

**ACTON PUBLIC AND ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES (approved 8/22/13)**

**Library**

**R.J. Grey Junior High School**

**April 10, 2013**

**7:00 p.m. Joint School Committee Executive Session**

**7:30 p.m. Acton Public SC Meeting**

**7:40 Joint APS/AB SC Meeting**

*Members Present:* Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino (7:05), Paul Murphy, Kim McOsker, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’ Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik  
*Members Absent:* none  
*Others:* Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr,

The Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committees were called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Kim McOsker and Maria Neyland, respective Chair and Vice-Chair.

**JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 7:04 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, Brolin, Bruce, McOsker, Murphy, Neyland, O’ Sullivan, Rychlik)

Maria Neyland declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session at approximately 7:30 p.m.

At 7:04 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 - Bruce, McOsker, Murphy, O’ Sullivan, Rychlik)

Kim McOsker declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session at approximately 7:30 p.m.

The Committees polled to go out of Executive Session at 7:45 p.m.

*The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee was suspended. The Acton Public School Committee meeting continued.*

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

3.1 The Superintendent and School Committee welcomed Kristina Rychlik as the new Acton member.

**3.2 Election of APS SC Officers for 2013-2014**

Dr. Mills ran the annual election of School Committee officers.

**3.2.1 Chairperson**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve Dennis Bruce as APSC Chairperson for FY14.

**3.2.2 Vice Chairperson**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve Kristina Rychlik as APSC Vice Chairperson for FY14.

**3.2.3 Secretary**

It was moved, seconded and unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve Beth Petr as APSC Secretary for FY14.

3.3 Kim McOsker was thanked for serving as FY13 APSC Chairperson.

#### **3.4 Merriam Principal Search Update**

Dr. Mills reported that Ed Kaufman had decided not to accept an offer from another school district and will stay as Principal of the Merriam School for next year. The Merriam community is very happy about this.

*The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee reconvened. The Joint School Committee meeting continued.*

### **CHAIRMEN'S INTRODUCTION**

#### **4.1 Acton Town Meeting results**

Dennis Bruce reported that the budgets passed easily at Acton Town Meeting.

#### **4.2 Thank you to Xuan Kong FY13 ABRSC Chairperson**

Dr. Mills, Maria Neyland and Mike Coppolino thanked Xuan Kong for serving as FY13 ABRSC Chair and for his years of service on the Committee with a valuable emphasis on financial analysis and reporting. Xuan did not run for re-election.

#### **4.3 Appointment of Interim Principal at ABRHS**

Dr. Mills announced that Dr. JoAnn Campbell will be the Interim Principal of the High School for next year. Dr. Campbell currently serves as Assistant Principal.

### **5.0 APPROVAL of MINUTES and STATEMENT of WARRANT**

The minutes of 3/7/13 will be voted at the next meeting.

AB warrant #13-020 dated March 21, 2013 in the amount of \$1,785,510.00 and #13-021 dated April 4, 2013 in the amount of \$1,959,941.70 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures. APS warrant #201320 dated April 2, 2013 in the amount of \$175,463.84 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** - none

:

### **JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

#### **7.1 Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC) Report**

7.1.1 Presentation slides

7.1.2 Latest revised Draft Regional Agreement, marked changes/clean copy, revised 4/8

7.1.3 Latest revised financial model, revised 4/8

7.1.4 Acton Town Meeting slides and handout, 4/1/13

7.1.2 **VOTE** on Proposed PreK-12 Regional Agreement

RSDSC Co-Chairs Peter Ashton and Mac Reid presented the latest Draft Regional Agreement and revised financial model, based on community and Regional School Committee feedback. Changes included: hometown guarantee, 5% discount/premium at existing Region, composition of the Regional School Committee, and sharing of benefits. Estimated annual benefits appear to be approximately \$950,000 - \$1.9 million. They asked that the School Committee vote their position so the documents could be shared with the Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees in both towns, as well as members of the communities. Attorney Edward Lennox from Murphy, Hesse, Toomey & Lehane, LLP was in the audience at the request of the Regional School District Study Committee. Several Boxborough School Committee members were in the audience.

Regarding the assessment formula, each year a budget assessment will be calculated based on what the enrollment is. This is difficult because it is trying to predict two unknowns – the real budget and enrollment making it very complicated to know what the split is.

The School Committee thanked the RSDSC members enthusiastically for their hard work.

The Committee asked many questions of Mac, Peter, and Ed Lennox. All agreed that these matters are complicated and many of the numbers are projections based on assumptions. When asked about the “elephant in the room”, the statutory vs. enrollment assessment methods and whether the DESE might approve a blended formula, Ed Lennox said that the terminology being used is a result of regulatory changes made in 2008, although regional districts have been around a long time. In the past, participating towns could state in their agreement how assessments would be calculated. As a result of Education Reform, the fact that property taxes have not resulted in equitable education funding statewide has been highlighted. This has resulted from many changes in state aid formulas in the Commonwealth. For 58 years, Acton and Boxborough have used an enrollment based assessment method. A hybrid approach for certain levels would be something new, and perhaps the DESE would approve it as an alternative assessment method, but he does not know.

