2/8/11 in the amount of \$172,406.27 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for approval.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of December 16, 2010 were unanimously approved as written.

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

#### 1. ALG Report

John Petersen reported on the 1/31/11 meeting which was held prior to the Health Insurance Trust Meeting decision on 2/10/11.

#### 2. Acton Finance Committee Report

Xuan Kong reviewed the discussion document from the Fincom meeting on 2/8/11.

#### 3. BOS Update

Herman Kabakoff reported on the 5 BOS meetings held since the last APS meeting. A hearing was held regarding the Next Generation childcare facility. The BOS decided to have another meeting. The public is encouraged to contact the BOS with their opinions before Feb 28<sup>th</sup> when they will vote. Mike Coppelino said the primary concern is public safety with hundreds of young children coming and going and subsequent traffic during rush hour. JD Head expressed concern from the schools on this issue in the past.

#### 4. FY'11 and FY'12 Budget Update

Don Aicardi and Steve Mills will present to the Acton Finance Committee on March 8. Dr. Mills highlighted slide #10 "FY'11 Year End Balances: How can they be used to meet our goals?".

Based on the stated assumptions (identifying \$691K as the APS and ABRSD share of the current \$850K deficit), the plan to achieve level service in the APS FY'12 budget is:

- 1) To move \$386k in SPED tuition from FY'12 and pay them out of the FY'11 budget capacity in order to help lower the current AB/APS FY'12 deficit of \$691k. (Leaves balance of \$287k for free cash replenishment or additional spending in FY'11 or FY'12, or some combination).

- 2) Once FY' 12 budget gap has been closed, we will estimate the potential FY' 11 year end capacity and review our FY' 12 priority list, weighing the purchase of non-recurring expenditures for school-based technology and textbook purchases.
- 3) If State Aid revenue proves to be higher than the current estimate being assumed, we will continue to work with the leaders of both communities to carefully revisit the FY' 12 budget assumptions.

Dr. Mills asked for a vote of \$26,374,059 for next year's APS Budget.

Marie Altieri talked about instructional hours for assistants and kindergarten enrollment. It was noted that additional hours for assistants are not included in the budgets because they are level service only. Kindergarten registration is scheduled for March 15 and 16 so the March meeting will include discussion of enrollment and number of sections. Dr. Mills reminded the Committee that the budgets are fluid and move as time goes by based on the many variables. Deficit spending is not an option. One Committee member urged the Committee not to ask for more than is needed as that would overtax our citizens.

Xuan Kong moved and it was seconded: **to accept the Administration's recommendation that the school year 2011-2012 APS District Budget be set at \$26,374,059. This budget covers the period July 2, 2011 through June 30, 2012.**

A Committee member recommended that the 3% increase that Dr. Mills proposed for Administrators be capped at \$2000 per employee. Another member agreed but felt the Committee had agreed to let Steve use his discretion on this. The Committee discussed the proposed math assistants – if they would be certified, who will manage them, and the job description. We are lucky to have many trained professionals in our community who may be available for these kinds of positions. It was agreed that once kindergarten registration is confirmed, the number of sections would be closely reviewed because sections roll forward and add significantly to total cost.

A Committee member advocated for including classroom and math assistant hours in the proposed budget now, as opposed to waiting until the financial picture is clearer.

Alex Horowitz spoke from the audience saying that too many cuts have been made over the years without restoring important needs. He pointed out all of the changes in library sciences in recent years, while we have not had a certified librarian in our elementary school system for a long time. Capping raises at \$2000 does not make sense to him in this economy, given a 3% inflation rate. He advocated for at least 3% increases.

Maureen Flynn spoke from the audience about the amount of funding provided by the PTOs, particularly for assistants, and stated that as a result this is not a "level funded" budget. She said that it is the responsibility of the town and schools to pay for their staff and spoke of the tremendous pressure on parents to fund these positions every year. She is absolutely in support of the extra 18 hours of assistant time, but stated that even more is needed. The audience applauded.

Nancy Sherburne spoke from the audience emphasizing that level funding the schools is the bare minimum that is acceptable. She said that Town Boards are viewing the money that Dr. Mills has set aside as "excess" but it is not. She said that fundamental needs exist for math assistants for identified blocks of students at each of the elementary schools. She supports Xuan's proposal of a higher number for the budget.

