

ACTON PUBLIC and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING WORKSHOP
Minutes (approved 8/1/12)

Blanchard School room 214
Boxborough

June 28, 2012
6:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m. Joint APS/AB SC Workshop Meeting
7:10 p.m. Joint SC Exec Session
Followed by return to Open Joint SC Workshop

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, Maria Neyland,
Members Absent: Deanne O'Sullivan, Bruce Sabot
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Steve Mills, Beth Petr, members of the public

The Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committees were called to order by Kim McOsker and Xuan Kong, respective Chairs, at 6:30 p.m.

1. Statement of Warrant

AB warrant #12-026 dated 6/14/12 in the amount of \$3,653,030.65 and warrant #12-027 dated 6/28/12 in the amount of \$1,383,908.00 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

APS warrant #201226 dated 6/26/12 in the amount of \$162,838.74 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

2. School Committee Business

2.1.1. AB/APS: Recommendation to Approve Minutes of SC Workshop on 7/26/11

ABRSC VOTE:

Maria Neyland moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the 7/26/11 Joint School Committee Workshop as written. Paul Murphy abstained because he was not there.

APSC VOTE:

Mike Coppolino moved, Xuan Kong seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the 7/26/11 Joint School Committee Workshop as written. Paul Murphy abstained because he was not there.

2.1.2. Recommendation to appoint new Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC) members

ABRSC VOTE:

Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to appoint the FY13 members of the RSDSC as proposed

2.1.3. Recommendation to Accept Proceeds of Loan from Acton-Boxborough Youth Soccer (ABYS) for Construction of Lower Fields Project

ABRSC VOTE:

Kim McOsker moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously:

VOTED: to accept the gift of loan proceeds in the amount of \$1,119,500 from Acton-Boxborough Youth Soccer to be used towards construction of the Lower Fields project.

Don Aicardi stated that this funding must be voted as a gift to be accepted into the gift account. The loan will be repaid through user fees and field rentals.

3. School Committee Policy, Operations, and Organizations

3.1. Policies

3.1.1. Review of SC Member Ethics policy, File: BCA (BP) reminder only

3.1.2. Policy Subcommittee Updates (BB)

The Committee agreed with the prioritized list of policies to be considered and thanked the Subcommittee for their efforts over the past year. The subcommittee has met almost weekly for most of the year.

(Don Aicardi left at 6:40 p.m.)

3.2. Operations

3.2.1. Roles/Responsibilities/Relationships (SM)

Steve Mills reviewed how the Committee and his team work as a group. Steve said that many superintendents have a lot of stress from demanding School Committee members who try to do more than they should. He expects everyone to continue to model good teamwork and leadership. This includes the ability to agree to disagree without being disagreeable, no fingerpointing, and no surprises at meetings. He encouraged people to ask questions ahead of time, giving the administration time for a thoughtful response. If a committee member needs something, they should go to Steve first. If it is a document that is already prepared, Beth or the owner of the document could be asked directly. If new material is requested, the whole Committee should decide if it should be created.

Mike Copolino stated that if an individual request is made, it should require two or more members' agreement to warrant the effort. The staff must feel comfortable telling Committee members if a request is too complicated or time consuming, or needs to be checked into before committing to doing the work. The Committee recognizes the time and resource constraints of the Administration.

Xuan Kong emphasized that the School Committee is a conduit between the School Administration and the families and community in general. The Parent Communication Map, found under Popular Pages at <http://ab.mec.edu> is an excellent resource. School Committee members should send questions to the Chairs and Steve Mills with a cc to Beth. Ideally, questions about a Thursday night meeting should be submitted by Tuesday.

3.2.2. Communications with PTSO (DO)

School Committee packets are posted online the Friday night before each meeting. It was suggested that Deanne O'Sullivan could identify issues of interest to families that could be sent in a news flash to PTOs. When a meeting is over, someone could send a quick summary of votes to the PTOs. Messages could be coordinated with the PTO newsletters. Beth sends the agenda to all PTO co-chairs prior to each meeting. She will include them in the email note when the packet is posted. Principals should be kept in the loop for all communications with the PTOs.