Mike Coppolino read a statement saying that he has been a firm supporter from the beginning and feels the Committee should move forward with June Town Meetings, but emphasized the Committee’s requirement to act with fiduciary responsibility. He wants to give the RSDSC time to assess Xuan Kong’s blended assessment formula proposal because it is so important that these complicated matters be fully understand.

**Michael Coppolino moved to defer voting on approving the proposed Regional Agreement until after the Regional Study Committee has fully considered and provided an opinion on Dr. Kong’s blended assessment model, and that the ABRSC conduct the vote at the next scheduled meeting on May 2, or sooner, if feasible.**

There was no second to the motion.

Dennis Bruce focused on the 80-20 without the efficiencies, but noted that after 5 years, it takes a negative turn for Acton. He asked for clarification of the Boxborough efficiencies that make the numbers look totally different. Peter replied that this issue has been discussed extensively. Jim Hamm presented on it last summer including the effect of teacher retirements and other factors. This is explained under the Boxborough tab of the spreadsheet. Peter said that Section 1G of the Agreement addresses Voting Power and ultimately means that Acton has the votes to determine outcomes if it comes to that.

Section 4E of the Appendix requires annual financial reporting of per pupil costs from the elementary schools to the School Committee, as well as both towns’ Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees. The purpose is to incentivize the convergence of these costs at the schools.

Dennis cautioned that at year 5, Acton gets a big hit and Acton School Committee members need to watch that. While he feels most people are supportive of regionalization he emphasized that the two towns “are about to jump into a long term marriage that has long term implications for the people we represent”. Assumptions on costs at year 5 will have to be made and they will add up for Acton. He expressed concern about which view is best. Peter Ashton replied that Acton’s costs are still lower.

The Committee asked that a Financial Oversight Subcommittee be set up. While Section 11 of the Agreement calls for annual reporting, it was the sense of the Committee that a standing subcommittee should be established to keep the public fully informed. Ed Lennox agreed.

Maria asked if the Committee was ready to vote to accept the proposed agreement, or if they wanted to take it to the public for more comment and then vote at the May 2 School Committee meeting. There was some concern about timing and being able to have the Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees vote on approval of the Agreement in time for warrant printing.

Deanne O’Sullivan asked about the ability to change home town choice after 5 years if enrollment should change drastically. Section 3D under “School Attendance” states that if the Superintendent finds it compelling such an issue could be addressed.

John Petersen requested that School Committee bring information to the public that is understandable to everyone. He considers Appendix A not understandable for the public. Alex Horowitz said the formulas give a false sense of security with the technology. If regionalizing is the right thing to do, he advocated for just doing it. Bill Guthlein was in support from the start but now sees how complex full regionalization is.

Heather Harer expressed concern about the home school guarantee. She asked if Boxborough enrollment decreases drastically, could it lead to closing an Acton school. Peter replied that this was investigated. This would be a function of enrollment and Boxborough's enrollment projections go up. It might be that a school could be closed for 2 years based on enrollment, but most people would not do this for 2 years knowing they would have to reopen it the third year when enrollment increases again. Marie Altieri stated that many different scenarios were examined and none would lead to closing a school in the Administration's opinion. Acton is desperate for space right now. They did look at possibly closing the Administration Building, but not even that made sense.

Brigid asked for clarification of Section 6A. While this is not a change from the existing Agreement, she asked in the last sentence, if "a majority of the members" means "a majority of votes".

Maria asked if the Committee was ready to vote on how to move forward.

Mike Coppolino advocated for asking the public for input and changes now that the RSDSC has a proposed Agreement. He suggested that a School Committee meeting be scheduled prior to the May 2 meeting to consider input on the proposed Agreement. Maria said that small changes perhaps could be made, but larger ones would mean renegotiating by the RSDSC and legal review and this could mean missing the June 3 Town Meeting date.

Kristina Rychlik pointed out that the first forum on Regionalization was at Merriam 16 months ago. A huge amount of outreach has been done. She feels the Committee's job now is to take the proposed Agreement and educate the public about it. Brigid Bieber agrees with Kristina and hears Mike as well. With only about 2 ½ weeks to get the task done, she stressed that all committee members need to be part of the outreach. Paul Murphy has some concerns but is willing to move forward because regionalization is the right thing to do. Kim McOsker agreed with Brigid stating that enough people have been involved and given thoughtful consideration during the process. She believes details can be worked out and has faith in those at the table and in both communities.

**Kim McOsker moved that the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee move forward with the public forums presenting the proposed Regional Agreement as presented by Peter Ashton and Mac Reid.**

**Mary Brolin seconded the motion.**

Dennis Bruce's hesitation is around how to explain the projections and assumptions and how they relate to costs. He agrees that Appendix A is hard to understand but that is the nature of contracts. Paul reminded the Committee that that is why it makes sense to have a standing committee to bird dog the financials. Kim acknowledged the concern and disagreement among committee members, but stressed that doing the public forums could serve both purposes – of telling the public that this is the proposed Agreement to consider, and to ask for their comment. Mike asked for assurance that if great ideas come out at the forums that a Committee meeting could be added to consider them.

