

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Minutes** (approved 11/18/10)

**Library**  
**McCarthy-Towne School**

**October 21, 2010**  
**7:30 p.m.**

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*Members Present:* Herman Kabakoff, Xuan Kong, Michael Coppolino, Sharon Smith  
McManus (7:35), John Petersen

*Members Absent:* Terry Lindgren

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

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The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by John Petersen.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of September 16, 2010 were approved as amended.

**STATEMENT OF WARRANT**

Warrant #201108 in the amount of \$166,367.53 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the Committee for approval.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** - none

**EDUCATION REPORT** -McCarthy-Towne School, *Principal David Krane*

David spoke about the literacy initiatives being used at the McCarthy-Towne School and how these formative literacy assessments drive instruction. Leveled text is used to match students to the right books at the right time. One size does not fit all when it comes to literacy. A new bookroom was developed over the summer and has been very valuable. David said one of their goals is to “grow critical thinkers, kids who can think out loud”. The “Teachers College Reading Project” was invaluable professional development. McT’s Family Literacy Night at Willow Books is a great event to show adults enjoying reading. David said that Lucy Calkins is an amazing researcher regarding Lifelong Learning. Her focus is that “Teaching begins with seeing the significance and intelligence of what children are doing, and almost doing. “ Emphasis is on pushing children as far as they can go, but noticing where they are, to begin the push. David thanked Matt McDowell and Deb Bookis for their efforts on the MCAS analysis for McCarthy-Towne.

The School Committee asked about professional development. When asked why all schools don’t participate in the Teachers’ College program, Dr. Mills answered that each school decides what is best for their staff at a particular time. Regarding funding staff professional development, there is some district money as well as individual schools’ budgets that are used. The total amount that we offer staff is below the state average. When asked what the School Committee could do to help with the literacy and other programs, David said funding was key. The more teachers can share best practices and learn from others, the better.

When asked how many student teachers McT has, David said there are 3 shared in Kindergarten and one in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. He said that having student teachers speaks to what the district is interested in, but it also makes teachers think of their practice. It is important to teach children, as well as the teachers of the future. When asked about the role of parents in literacy, David said that children who are interested in books and read for pleasure, and families that have books and newspapers at home, make the difference. We want to inspire kids to love books and reading.

Mike Coppolino said that at the last meeting, Liza Huber gave information on MCAS re professional development and what is going on. David said that he will get back to the School Committee regarding additional information on that subject.

Teacher Kate Fitzmaurice spoke from audience. She said that people should realize that many teachers are dedicated to professional development without compensation (using workshops, book groups, book shelf) and this is a key to our success.

Assistant Principal Update:

Matt McDowell is learning about the cultures of his two schools, Merriam and McCarthy-Towne. David Krane said that he is doing a terrific job after just six weeks. He has been trying to get into the classrooms often.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **1. ALG Report**

The ALG Meeting on 10/7/10 was primarily about the land issue being voted on at the upcoming special Acton Town Meeting. John Petersen asked if the School Committee should take a position on this issue. It was decided not to take an official position, but that the sense of the Committee is that they encourage everyone to attend Town Meeting and vote for this.

### **2. Acton Finance Committee Report**

Xuan Kong attended the 10/19/10 meeting. The FinCom voted 5-4 to support the Town Meeting question regarding the land purchase, although financially it is very difficult.

### **3. BOS Report**

Herman Kabakoff attended the 10/18/10 meeting. Acton is a "Green Community" and we are now reaping the rewards with some grant funding. Debate is ongoing regarding sewerage the Spencer Tuttle neighborhood.

### **4. FY'11 Budget Update**

ALG meets next week where assumptions will start to be confirmed. If nothing changes and all goes well, it looks like there will be a surplus at the end of the school year. Dr. Mills would like to spend some money this year for next year, as a strategy to help with FY12. It was asked how we know there is a surplus when it is so early in the year. Don agreed to get some details on this for the next meeting. Most of the apparent surplus is on the health insurance salary line. Xuan Kong asked for a good understanding of the variance on this so they can learn going forward.

## 5. FY'12 Budget Update

- a. Use of Reserves – FY11 Final Table 6 Regional School Assessment (from 10/7/10 AB meeting packet)
- b. Proposed FY12 Budget Schedule for the Schools

Dr. Mills stated that the two school districts have been very good about turning back money at the end of the year in the past. Part of the FY12 strategy is to pay on some bills for next year, next Spring. Steve Mills, Don Aicardi and Marie Altieri spoke at FinCom last month about using reserves. At that time, Dr. Mills stated that as Superintendent, if two very significant conditions exist, he does not object to using local reserves:

1. If 9C cuts are made, the leadership groups will not reduce school budgets.
2. Even more significant is a commitment from ALG to level service the schools (no lay offs for teachers)

If these conditions exist, then the Superintendent does not reject spending some of the surplus. Moving forward over the next 18 months, Dr. Mills wants to be able to say that he did not layoff any teachers, and that a level service budget exists. It may be too early to have that discussion, but it needs to be stated from the start. The message is that "Layoffs are unacceptable in Acton and Acton-Boxborough, and a level service budget is essential." School districts here are efficient. We cannot cut any further. The NEASC Chairperson said this week that our class sizes are too large. If there are 9C cuts, we have to draw down some reserves.