3.2.3. Mentors for new SC members (XK)

It is the collective responsibility of the School Committee to be sure that new members understand protocol, etc. While it is reasonable to assume the chair would take on this responsibility, senior members' help is also valuable, particularly during budget season, negotiations, and executive sessions.

3.2.4. APS SC Meeting Locations (KM)

After input from the principals, PTO co-chairs, and the public, given the technical challenges for the audiovisual at the meetings held at the individual schools, it was decided to have all meetings in the Junior High Library. The Committee would still like to have each principal do an Education Report presentation during the year. Maria Neyland advocated for not doing the workshop in Boxborough due to the complications involved in setting up. This will be considered next year.

3.2.5.FY13 APS/AB SC Meeting Schedules (XK)

The Committee agreed with the FY13 calendar as presented, including Budget Saturday on 1/26/13. Start times will continue to be 7:00 p.m. for APSC and 7:30 p.m. for ABRSC.

3.3. Organizations

3.3.1.Subcommittee Assignments (XK)

Results of a survey given to Committee members asking their preference for subcommittee assignments were reviewed. A detailed memo from the Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC) proposing their composition and 3 subgroups for FY13 is in the packet. Steve Mills will ask Theresa Watts if CASE permits a School Committee member to be a board member. Beth Petr will confirm if the policy subcommittee can establish their quorum at 2 of the 4 members, instead of the current 3 of the 4 members. The Committee voted on the assignments at the end of the meeting.

JT EXECUTIVE SESSION – to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining

At 7:18 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, Bruce, Coppolino, Kong, McOsker, Murphy, Neyland)

Xuan Kong 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 after the executive session.

At 7:19 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, Coppolino, Kong, McOsker, Murphy)

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 after the executive session.

At 8:15 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Joint Executive Session.

Joint School Committee Open Meeting resumes.

4. **Budget/Finances**

4.1. School Districts Financial Projections using Acton Finance Committee Long-Range Planning Framework (XK)

Xuan discussed this with Don Aicardi and Steve Mills and they feel this is worthwhile doing this summer. Steve Mills stated that the Acton Finance Committee is trying to be proactive about future budgets, particularly regarding sustainability.

4.2. OPEB (DB)

Dennis Bruce is following the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) issue very closely and urged the Committee to take a leadership position in developing the ultimate strategy in our Acton and Boxborough communities. He volunteered to be the SC representative at the ALG (Acton Leadership Group) OPEB summer task force. The purpose of this task force is to provide recommendations on a long-term strategy of funding OPEB liability prior to the annual budget process. Dennis attended the Town of Acton OPEB meeting on 6/27/12.

4.3. FY2014 Budget Process and Budget Priorities (XK, KM)

The Committee discussed the impact and effectiveness of budgetary decisions and how they affect and/or fulfill the Long Range Strategic Plan. Regarding the Finance Committee's model and how the Committee will respond to it, Xuan said numbers will be run and the School Committee will discuss and evaluate them to prepare for a response. Good questions were asked about what regionalization would do to the ALG model, and about 5 year projected expenditures.

Getting these answers will require significant staff time. It is also the School Committee's responsibility to understand the issues. The Finance Committee model will be a consistent planning tool to see how changes affect the budget for the next 5 years. This will help with deciding how to fund OPEB if the plan for the future is clear. It will also help the Committee decide what their priorities will be in a time appropriate manner, and be a valuable part of the Town Meeting presentations.

The Committee agreed that a plan for OPEB in particular, is needed and will be discussed further. Brigid nominated Dennis to be the SC rep on this subcommittee and Maria seconded. All agreed. It was stated that OPEB is an important long term liability, but it cannot sacrifice the education of the children.

The School Committee agreed that they should provide guidance and control the conversation about the next year's fiscal frameworks now that the Long Range Strategic Plan is in place. Having these discussions early in the year is better. Steve said that November is when budgets talks start. Xuan thinks that September or October or even now is the time for the Committee to start considering the issue. The Committee must have a clear understanding of fee structures and revolving account fund balances.

