

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes (approved 12/16/10)

Library
Merriam School/Parker Damon Building

November 18, 2010
7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Herman Kabakoff, Xuan Kong, Michael Coppelino, Terry Lindgren,
Sharon Smith McManus
Members Absent: John Petersen
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Stephen Mills,
Beth Petr

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Michael Coppelino.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of October 21, 2010 and November 4, 2010 were approved as amended. Sharon McManus abstained from the Nov 4th vote because she was not there.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #201110 dated in the amount of \$139,749.72 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the Committee for approval.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

EDUCATION REPORT -Merriam School, *Principal Edward Kaufman*

Ed spoke about the Preventative Anti-Bullying Program used at Merriam called *Open Circle*. Defining bullying is key and not easy to do. Each bullying situation is unique and requires a multifaceted approach. Proactive and reactive strategies are necessary. Building a sense of community teaches children how to take care of each other. All classroom teachers take the four day training for Open Circle. Classroom assistants also have a workshop so they are familiar with the language and terminology. We are one of three schools in the state chosen to be trained by Open Circle. Cybersmart is also used with 5th and 6th graders. Recently a meeting was held with 32 parents who learned much by sharing experiences. Parents were grateful for this meeting. March 16th will be another parent community evening workshop with Open Circle staff. In the past, a principal would have to take action on his own in a bullying situation. This has changed now with "BATS", Building Assistance Teams, so when a situation comes up Ed can call on his colleagues to help him assess and deal with it. Ed tells the students that they must, "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

Liza Huber said that systemic annual training is part of our plan for all staff, including those around children during unstructured time like bus drivers and cafeteria workers. This is all part of the legislative mandate. Dr. Mills said that each elementary school decides which of these types of programs they would like to use. There are requirements that must be met, but how that is done is up to each school. Ed Kaufman said one of the challenges for the future in terms of bullying in general is understanding what the law requires, including what kind of response. Another challenge, but an exciting one, is involving the parents and families because so much is happening outside as well as inside of schools. This is a place where schools and families can work as a community team. There will be a public forum on March 16 on this. Liza Huber described how the DESE asks the staff to use consistent language, such as "aggressor" instead of "bully", as well as for everyone to use the same definitions for behaviors. A second element of dealing with an issue, is to look at the scenario. A one time incident is dealt with differently than one that is chronic.

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

Assistant Principal Update

Ed said that Matt McDowell has been an invaluable resource in the few months that he has been at Merriam and McCarthy-Towne. He did a new building evacuation plan as well as a lot of work with the MCAS data. He serves on a number of Merriam committees, as well as in the classrooms and with the students. Deb Bookis noted that he has taken on a district wide role as chair of the K-12 Committee on ELA. More information will be provided at the next meeting.

When asked, "What can the School Committee do for you?", Principal Ed Kaufman said that aside from more resources, if any School Committee members could attend the March 16th evening with the Open Circle staff, that it would be great for them to experience the program first hand. This would help School Committee better understand how to assist the schools.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. ALG Report

Xuan Kong reported on a new spreadsheet for ALG, led by Don Aicardi. Don thanked Mary Ann Ashton and John Murray for their assistance. This format allows for a lot of detail to be shown, with a mechanism in the spreadsheet to adjust for any changes. Mike Coppolino commented on how much better this document is with the summary sheet followed by details.

Dr. Mills has instructed administrators to plan for a level service budget. Xuan Kong gave an excellent presentation summarizing the Waterfall model and acknowledged that there is a discrepancy in people's understanding of the assumptions made when the Committees voted on it. Slide #11 seems to say that only Chapter 70 aid is what the model applies to. The Town has said they expect a shortfall of \$150,000 from fees compared to April 2010 Town Meeting. Dr. Mills has talked to AB SC Chair Brigid Bieber about considering a revote to lower the regional assessment to make up for this. Anything that affects the tax rate has to be done before the Acton Board of Selectmen's meeting on 12/6/10. How the Committee decides to handle the waterfall model will have an effect on the whole process. It will not affect any of the services for FY11 because it is not reducing the budget. It is deciding whether to use E&D to cover this deficit.