Paul Murphy asked from the audience if any of the "Needs" list items are included in the proposed budget. Steve said that virtually none are because it is level service.

Steve acknowledged the difficulties of the large amounts of fundraising being done for years by the PTOs and said that the Community Education Program is starting to help with some funding. Steve respectfully requested that the Committee leave in the terminology as he has it for the 54 people non union salaried Administrators' increases. (He also requested that his own salary not be included in this discussion.) The difference between \$2000 or 3% whichever is larger, is \$16,000 for this group of staff.

Herman called the question and the Committee unanimously **VOTED** to do so.

It was moved, seconded and

**VOTED: to accept the Administration's recommendation that the school year 2011-2012 APS District Budget be set at \$26,374,059. This budget covers the period July 2, 2011 through June 30, 2012.**

(YES: Coppolino, Kabakoff, Petersen, McManus NO: Kong)

It was requested that the Committee discuss the budget again in the future. The Chair agreed.

5. Health Trust Report

John Petersen reported on the 2/10/11 HIT meeting. They will meet again on Feb 24 to finalize the rates.

6. Subcommittee Updates

1. Class Size

Amy Hedison said that they will have a full report very soon. They have met with all the administrators and many teachers, as well as gathered parent and student comments.

2. Long-Range Strategic Planning

Steve Mills reported that this is an exciting group doing important work. They will be converting values into goals and doing a survey soon. Next year is considered the first year of the five year plan.

3. Policy

5.6.3.1. Recommendation to Approve New School Committee Policy on Admission of Exchange Students (File: JFABB ) – **FIRST READING**  
Marie Altieri asked the Committee if they wanted to discuss this new policy even though it probably would not involved elementary students. John reminded the Subcommittee that policies should not drop down into the procedure level. He thinks the decision making level for procedures should be at the building level. The Committee suggested that the policy be clearer that it is 3 students per district, not per school. One member requested a more extensive discussion about the cost of exchange students. Principal Chris Whitbeck said that in the past 7 years, there have been no exchange students in our elementary schools. It was the consensus of the APS Committee that they do not need to review this policy further.

4. Cost Savings Task Force – Xuan reported that the task force met on 2/16/11 and the current plan was to have a preliminary report ready for public comments by Town Meeting.

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

1. Superintendent's Updates

Dr. Mills thanked people for their positive responses to his recent memos regarding School Cancellations and Determining the Last Day of School (June 21, 2011) as well as Roof Safety and Snow Removal. His Interschool Council will meet on 2/9/11. He highlighted the showing of *Race To Nowhere* and the Panel Discussion to follow on March 15 at 7 p.m. in High School Auditorium. <http://www.racetonowhere.com/home>

6. Curriculum Update

Dr. Mills thanked Eileen Sullivan for bringing the Giant Traveling Map of Asia to the Acton and Boxborough Schools. Regarding the change in the McCarthy-Towne School NCLB Accountability Status, Dr. Mills said that an adjustment has been made by the DESE and the issue has been resolved. A letter has been sent by Principal David Krane to his school community.

7. APS Food Services Reports

Dr. Mills thanked Food Services Director, Kirsten Nelson for her excellent leadership. She is researching electronic payment. Food prices are not expected to change.

8 Correspondence from the Community

John Petersen thanked all of the community members who emailed their comments and questions to the Committee.

**NEXT MEETINGS**

March 3 at 7:30 pm AB SC at R.J. Grey Junior High School Library

March 17 at 7:30 pm APS SC at GATES SCHOOL

March 24 at 7:30 pm Joint AB/APS SC at RJG JH Library (serves as April meetings)

*(Note: January 20, 2011 APS SC meeting was cancelled.)*

The School Committee adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda attached.

## ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

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### AGENDA

- 1.0 CALL TO ORDER
- 2.0 CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION
- 3.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES of December 16, 2010 (addendum) and STATEMENT OF WARRANT
- 4.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- 5.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS
  - 5.1 ALG Report – *John Petersen/Xuan Kong (7:35)*
    - 5.1.1. Draft Minutes of 1/31/11 meeting
  - 5.2 Acton Finance Committee Report – *Sharon McManus/Xuan Kong (oral) (7:40)*
    - 5.2.1 Discussion Document from Fincom 2/8/11 meeting (addendum)
  - 5.3 BOS Update – *Herman Kabakoff (oral) (7:45)*
  - 5.4 FY'11 and FY'12 Budget Update – *Steve Mills/Don Aicardi (7:50)*
    - 5.4.1. Classroom Assistants
    - 5.4.2. Number of Kindergarten Sections (oral)
    - 5.4.3. Presentation slides (brought to meeting)
    - 5.4.4. Recommendation to Approve FY'12 APS Budget – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
  - 5.5 Health Trust Report – *John Petersen (8:20)*
    - 5.5.1. 2/10/11 meeting
  - 5.6 Subcommittee Updates (8:25)
    - 5.6.1. Class Size – *Terry Lindgren (oral)*
    - 5.6.2. Long-Range Strategic Planning – *Steve Mills (oral)*
    - 5.6.3. Policy – *Sharon McManus*
      - 5.6.3.1. Recommendation to Approve New School Committee Policy on Admission of Exchange Students (File: JFABB ) – **FIRST READING** – *Marie Altieri*
- 6.0 NEW BUSINESS (8:35)
- 7.0 FOR YOUR INFORMATION
  - 7.1 Superintendent's Updates, *Steve Mills*
    - 7.1.1. School Cancellations and Determining the Last Day of School (June 21, 2011)
    - 7.1.2. Roof Safety and Snow Removal
    - 7.1.3. Interschool Council meeting on 2/9/11
    - 7.1.4. Race To Nowhere Panel, March 15 at 7 p.m. in High School Auditorium  
<http://www.racetonowhere.com/home> (addendum)
  - 7.2 ELL Student Population Report – January 1 and February 1, *Liza Huber*
  - 7.3 FY'11 Monthly APS Financial Reports, *Don Aicardi*
    - 7.3.1. Budget Status Summary
    - 7.3.2. Budget Status Summary - SPED
  - 7.4 Student Enrollment Numbers/Class Size Info - February 1, 2011, *Marie Altieri*
  - 7.5 Kindergarten Information Night Slides (1/11/11), *Marie Altieri*
  - 7.6 Curriculum Update, *Deborah Bookis*
    - 7.6.1 Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative, Session I Feedback Sampling
    - 7.6.2 Giant Traveling Map of Asia Coming to Acton and Boxborough Schools

- 7.6.3 Mapping the Past – Free workshop for Educators and Map Lovers, 3/3/11
- 7.6.4 McCarthy-Towne School Change in NCLB Accountability Status 1/27/11
  - 7.6.4.1. Letter to McT Families from D.Krane re Change in NCLB Status
- 7.6.5 AB Star Party on February 28<sup>th</sup> 6:30 – 9:00 p.m. Parker Damon Building
- 7.6.6 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Market Math Mania was February 8<sup>th</sup>
- 7.6.7 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Market Math Mania on April 13<sup>th</sup> 4:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Roche Bros.
- 7.7 APS Food Services Reports, *Kirsten Nelson*
  - 7.7.1. Annual Food Services Update and Point of Sale System
  - 7.7.2. APS Food Services Balances FY'08 – FY'10
  - 7.7.3. FY'10 APS Food Services Report (*same as 1/22/11 binder*)
- 7.8 Correspondence from the Community
  - 7.8.1 “Please Fund Teaching Assistants”
  - 7.8.2 “Vote to Fund Additional School Assistant Hours”
  - 7.8.3 “Proposed Funding of Teachers Assistants”
  - 7.8.4 “Waterfall .... Cascade?”
  - 7.8.5 “Do not want to see school funds reallocated to town reserves”
  - 7.8.6 “Globe article: Residents face \$20b retiree health tab”
  - 7.8.7 “Budget Priorities”
- 7.9 Links to School Newsletters:
  - Acton Public School Preschool: <http://ab.mec.edu/Preschool/index.htm>
  - 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>
- 7.10 *Lamplighter*, December 2010, posted at [www.ab.mec.edu](http://www.ab.mec.edu)
- 8.0 NEXT MEETINGS
  - March 3 at 7:30 pm AB SC at R.J. Grey Junior High School Library
  - March 17 at 7:30 pm APS SC at GATES SCHOOL
  - March 24 at 7:30 pm Joint AB/APS SC at RJG JH Library (serves as April meetings)
  - (*Note: January 20, 2011 APS SC meeting was cancelled.*)
- 9.0 ADJOURNMENT (8:45)