John Petersen asked for guidance from the Committee for the opinions that he and Xuan take back to ALG. The committee needs to be committed to a level service budget, and a plan to make that happen, including how reserves should be managed.

Several members have not decided yet. One mentioned that he would defer to FinCom's, the BOS' and the Superintendent's expertise on the use of reserves. Another member voiced concern about the impact this decision would have on the students. The School Committee's job is to advocate for the students, and doing something that would reduce the probability of a level service budget goes against the students. Xuan Kong wants to honor the Committee's commitment. He stated that the waterfall proposal was created because the school needed help and now we must abide by our vote. Herman Kabakoff wants to use the waterfall model and give the taxpayers some relief and do what we said we would do. This gives us political credibility.

Amy Hedison spoke from the audience stating that the Town did not vote on the waterfall and that it is not policy. For the small amount of relief it would give a taxpayer, it could have a much more significant effect on a group of students. She stated that the School Committee should be advocating for the students, not the taxpayers, since that is what we have other boards in town for. Heather Harer spoke from the audience stating that the waterfall model was to handle Chapter 70 money, and the money we are considering now is not Chapter 70 money. John Petersen agreed that literally the waterfall discussion that happened last February was not about what we're talking about now, but he advocated for considering the intent of the

decision. Sustainability of the tax burden is always a question in front of the Committee, in his opinion.

Heather Harer said that if the Committee made a commitment, she supports that they abide by it, but they need to advocate for the children and be very careful that what is being compared is apples to apples. Another parent spoke from the audience saying that her child's teacher asked her to get her some help with the large class sizes. That is why she attended the meeting. She stated that she feels she is representing the majority of parents in town. Another woman said that as a taxpayer that gets a cut, but then is asked for an override, this would be a very confusing message. John Petersen concluded the discussion by encouraging everyone to continue their participation.

Members agreed that Saturday, Feb 5, 2011 should be the all day Budget Session.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. State Ballot Question 3 Resolution**

The Regional School Committee voted on this resolution against Question 3 and a letter was sent to the Beacon.

### **2. Consent Calendar**

7.2 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Conant School PTO

7.3 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Douglas School PTO

7.4 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Gates School PTO

7.5 Recommendation to Accept Gift from McCarthy-Towne School PTO

7.6 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Merriam School PTO

7.7 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Roche Brothers

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED:** to accept these gifts with great gratitude.

Herman Kabakoff emphasized how much the community is contributing over and above their tax dollars. Mike Coppolino cautioned people about the vast discrepancy between the PTO funding and other gifts, and that the public education piece doesn't get lost.

### **3. Recommendation to Approve Gates Overnight Field Trip to Nature's Classroom**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED:** to approve the Gates Overnight Field Trip to Nature's Classroom on 4/27/11 - 4/29/11

### **4. Recommendation to Approve Revised School Committee Policy's**

**Nondiscrimination Statement and Policy (File: AC) - SECOND READING**

Every 6 years a coordinated program review is done and this is happening at APS next week. Civil rights, ESL and Special Education are the focus. Our Notice of Nondiscrimination and policy needed some required modification. We added wording regarding Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students and several minor corrections.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED:** to approve the amended version of the revised School Committee Policy's Nondiscrimination Statement and Policy

The amendment was to remove "(LEP)" from the statement because the other terms included do not show abbreviations.

**5. Acceptance of Douglas School Before and After School Program Funding**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED:** to accept \$114,191.00 of Douglas School Before and After School Program Funding to be spent on 185 hours of classroom assistant time.

**6. Recommendation to Accept Gift from the Friends of the Acton Libraries**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED:** to accept with gratitude, a gift of \$12,000 from the Friends of the Acton Libraries for the 5 elementary schools.

**7. Recommendation to approve APS Non-Resident Tuition Rate for FY'11**

Xuan Kong asked how other school districts set their rates and if it is a market rate or restricted in any way. Lexington uses an average of the regular and special education costs.

Xuan moved to set the APS non-resident tuition rate for FY'11 at the state average of \$13,000 per student. This was seconded by Herman Kabakoff.

Discussion included why we would accept a student in this situation, given our large class sizes and that we are not participating in the school choice program. If special education issues come up, this would add significantly to the cost.

Xuan withdrew his motion.

John Petersen said that the policy implications should be discussed before setting a rate. The Committee agreed to wait on setting this rate. Sharon McManus said that this issue should be considered by the School Committee Policy Subcommittee at their upcoming meeting. The Committee completed a comprehensive review of the policies in the summer of 2006. Sharon felt that a joint discussion should be held regarding if it is time to do a new comprehensive review. John Petersen will talk to Brigid Bieber about this. This was a major undertaking the last time it was done.

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

- 8.1 October 1 Enrollment Report  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, in particular, is in violation of the class size guidelines. Marie Altieri added that in the last week and a half, 5 kindergarteners (18 total students) have been enrolled. Enrollment projections will be discussed at the December School Committee meetings.
- 8.2 ELL Student Population Report - October 1, 2010
- 8.3 FY '10 Monthly APS Financial Reports
  - a. Budget Status Summary
  - b. Budget Status Summary Report - McCarthy-Towne

- c. Budget Status Summary – SPED
- 8.4 Curriculum Update
- Goal #1 a. Teacher to Teacher Initiative – Leadership Institute Action Step #2, SMART
- b. Protocol used for Visits, *National School Reform Faculty*  
 Dr. Mills highlighted this professional development, recognizing Deborah Bookis’ work. 180 APS and AB staff are involved in the November 2<sup>nd</sup> Professional Development Day. Students are given the day off so staff can work collaboratively.
- 8.5 “Talking about Taxes: What is the Best Way to Pay for Services?”, Oct 28, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Concord Town House, presented by Reps. Cory Atkins and Jay Kaufman
- 8.6 School Newsletters: website links  
 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>  
 Acton Public School Preschool: <http://ab.mec.edu/Preschool/index.htm>
- 8.7 Dismissal Schedule for 11/24/10
- 8.8 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Special Education Parent Workshop, “*What does it take for our children to learn? How do we know they are learning?*” - Friday, Oct 29, 8:30 – 1:00 PM, Congregation Beth Elohim, Acton, Co-hosted by APS and ABRHS Pupil Services and the AB Special Education Parent Advisory Council (*This event was postponed.*)
- 8.9 *deleted*
- 8.10 2011-2012 Kindergarten Registration Schedule
- 8.11 MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.) Annual Meeting, November 3, 2010
- 8.12 “DOE to Visit Schools”, *Beacon Article*, 10/14/10, page 7  
 The Coordinated Program Review of the Acton Public Schools will be done the week of October 25<sup>th</sup>.

NEXT MEETINGS

- November 18, 7:30 pm APS SC Meeting at Merriam School  
 November 4, 7:30 pm ABRSC Meeting at ABRHS Library

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Beth Petr

## ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Library  
McCarthy-Towne School

October 21, 2010  
7:30 p.m.

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### AGENDA with addendum

- 1.0 CALL TO ORDER
- 2.0 CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION
- 3.0 APPROVAL of MINUTES of SEPTEMBER 16, 2010 and STATEMENT of WARRANT
- 4.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- 5.0 EDUCATION REPORT
  - 5.1 "Literacy Initiatives" - McCarthy-Towne School Principal, David Krane
  - 5.2 Assistant Principal Update
- 6.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS
  - 6.1 ALG Report/ Acton Finance Committee Report – *Xuan Kong, John Petersen*
    - a. ALG Meeting Minutes – 10/7/10
    - b. Email re Minuteman Tech progress
  - 6.2 BOS Update – *Herman Kabakoff*
  - 6.3 FY'11 Budget Update – *Steve Mills*
  - 6.4 FY'12 Budget – *Steve Mills*
    - a. Use of Reserves – FY11 Final Table 6 Regional School Assessment (from 10/7/10 AB meeting packet)
    - b. Proposed FY12 Budget Schedule for the Schools
- 7.0 NEW BUSINESS (Consent Calendar?)
  - 7.1 State Ballot Question 3 Resolution
    - a. Approved Resolution against Question 3
    - b. Letter from the *Beacon*, 10/14/10
  - 7.2 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Conant School PTO - **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
  - 7.3 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Douglas School PTO - **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
  - 7.4 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Gates School PTO - **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
  - 7.5 Recommendation to Accept Gift from McCarthy-Towne School PTO - **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
  - 7.6 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Merriam School PTO - **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
  - 7.7 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Roche Brothers - **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*
  - 7.8 Recommendation to Approve Gates Overnight Field Trip to Nature's Classroom, 4/27/11 – 4/29/11 – **VOTE** - *Steve Mills*
  - 7.9 Recommendation to Approve Revised School Committee Policy's Nondiscrimination Statement – **SECOND READING** - **VOTE** – *Liza Huber*
  - 7.10 Acceptance of Douglas School Before and After School Program Funding -**VOTE** – *Steve Mills (addendum)*

- 7.11 Recommendation to Accept Gift from the Friends of the Acton Libraries –**VOTE** -  
*Steve Mills (addendum)*
- 7.12 Recommendation to approve APS Non-Resident Tuition Rate for FY'11  
– **VOTE** – *Steve Mills (addendum)*

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- 8.2 ELL Student Population Report – October 1, 2010
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  - b. Protocol used for Visits, *National School Reform Faculty*
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- 8.12 “DOE to Visit Schools”, *Beacon Article*, 10/14/10, page 7, Coordinated Program Review of Acton Public Schools the week of October 25 (*addendum*)

9.0 NEXT MEETINGS

- November 18, 7:30 pm APS SC Meeting at Merriam School
- November 4, 7:30 pm ABRSC Meeting at ABRHS Library

10.0 ADJOURNMENT