Xuan said that ALG asked him to bring back two questions: When the School Committee voted for the waterfall model was it just for Chapter 70 funding or was it for any incremental funding? How should we deal with this \$150,000 local revenue shortfall? This was not entirely related to Chapter 70 so it is not clear. Xuan said that BOS Chair, Lauren Rosenzweig Morton made a proposal that would return some money to the taxpayers. She said that because revenues are lower than predicted right now, she proposed that they split it – 70% from schools and 30% from the Town. As of this morning, the schools' 70% would be \$206,000. Sharon McManus feels that the number the Committee needs to think about is the \$150,000 and they should consider splitting \$150,000 by 70-30 instead of \$200 something. She feels that the Committee should consider backfilling the \$150,000 not the whole thing. Lauren thought that was correct. Terry Lindgren stated that the School Committee became very clear that Edujobs money and transportation money should not be spent on anything except schools and school transportation. He said that the Committee voted last time to endorse the waterfall model, but the waterfall isn't in question. It is whether to give money back in the end and the Committee agreed that it would be decided at the 12/4/10 Regional School Committee meeting. He felt that the \$150,000 should be deducted from what is going back to the taxpayer. Herman Kabakoff felt strongly that all of the elected boards and FinCom endorsed the waterfall model and announced it at Town Meeting saying that if more came in, this is how it would be dealt with and given back to the taxpayer. He felt it was an issue of credibility that the Committee needed to abide by this model. Mike Coppolino said that the regional meeting on 12/2 would

be the place to reconsider any decisions and that clearly the Committee is better informed now. He hopes that Mary Ann Ashton will make a brief presentation at the 12/2 meeting for clarity.

Regarding what should be taken back to ALG, Mike said that the consensus seemed to be that the waterfall model included only Chapter 70 funds, with the exception of the transportation money at the region. Xuan said that during the budgeting process we made all boards aware that we had to catch up with transportation this year.

Regarding the \$150,000 shortfall, the consensus was that it should be included and covered at 70% for the schools. This will be followed up with discussion at the 12/2/10 Regional School Committee meeting when there is more clarity around the numbers.

2. Acton Finance Committee Report

The Committee discussed the Draft FinCom Point of View for FY'12. Terry Lindgren disagreed with page 3 of the 6.2 assumptions because the Committee is not going with a 0% increase. Xuan said this is related to what happened at ALG this morning. Sharon pointed out that this is the FinCom's point of view, not a commandment. It is helpful to understand but the actual numbers that end up at Town Meeting are almost always determined within the last month, with information that was not available until then. Herman Kabakoff agrees with the second bullet that Terry disagrees with. Sharon made the point that there has been a lot of money coming in to the schools transportation, Edujobs and ARRA accounts over the past year and we have not been hoarding it. She does not want to give the wrong impression. This would help everyone – town and school financially. Terry urged the Committee to talk about educational needs so the Town hears where we are educationally in need of, in a realistic way. Mike stated that we have had some successful negotiations with OSA and AFSCME, and that this will reflect some savings in the long term and should be acknowledged.

3. BOS Update

Herman Kabakoff updated the Committee on the recent two meetings, held on Nov 1 and 8. Quail Ridge is a concern if this property is turned into homes. Jean Fleming retired and a new Council on Aging Director is in place. The BOS has made CPA recommendations.

4. FY'11 and FY'12 Budget Update

Steve Mills said that he would like to pay forward a few bills again this year as was done last Spring. At the Nov 5 MASS/MASC Conference, Michael Widmer said that there is a real possibility of 9C cuts. Dr. Mills sees his role regarding finance as the steward of the high level of service that we have in our Acton and Acton-Boxborough schools. His goal is a level service budget as he moves forward. This is not a zero expense increase, but it is close. See 6.4a and b. He will move ahead with a planned 10% cut in state aid. A presentation will be done for the 12/2 School Committee meeting. With School Committee support, two of our unions are now settled, and one is still being worked on. He requested support from the Committee for a modest increase for next year for the salaried employees. This is the last group of staff that need to know what their package for next year will look like. Terry Lindgren asked that the Committee be mindful that not everyone gets an increase in these economic times. Xuan Kong asked about the budget assumption regarding the circuit breaker reimbursement rate. Liza said that it is 40% this year and that they are expecting the same next year. Xuan and Terry would like to see, starting with this budget cycle, a districtwide effort to get more assistants in the classrooms. This would help with our larger class sizes. Dr. Mills was asked to figure this into the budget. This can still be a level service budget, just moving resources to make it happen.

