

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes (approved 2/14/13)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

January 17, 2013
7:00 p.m. APS SC Meeting
8:45 p.m. AB Regional SC Meeting (to follow)

Members Present: Dennis Bruce, Mike Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy,
Deanne O'Sullivan
Members Absent: none
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

Chairperson Kim McOsker called the Acton Public School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

APS warrant #201314 dated 1/8/13 in the amount of \$62,925.74 was signed by the chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 12/20/12 APS SC meeting were approved as written.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Douglas School Parent Jeff Poulton expressed concern over our schools' current level of security and asked the School Committee to take actions similar to other local districts. (Boston Globe 1/13/13) Dr. Mills summarized his statement from 12/20/12. A Task Force is now in place and they expect to bring recommendations to the School Committees in March. These are open meetings that anyone may attend.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 ALG Update

Kim reported on the 1/10/13 meeting. Fincom does not agree with using \$2 million for reserves. The next stage of ALG meetings (after Budget Saturday on 1/26/13) will be more forthcoming as far as the reserves discussion. FinCom believes that the municipal side has taken two rounds of cuts and it is perceived that the schools have not cut. Xuan suggested that APS debt be part of the APS operating budget. This may be considered in the future. There is still much discussion about OPEB.

6.2 Board of Selectmen and FinCom Update

Xuan reported that the Regional School District Study Committee presented at the recent BOS meeting.

6.3 Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Update

Kim McOsker reported.

6.4 OPEB Task Force Update

Dennis Bruce reported that a 60 page Report is out and will be discussed on 1/30/13. OPEB is not on the agenda for Saturday. A possible change to the law is an increase to the vesting period from 10 to 20 years. A 16% surcharge for new hires is also being considered.

6.5 APS FY14 Budget Update

Dr. Mills began saying that much more detail will be presented at Budget Saturday. Anything that he is asking for for next year is replacing something that went away. The direction he has been given is to calculate a level service/investment budget linked to the Long Range Strategic Plan with an eye on all possible savings. Gov. Patrick will present the state budget on January 23rd and that will have a direct impact on the numbers. Don Aicardi explained that the proposed FY14 APS operating budget uses \$2 million of reserves at \$27,130, 000. This is a \$569,000 or 2.14% increase from FY13. A total of \$230,000 worth of investment items are requested including:

Staff: .5 FTE Assistant Principal Douglas School (\$43k) (*LRSP Goals #1, 2, 3*)
.6 FTE ELL Teacher (\$32k) (*LRSP Goals #1, 2*)
1.0 FTE Psychologist (\$62k) (*LRSP Goal #1*)
Other: Professional Development (\$93k) (*LRSP Goals #2, 3*)

Dr. Mills referred to a chart showing a 27% decline in APS PTO Gifts from FY09 – FY13 (FY13 = \$245,523 total raised). He felt this shows that the appropriated budget is absorbing some of the costs that PTOs felt they needed to fund in the past and that PTOs don't feel as much pressure now to raise money.

Dr. Mills invited the Committee to submit questions before Tuesday to be addressed on Budget Saturday. He described this annual meeting as a conversation with the School Committees and his staff. The budget binder will be posted online by 1/18/13. Referring to slide 21, Don said this would be discussed in detail on Saturday. There are many retirees at the end of this year and that has made the increase low because retirees' salaries are removed and the new salary is in at M4 level, \$54,000.

When asked how the need is being met for the psychologist proposed for next year, Liza said contracted services are being used so we may see a decrease in cost there. Moving positions to special revenue accounts is considered every year (such as preschool staff being charged to the preschool revolving account). This will be discussed at Budget Saturday. Dennis Bruce stated that he would be looking for a lot more detail on Saturday on the FTE positions being added. He also asked what is included from a budgeting perspective for turnback from APS. Don Aicardi stated that he doesn't feel it is appropriate to ask for more than is needed at the beginning of the year. That said, he has been aggressive with the vacancy factor. Many building maintenance projects are being done with end of year money. He cautioned that at some point JD Head may say they need to be in the appropriated budget.

John Petersen spoke from the audience stating that historical use of EdJOBS money does the same thing as revolving accounts. They make it appear that there are not expenses that are really there, making it hard to know what is really being spent. Regarding compensation for nonunion employees, the budget proposal includes a 2 ½% increase. From an external equity view, he asked what process is used this year. Dr. Mills replied that we need to recruit and retain the best people. The School Committees allowed him to give up to 3% to his 15 salaried staff members as long as it was performance based this past year.

6.6 Regionalization Update

Xuan explained his memo dated 1/4/13 regarding Attorney Edward Lenox's comments on regional assessment methods. He reported that Peter Ashton presented to the Acton Board of Selectmen and there was concern about cost as well as how the savings would be allocated between the two towns. There are still many questions about regionalization. Current presentation slides are in the packet. Dennis asked based on the current plan, what is the net change in FTEs that the new region would have. Xuan said it was 3.8 FTE mostly from Central Office. Dennis felt this was an important answer. A revised memo from the Dr. Mills and Dr. Bates regarding more specific educational benefits was distributed. Kim reviewed the draft response to the FinCom letter. Mike feels the FinCom may be looking for something more tangible and clear regarding how the quality of educational service will be improved.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Marie Altieri reported that the 2013-2014 Kindergarten Registration Night was very successful. The flyer is posted on the website. It is expected that Gates will continue with 2 kindergarten sections next year.

The Committee adjourned at 8:48 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents used: see agenda