Mike Coppolino stated that this appears to no longer be a bottom up approach, but more top down with things having already been decided. He urged that requests be fed into this plan so there can be some movement. He agreed that it gives the Committee a great roadmap/continuum now. The Committee agreed to try this budget approach based on the Long Range Strategic Plan.

5. **Regionalization**

5.1. What other leadership role(s) should ABRSC as a whole take (MN, XK)?

Maria Neyland expressed concern about the amount of factual information that needs to be communicated to the public to help address the many emotional questions people have about possible full regionalization. Many of these questions are not RSDSC issues, but School Committee questions. Examples include: What time would school start? What happens with the half days? What happens with contracts like those for transportation? Steve Mills and Curt Bates were asked to bring this issue to the RSDSC. A key question is, "What will the educational benefit be for each of the concerns as they are answered?" It was noted that the RSDSC handout in the packet begins to address this issue. It was suggested that a list of questions and answers be generated, and added to over time. This could be posted on the

6. School Operations

6.1. FY14 School Calendar Revisited (MC)

Mike Coppolino wanted to know why the decision was made to have school on Good Friday and the Jewish Holidays in FY14. Steve Mills said that he felt that he had misread the vote last year about adopting the calendar. As a result, he asked for School Committee guidance about the religious holidays. He stated, "As a public school we should not be making decisions about people's religious holidays, it should be based on whether the school can be run or not." The Chairs' memo found in the 6/7/12 packet summarized the issue as an operational matter, not a religious matter. The issue was initially presented at the 5/5/12 Joint School Committee meeting with the announcement that a decision would be made at the 6/7/12 meeting.

6.2. Return to Review of Demographic Survey Results (MC)

Mike Coppolino felt that the information from this extensive survey was not fully mined as promised to the public and to the School Committee several years ago. He did not advocate for spending a lot of money on this, but asked if perhaps another group could analyze it. The data can be found at:

Executive Summary (of selected results presented to SC on Jan 28th, 2010)

<http://www.ab.mec.edu/pdf/files/values-interest/Educational%20Values%20Exec%20Summary.pdf>

Presentation by Staff

<http://www.ab.mec.edu/pdf/files/values-interest/Educational%20Values%20and%20Interest%20Presentation.pdf>

It was decided to reach out to local colleges/universities to see if anyone is interested in examining this rich dataset to inform the Committee and the District about our evolving community and student demographics and education values. It was agreed that an unknown person/group could be better than a local volunteer due to possible bias. Andrew Shen is interested in this topic, but may be very busy next year as our new RJGJHS Principal. Mike will draft a letter for Xuan and Kim to sign and send to local business schools.

On a related note, Xuan is in contact with Dr. Yong Zhao about a possible visit to our community in the Fall. His research may be found at <http://zhaolearning.com>

6.3. Ensure that all staff has some special needs training (PM)

Paul Murphy asked if there is training in the professional development budget that gives staff sensitivity to special education students. Liza Huber will prepare a memo about this training. Nancy Sherburn spoke from the audience saying that the SpedPAC has been interested in this for a long time. Teachers who have graduated recently usually have special education training but those who graduated longer ago may not have. This is of particular concern now that teachers have so many students in their classes with so many issues and learning styles.

6.4. Even focus on cost reduction for all goals (PM)

Xuan stated that the Committee discusses and accepts the districtwide goals. If the Superintendent feels some areas need more work than others regarding financial control, that is his responsibility to decide. Xuan said that if this decision affects performance, than in his mind it becomes a School Committee issue. Paul Murphy suggested that Goal 2: *Pupil*

Services - Program Development and Fiscal Accountability should be written differently. Nancy Sherburne spoke from the audience saying that the Sped PAC received a lot of input and anger about the wording of this SMART goal. The other goals were about improving, but this goal was about cutting. She suggested that wording like “find the right number of students” be used instead of “reduce the number of students” with an emphasis on improvement.

6.5. Use of technologies in classrooms and for school-parent communications (DO)
It was suggested that this topic be considered for a future school committee meeting, or mentioned in the Principals’ Education Reports next year.

7. Recommendation to Approve 2012-2013 Subcommittee Members

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee and Acton Public School Committee approved the FY13 Committee Assignments as shown in Exhibit A attached.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee and Acton Public School Committee adjourned at 10:33 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:

JT School Committee on WEDNESDAY, August 1st at 7:30 or 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used:

Agenda

Exhibit A: Acton/Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committees 2012-2013 Committee Assignments

ACTON PUBLIC and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING WORKSHOP

Blanchard School Library
Boxborough

June 28, 2012
6:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m. Joint APS/AB SC Workshop Meeting

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Chairmen's Introduction**
3. **Statement of Warrant**
4. **School Committee Business**
 - 4.1. Consent Agenda
 - 4.1.1. AB/APS: Recommendation to Approve Minutes of SC Workshop on 7/26/11 – **VOTE** – *Xuan Kong*
 - 4.1.2. AB: Recommendation to appoint new Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC) members – **VOTE** – *Xuan Kong*
 - 4.1.3. AB: Recommendation to Accept Proceeds of Loan from Acton-Boxborough Youth Soccer (ABYS) for Construction of Lower Fields Project – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills*

School Committee Annual Workshop

5. **School Committee Policy, Operations, and Organizations**
 - 5.1. Policies
 - 5.1.1. Review of SC Member Ethics policy, File: BCA (BP)
 - 5.1.2. Policy Subcommittee Updates (BB)
 - 5.2. Operations
 - 5.2.1. Roles/Responsibilities/Relationships (SM)
 - 5.2.2. Communications with PTSO (DO)
 - 5.2.3. Mentors for new SC members (XK)
 - 5.2.4. APS SC Meeting Locations (KM)
 - 5.2.5. FY13 APS/AB SC Meeting Schedules (XK)
 - 5.3. Organizations
 - 5.3.1. Subcommittee Assignments (XK)
6. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: "Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining"** (BB/XK)
7. **Budget/Finances**
 - 7.1. School Districts Financial Projections using Acton Finance Committee Long-Range Planning Framework (XK)
 - 7.2. OPEB (DB)
 - 7.3. FY2014 Budget Process and Budget Priorities (XK, KM)

8. **Regionalization**

8.1. What other leadership role(s) should ABRSC as a whole take (MN, XK)?

9. **School Operations**

9.1. FY14 School Calendar Revisited (MC)

9.2. Return to Review of Demographic Survey Results (MC)

9.3. Ensure that all staff has some special needs training (PM)

9.4. Even focus on cost reduction for all goals (PM)

9.5. Use of technologies in classrooms and for school-parent communications (DO)

10. **Other Issues**

11. **Recommendation to Approve 2012-2013 Subcommittee Members – VOTE – *Xuan Kong***

Adjourn

Acton Public/Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committees
2012-2013 Committee Assignments
(voted 6/28/12)

CASE Board Members	Brigid Bieber (AB), Steve Mills (APS)
EDCO Public Policy Liaison	
EDCO School Committee Leadership Liaison	Brigid Bieber (AB)
EDCO Board Member	Brigid Bieber (AB), Steve Mills (APS)
Legislative Issues/Ballot Initiative Liaison (for Representative Benson's District)	Maria Neyland (AB)
Legislative Issues/Ballot Initiative Liaison (for Representative Atkins' District)	
Health Insurance Trust Representative	Kim McOsker
Health SAC (Superintendent Advisory Council) Liaison	Mike Coppolino
PTSO Liaison	Deanne O'Sullivan
SpedPAC Liaison	Paul Murphy
AB Warrant Signature Subcommittee	Brigid, Mike, Kim
Lower Fields/Corporate Sponsorship	Brigid Bieber, Dennis Bruce
Policy Subcommittee	Brigid, Maria, Paul, Deanne
AB/APS Negotiations Subcommittee	Maria, Dennis, Kim
Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Representatives	Kim McOsker, Xuan Kong
Acton Board of Selectmen Liaison	Paul Murphy
Acton Finance Committee Liaison	Dennis Bruce
OPEB Task Force	Dennis Bruce
Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) Representatives	Brigid Bieber, Maria Neyland
Regionalization School District Study Committee (RSDSC)	Xuan Kong

8/31/12