5. Health Trust Report

John Petersen reported on the meeting held 10/27/10. The trustees recommend that budgets be based on a 9% increase in health care costs. This recommendation will be reviewed at their next meeting scheduled in December.

6. Policy Revisions

- a. Recommendation to Approve Revised School Committee Policy on Bullying Prevention and Intervention (File: JICFB), Exhibit (File: JICFB-E), Plan (File: JICFB-R) – **FIRST READING**

Liza Huber was asked if defining the aggressor as just a student, is too restrictive. She will consider this thought prior to the second reading.

- b. Recommendation to Approve Revised School Committee Policy on the School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting (File: BDA) – **FIRST READING**

- c. Recommendation to Approve Revised School Committee Policy on the Kindergarten and First Grade Entrance (File: JEB) – **FIRST READING**

Dr. Mills spoke about this last year. This revision eliminates the early admission process. Over time, children whose families paid the requested fee and were tested, were rarely admitted early. The administration would like to be clearer that we expect children to attend kindergarten according to their birthdate. Xuan Kong suggested that “or first grade” be deleted from the 3rd paragraph. The Committee agreed. There was a question of whether this is an enforceable policy because we have no way to know if people are holding their children out of kindergarten.

7. Class Size Subcommittee Update

Terry Lindgren and Amy Hedison were given approval to speak with the principals regarding class size. Terry will bring information to future School Committee meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 2011-2012 School Calendar Process Update

- a. 4 proposed Calendars – start before/after Labor Day, with/without Good Friday and Rosh Hashanah
- b. DESE list of holiday observances in MA
- c. Parent/Staff Surveys - Last Day for Survey is FRIDAY, 11/19

After the last School Committee meeting, it was recognized that more discussion and data are needed on this subject. A survey has been put online for parents and staff to complete. Cassie Stewart spoke from the audience and suggested that parents be surveyed when they are filling out their powerschool information in September to get a good response rate. Terry pointed out that the survey was not a vote, just a sampling of opinion. The calendar and survey results will be discussed at the Joint meeting on 12/2/10.

2. School Committee Policy Subcommittee Update

- a. APS FY11 Non Resident Tuition Rate/Exchange Students
- b. Field Trip Policy (File: IJOA) and Student Travel (File: JJH)

Sharon McManus reported that the Subcommittee met on Oct 27 and began review of policies on field trips, officer elections, exchange/tuition students, corporate sponsorships, bullying and early admission to kindergarten. The subcommittee plans to meet again next month.

3. Correspondence from/to the Community

A number of emails were received from the community, particularly regarding the calendar.

4. New Long-Range Planning Subcommittee update

Xuan Kong, Bruce Sabot and Steve Mills will discuss the formation of this new subcommittee.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- 8.1 ESL Student Enrollment Report – November 1
- 8.2 FY'11 Monthly APS Financial Reports
 - a. Budget Status Summary
 - b. Budget Status Summary – Merriam
 - c. Budget Status Summary - SPED
- 8.3 November 1, 2010 Student Enrollment Numbers/Class Size Info
- 8.4 Report of Professional Development Day, November 2
Deborah Bookis reported that this was a very positive experience and teachers really appreciated the opportunity to work collaboratively.
- 8.5 Educational Technology 3 Year Plan
Terry Lindgren encouraged everyone to read this document because it was very well done by Amy Bisiewicz.
- 8.6 Links to School Newsletters

NEXT MEETINGS

- December 16, 7:30 pm APS SC at R.J. Grey Junior High School
- December 2, 7:30 pm AB SC at R.J. Grey Junior High School

The meeting was adjourned at 10:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used:

- 1. See 11/18/10 APS SC Meeting agenda,
- 2. Waterfall Policy: Past, Present, Future 11/18/10 by Xuan Kong

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Library
Merriam School/Parker Damon Building

November 18, 2010
7:30 p.m.

AGENDA with addendum

- 1.0 CALL TO ORDER
- 2.0 CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION
- 3.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES of October 21, 2010 (addendum) and November 4, 2010 (revision in addendum) and STATEMENT OF WARRANT
- 4.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- 5.0 EDUCATION REPORT (7:35) - Merriam School – Ed Kaufman, Principal
 - 5.1 Preventative Anti-Bullying Programs – Open Circle
 - 5.2 Assistant Principal Update
- 6.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS (8:00)
 - 6.1 ALG Report – *Xuan Kong*
 - a. Meeting packet and draft minutes, 10/28/10
 - b. Agenda, 11/18/10
 - c. Draft Budget Planning Calendars, 11/18/10 (addendum)
 - d. Draft Spreadsheet, 11/18/10 (addendum)
 - 6.2 Acton Finance Committee Report – *Xuan Kong*
 - a. Draft FinCom Point of View for FY' 12 (addendum)
 - 6.3 BOS Update – *Herman Kabakoff*
 - 6.4 FY' 11 and FY' 12 Budget Update – *Steve Mills/Don Aicardi (8:30)*
 - a. FY' 12 Operating Budget Assumptions/Key Decisions
 - b. FY' 12 Revenue and Expenditures Assumptions
 - c. Budget Timeline
 - 6.5 Health Trust Report – *John Petersen*
 - 6.6 Policy Revisions (8:40)
 - a. Recommendation to Approve Revised School Committee Policy on Bullying Prevention and Intervention (File: JICFB), Exhibit (File: JICFB-E), Plan (File: JICFB-R) – **FIRST READING** – *Liza Huber*
 - b. Recommendation to Approve Revised School Committee Policy on the School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting (File: BDA) – **FIRST READING** – *Sharon McManus*
 - c. Recommendation to Approve Revised School Committee Policy on the Kindergarten and First Grade Entrance (File: JEB) – **FIRST READING** – *Marie Altieri (addendum)*
 - 6.7 Class Size Subcommittee Update - *Terry Lindgren (addendum)*

- 7.0 NEW BUSINESS (8:55)
- 7.1 2011-2012 School Calendar Process Update – *Steve Mills*
- a. 4 proposed Calendars – start before/after Labor Day, with/without Good Friday and Rosh Hashanah
 - b. DESE list of holiday observances in MA
 - c. Parent/Staff Surveys (*addendum*)- **Last Day for Survey is FRIDAY, 11/19**
- 7.2 School Committee Policy Subcommittee Update – *Sharon McManus* (9:00)
- a. APS FY11 Non Resident Tuition Rate/Exchange Students
 - b. Field Trip Policy (File: IJOA) and Student Travel (File: JJH)
- 7.3 Correspondence from/to the Community
- a. “Use of reserves”, *Ann Budner*
 - b. “So many half days”, *Yongjiang Liang*
 - c. “Public information and participation”, *John Petersen*
- 7.4 New Long-Range Planning Subcommittee update – *Xuan Kong*
- 8.0 FOR YOUR INFORMATION (9:10)
- 8.1 ESL Student Enrollment Report – November 1
- 8.2 FY’11 Monthly APS Financial Reports (*addendum*)
- d. Budget Status Summary
 - e. Budget Status Summary – Merriam
 - f. Budget Status Summary - SPED
- 8.3 November 1, 2010 Student Enrollment Numbers/Class Size Info
- 8.4 Report of Professional Development Day, November 2, *Deborah Bookis*
- 8.5 Educational Technology 3 Year Plan, *Amy Bisiewicz*
- 8.6 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>
- 9.0 ISSUES FOR THE COMMITTEE
- 10.0 NEXT MEETINGS
- December 16, 7:30 pm APS SC at R.J. Grey Junior High School
- December 2, 7:30 pm AB SC at R.J. Grey Junior High School
- 11.0 ADJOURNMENT (9:15)