

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES (approved 12/20/12)**

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

**November 15, 2012
7:00 p.m. APS SC Meeting**

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 7:01 p.m.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

APS warrant #201310 dated 11/13/12 in the amount of \$163,257.79 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 10/18/12 APS Meeting were approved as amended.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

EDUCATION REPORT

Lynne Newman, Principal of the Paul P. Gates School presented on “Measuring and Examining Student Growth”. Referring to the District Strategic Goal #2 – Advancing Standards-based Learning, Mrs. Newman discussed:

- Objective #1: Essential content and learning expectations that are aligned to State Mathematics Standards will be clearly identified in each grade level, and will be clearly communicated to teachers, students, and parents.
- Objective #2: Common assessments, collaborative data analysis and specific student feedback will become a part of the instructional practice of all teachers.

She gave examples of formative and summative assessments as well as the many professional learning opportunities available this year. Slide 16 illustrated the significant growth results for current 6th graders on MCAS math. Dr. Mills noted a very valuable bar graph showing students measuring their own progress, similar to David Krane’s presentation. Mrs. Newman commented that, “Kids take responsibility for their learning.” When asked if progress was being made regarding student data being captured electronically, Mrs. Newman said that much more is being handled that way but it is still evolving. Director of Educational Technology, Amy Bisiewicz has been very helpful with this.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 ALG Update

Kim McOsker reported that at the 11/8/12 meeting, she gave an update on the public outreach started by the Regionalization Subcommittee. (Xuan was traveling and Dr. Mills was at a conference.) There was some discussion about whether the projection for the Chapter 70 number was too high. Kim reported that Don has since received new information that is more in line with the Town’s assessment. The key issues at ALG continued to be: use of reserves, OPEB and the split. Some firm decisions are expected to be made at the next ALG on 11/29/12. Kim told the School Committee that she and Xuan need to know members’ opinion on the use of reserves. The current ALG model uses \$2 million of reserves and still leaves a deficit of over \$900,000.

6.2 Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Update

Kim reported that the audit for FY12 shows a reduction of \$500,000 to the balance of the trust which was purposeful. The balance is now at \$3 million with approximately \$15 million of expenses each year. It is still too early to see any consistent trends regarding the design changes and reports are only available up to September but it is expected to have through November at the 12/20/12 meeting. An increase is expected from the carriers which must be incorporated into the new rates. Rates will be determined in February but currently the Trust recommends for budgeting purposes increases of between 8 – 10%.

6.3 FY13 Status Report, 1st Quarter

Don Aicardi reported that the Acton Public School District ended the first quarter of FY13 with a \$127,583 projected year end fund balance. Future reports will be done in February and May. Of note is that \$125,000 in “anticipated vacancy factor” savings was applied to the Salaries/Teaching account before the school year began. As non-certified staff leaves, the District is trying to hire people at a maximum of 19 hours so health insurance costs are not incurred. When asked if this has any detrimental educational results, Dr. Mills said that his colleague from Lexington, Paul Ash, has used this strategy very effectively. If there is a compelling reason to hire a full time person, then that is considered. Don said that financially everything appears to be moving forward as expected. He and his financial analyst have built some tracking documents that will bear fruit after the second quarter.

6.4 APS Long Range Financial Model FY14 to FY18

Don Aicardi began his presentation by saying that this financial model, an “educated guess” on what may happen, is based on a historical review of spending going back to FY07. Using FY07 as the base, appropriated budgets have increased on average from FY08 to FY13 by 3.2% and Using FY10 as the base, appropriated budgets have increased on average from FY10 to FY13 by 1.0%. Every \$265,000 is about a 1% increase for APS. Don reviewed the 8 major assumptions and concluded that budgetary increases for level service alone will likely be well over 3% next year. The small increases of the last few years are no longer possible due to a combination of Chapter 70 revenue affected by declining enrollment, the non-availability of federal revenue, and already authorized spending commitments. There will be a double digit increase in the Health Insurance number due to it being artificially decreased last year. The next 3 or 4 years will prove to be very challenging financially. Don stressed the need to balance priorities according to the Long Range Strategic Plan. Don’s remarks assume no change in regionalization.

6.5 Regionalization Update

The Committee discussed the School Committee Chairs’ draft memo, also referred to as a position statement. This draft was approved by the Boxborough Public School Committee last week.

Of concern to some members is that the memo does not guarantee answers to many questions that people have about the proposed regionalization. Xuan Kong explained that many of these issues can only be answered by the future School Committee. The public was urged to carefully consider who the future School Committee members will be. Deanne O’Sullivan distributed a proposed change to item #1 of the memo regarding PTO funding for classroom assistants. She feels the wording of this item could decide some people’s vote on regionalization, if PTO funding is not permitted for assistants. Several members liked Deanne’s suggestion because it “preserves something that Acton schools have worked hard to allow”. Other members were comfortable with the Chairs’ language because they felt it “does not lock the issue in stone”.

Xuan appreciated the anxiety of the parent community but stated that PTO funding really has nothing to do with regionalization. Boxborough also raises PTSO funds and has put more money into technology for example. They choose to allocate their funding to a different line item than Acton schools.

Mike Coppolino asked about the level of assistants at Blanchard and if that would be worth looking at. Secondly, he reminded the Committee that over last couple of years, the Committee has been moving toward absorbing the cost of assistants to mitigate the expense to PTOs.

Paul Murphy emphasized that the basic issue is to allow the schools to maintain their unique characteristics, and that is how the assistant funding issue came up a few years ago. He felt that conveying the message that the unique characteristics of all the schools are valued is what is important. Xuan said

that currently the Acton Public Schools are under one policy. For FY12, each school has 4.5 FTE classroom assistants funded through the appropriated budgets. At same time, some schools have an additional 4.5 and up to 10 FTE that are funded through the non appropriated budget. A consistent policy is in place and the future School Committee will still ultimately control that policy by their votes. He noted that the Blanchard School funds 6 FTE classroom assistants through their budget.

Deanne reiterated that she wants to get the focus on Regionalization and off of PTO funding. Parents need to be relieved of their concerns that the intent of the memo is to decide about funding.

Xuan Kong moved, Dennis Bruce seconded and it was

VOTED: to approve the draft Chairs' memo regarding Regionalization, as proposed.

(YES: Bruce, Coppolino, Kong, McOsker, Murphy NO: O'Sullivan)

Xuan talked about the upcoming forums and the emphasis on public outreach. Town Meetings in Acton and Boxborough are now set for April 29, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

7.1 Pupil Services

Dr. Mills thanked Liza Huber for the new Preschool Enrollment Report, including background information on the Acton Integrated Preschool. It does not look like the Administration will have to ask School Committee for any additional programming. Trends are such that the current level of programming and staff should be appropriate through the end of the school year. When asked what would happen if additional students arrive unexpectedly again, Liza stated that it is not likely but the staff would realign resources as necessary. She stated that last year staff had a sense that a problem was coming, in the form of a large group of new students, but not this year.

Xuan stressed the importance of this visibility and thanked Liza and her staff for the report. Dennis Bruce is concerned about having a back up "Plan B" if large numbers of students arrive unexpectedly needing preschool services. Liza described her weekly staff meetings where every aspect of services are covered. She said that "Plan B is always in process." Dr. Mills agreed that a back up plan would be in place if needed.

NEXT MEETINGS: December 6, 7:30 p.m. in the RJGJHS Library, ABRSC Meeting
December 20, 7:00 p.m. in the RJGJHS Library, APSC Meeting
April 29, 7:00 p.m. Special Town Meetings in Acton and Boxborough regarding preK-12 Regionalization

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, proposed revision to School Committee Chair's memo from Deanne O'Sullivan dated 11/15/12