**ABRSC VOTE:**

**The ABRSC VOTED unanimously in favor of the motion.**

**7.2 Safety and Security Within the Acton and Acton-Boxborough Schools**

7.2.1 Superintendent's Safety Task Force Report

7.2.2 Parent and Staff Survey Results

Dr. Mills thanked the 14 members of the Safety Task Force who unanimously support the recommendations outlined in the memo. He noted that #9 of the memo should say, “All external doors (K-8) will remain locked, except the front doors. All internal doors K-12 will have the capability to lock instantly.”

Christine Philips spoke as a parent and Task Force member. She said it was very reassuring and gratifying to learn about all that has been in place for years regarding school safety. She appreciated that there are many complex components of this issue and feels that school officials have been effectively dealing with it over the years. Specifically as a parent, she wanted to address the Visitor Management Systems. Although the impetus for this Task Force came from the horrible tragedy in CT, she felt many parents are less concerned about such a horrific event and more concerned about day to day operations regarding student and staff safety. She was particularly interested in making sure that external doors to our schools, other than the front doors, remain locked at all times. She has particular concerns at the beginning of the school day and dismissal time. As a result of the Task Force, when school opens in September, all faculty and staff employees will wear lanyards with ID swipe cards. All visitors, including parents, will sign in and wear a lanyard with a visitor card. Anyone in the school without a lanyard will be reported to the principal. She feels confident that school staff have already redoubled their efforts around this issue but she stressed the need that every visitor have a positive reason every time they are in a school.

JD Head spoke about the network based security system being considered and its many flexible options. He thanked Brendan Hearn for his valuable assistance. Ongoing costs would be for maintenance of the equipment, such as if a camera breaks as well as licensing and tech support for the software. The work will be put out to bid, hopefully installed in July and ready when school starts.

The group discussed at length whether or not to lock the front doors of the elementary buildings. After reviewing the many options and JD’s proposed system, they agreed not to lock the front doors. There was a concern about not wanting to change the welcoming nature of the schools.

Jeff Poulton, a parent member of the Task Force, missed a meeting so his final opinion was not included. He still believes that the front doors should be locked and asked that this be noted. Several parents in the audience agreed, several felt the proposed system would be adequate. Someone stated that a locked door could give a false sense of security. JD was asked who and how would the system be monitored. Although details are still being worked out, the front offices are the front line and will need to learn how to use the system. The second line will be someone in Central Office or a remote location, watching at all times during the school day like a dispatcher.

Dennis Bruce asked who would make the decision to lock a door. Dr. Mills said this will be discussed, but this system would definitely add a layer of additional safety to our schools. The Principals agreed that they will all do the same thing if it is permanent. Dr. Mills plans to reconvene the Task Force annually as the schools review their procedures.

### **7.3 School Committee Member Reports**

- 7.3.1 Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Report –*Kim McOsker*
  - 7.3.2 Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) Report – *Maria Neyland*
  - 7.3.3 Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Report – *Kim McOsker*
  - 7.3.4 OPEB Task Force Update – *Dennis Bruce*
  - 7.3.5 Acton FinCom Report - *Dennis Bruce*
  - 7.3.6 Acton BOS Report - *Paul Murphy*
- Members updated the Committee.

### **7.4 Policy Subcommittee Update**

- 7.4.1 **Technology Policy Revision, File: GBEE – FIRST READING**

Brigid Bieber stated that many hours were spent on this draft with lots of input from various sources. Because technology moves very quickly, the policy is focused on standards of behavior to try to make it a “living document”. Comments should be sent to Brigid or Beth.

## **7.5 FY13 Superintendent’s Evaluation Process**

7.5.1 Process and Timetable for 2013

7.5.2 Summative Evaluation Report Form and Rubric

7.5.3 Staff Survey Results, February 2013

7.5.4 Job Description

7.5.5 Annual Consolidated Evaluation, June 2012 (Last Year)

Marie Altieri outlined the Annual Superintendent’s Evaluation process. The public is welcome to send input by May 10. School Committee members should also send their evaluations to Kim, Maria and Beth by May 10. The May 2<sup>nd</sup> School Committee packet will include the final SMART goals update.

## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

Dr. Mills highlighted the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2012 Results & presentation on 5/22/13.

## **NEXT MEETINGS**

- May 2, 7:30 pm, ABRSC Meeting at RJGJHS Library
- May 16, 7:00 pm, APSC Meeting at RJGJHS Library (Education Report – D. Sugrue)
- May 22, 7:00 pm, Youth Risk Behavior Study Presentation
- June 3, 7:00 pm, Acton and Boxborough Special Town Meetings on Regionalization

The School Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda