

**JOINT ACTON PUBLIC (APSC) and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL (ABRSC)  
and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH TRANSITIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABTSC)  
MEETINGS Minutes (approved 5/1/14)**

Library

March 6, 2014

R.J. Grey Junior High School

7:15 p.m. Joint ABRSC/ABTSC/APSC Executive Session

7:30 p.m. Joint ABTSC/ABRSC/APSC meeting

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*Members Present:* Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Kim McOsker, Maria Neyland, Paul Murphy, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik

*Members Absent:* Dennis Bruce

*Others:* Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr, many members of the AEA and staff were in the audience

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The Acton-Boxborough Regional and Transitional School Committees were called to order at 7:16 p.m. by Chairperson Maria Neyland. The Acton Public School Committee was called to order at 7:16 p.m. by Vice Chairperson Kristina Rychlik.

**1. JOINT ABRSC/ABTSC/APSC EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 7:17 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 litigation.

(YES – Bieber, Brolin, Coppolino, McOsker, Murphy, Neyland, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)

Maria Neyland declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session.

At 7:18 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED** by role call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Transitional School Committee** go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) to discuss strategy with respect to litigation.

(YES – Bieber, Brolin, Coppolino, McOsker, Murphy, Neyland, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)

Maria Neyland declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board and the Committee would return to open 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 litigation.

(YES - Coppolino, McOsker, Murphy, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session.

The School Committees returned to Open Session at 7:34 p.m. Approximately 100 AEA and staff members were in the library waiting for the open meeting to begin.

**2. Chairmen’s Introduction**

1. Danny’s Place Youth Services Update

Maria Neyland and Kristina Rychlik met with the McCarthys to get a better understanding of how the decision was made for Danny’s Place to leave the school campus. Maria read a statement of support for future Danny’s Place plans and apologized for the surprise expressed by Cindy McCarthy at the 1/7/14 meeting. The School Committee will assign a liaison to Danny’s Place Youth Services. The McCarthys were

thanked for their significant efforts over the last 10 years on behalf of our communities' young people.

2. Paul Murphy circulated a draft letter that the School Committees could send to the elected officials regarding FY15 state funding. This was in response to an email from Representative Jennifer Benson. Comments should be sent to Paul.

### **3. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**

1. Meeting Minutes for the following were approved by the three School Committees: 2/12/14 and 1/25/14 (ABTSC), 2/6/14 (APS/ABRSC/ABTSC). Minutes for 2/1/14, 1/15/14 and 1/7/14 will be at the next meeting.
2. APS warrant #201417 dated 2/18/14 in the amount of \$125,507.72 and #201418 dated 3/4/14 in the amount of \$291,283.29 and AB warrant #14-017 dated 2/20/14 in the amount of \$1,753,053.91 and #14-018 dated 3/6/14 in the amount of \$2,244,822.49 were signed by the Chairs and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

### **4. Public Participation**

Marc Lewis, President of the AEA and RJGJHS teacher, read a 955 word statement encouraging the School Committee "to complete our negotiations with a fair and just contract."

Karen Shiebler, a teacher at Merriam, spoke about the importance of collective collaboration and planning time to work with colleagues, particularly on Thursday afternoons, as key to success. Sara Wilcox, a teacher at Conant, spoke about how being a strong teacher means staying up to date with all of the many changes and that takes time outside of the classroom. Samarth Gupta, a senior at ABRHS, stated that the reason our school is so successful is not because of the students, but our very special teachers.

Maria and Dr. Mills thanked the staff for attending the meeting and urged them to stay for the budget discussion.

### **5. Recommendation to Approve Refunding of Junior High and High School Construction Debt**

1. Memo re "AAA" credit rating, bid results and request for approval
2. Memo requesting agenda item on 3/6/14 and process description
3. Standard & Poor's Rating Results, ABRSD, 2/26/14

Don Aicardi and Tess Summers have been working on this refinancing for months. Initially, \$900,000 of savings was projected but then the market turned. In January 2014, the bond market improved and \$700,000 of savings was expected. In reality, \$1,321,225 of savings over the life of the bonds has been generated by this refinancing (from FY15 – FY25). This money will go into an escrow account next week, also all costs incurred will be reimbursed. Kim thanked Tess for her efforts to make this possible. Receiving a AAA bond rating upgrade, the best, was very valuable.

#### **ABRSC VOTE:**

Michael Copplino moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED:** to approve the motion as written in 6.4 of the packet.

#### **ABTSC VOTE:**

Michael Copplino moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED:** to approve the motion as written in 6.4 of the packet.

## **6. Update on Athletic Revolving Accounts**

Dr. Mills reported that there are “no emergencies” regarding these revolving accounts, but there are things to discuss. He complimented Steve Desy on how hard he works to keep the budget in line. Funding for athletics come from a gifts special revenue account, an ABSAF special revenue account, the athletics revolving fund (includes gate receipts and user fees) and the ABRSD appropriated budget (\$536,000 in FY14). Future options include: reduce program spending, increase operating budget support, and increase athletic fees.

A member asked if the family cap should be considered a lifetime family cap instead of annual. Dr. Mills said waivers are given on the honor system now, but perhaps it should be similar to how the free/reduced lunch program operates. The Committee wanted to know how our fees compare to other communities’. It was suggested that a percentage be used, as opposed to an actual amount for comparisons. Maria stated that a few years ago there was a lot of discussion about corporate sponsorship involving banners and publicity. Maria thought this money would go directly to appropriated budget, not the athletic budget. Dr. Mills said that funding is not reflected in the presentation and he’s been somewhat disappointed with how slow this effort has been so far. He said this money is currently in the Community Education account.

Maria wants to talk about this for next year. She thought this funding would directly offset some of the athletic budget, and prefers to see it go there instead of Community Education. Mike confirmed that when the lower fields are on the positive side, in the near future, they will generate profit that will go toward maintenance of the properties. Dr. Mills stated that he convenes a meeting once a year to talk about the revenue generated in the previous year, and that he is recommitting it to capital items. He noted that athletic fees were last raised five years ago.

## **7. FY14 ABRSD 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report**

Don Aicardi reported that he has never seen a budget this tight based on the second quarter report for FY14 that projects a year end fund balance of \$11,466. A shortfall is anticipated for athletics. Everything else is consistent with the first quarter report. Maria noted that year end spending and turning money back to the towns will not be a very long discussion this year.

## **8. FY15 Budget Update**

Maria reviewed the memo from the School Committee chairs to the Acton Finance Committee dated 3/6/14. This was based on School Committee’s presentation to Acton Finance Committee on 2/25/14. She committed to communicating earlier and more clearly next year, especially to the town boards, Finance Committees and Selectmen of both towns. She said it is important to start explaining the needs in the fall. Mike Coppolino asked that Dr. Mills explain the before/after school accounts for the public. Dr. Mills said that these enterprise accounts exist and the law is clear that the funds can only be applied to items being used for those programs.

Heading into the Town Meetings, the need to address any and all questions as they come up, and as clearly as possible, was emphasized. Regionalization has made things more complicated than usual. Kristina Rychlik said the Outreach Committee plans numerous communications prior to Town Meeting. She will connect with Dr. Mills.

A possible School Committee meeting will be posted for the Acton Finance Committee meeting on 3/11/14 in case there is a quorum of members who attend.

## **9. ABTSC PreK – 12 Regionalization Update**

Dr. Mills said a lot of work is being done on the Intermunicipal Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with legal counsel involved. Three warrant articles will be ready for Acton Town Meeting. The Boxborough documents will be ready for their May meeting as well.

## **10. Policy Subcommittee Update**

1. ABTSC/APSC/ABRSC Policies - Consent Agenda #4 - **FIRST READING**  
– *Maria Neyland (incorporating Blanchard policies with APS/ABRSD)*
  - i. Section G: Personnel (*selected policies*)
  - ii. Section I: Instructional Program (*selected policies*)

## **11. School Committee Member Reports**

1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)  
Kim McOsker reported on the meeting held earlier that night. All are in agreement about what to present at Town Meeting and what will be in the warrant. Sustainability in future years is a concern, particularly the use of reserves.

Maria expressed concern that amounts are being “put out there” for OPEB that School Committee has not discussed. Don said that Dennis (absent from the meeting) has stated that he cannot commit to any OPEB numbers without running it by the School Committee first. Maria wants to be very clear for the future that the School Committee needs to discuss any numbers before committing to any other group. Mary Brolin elaborated that the School Committee should say they are educating children first, then paying OPEB on top of it. Brigid agreed that some ALG references caught her eye. She stressed that School Committee needs to keep in the forefront that ALG and BLF are not decision-making bodies.

Paul asked how the OPEB liability is arrived at. Don said that Segal will do an assessment of the region so we will have new numbers maybe in February or March. Mike asked if the situation arose, could the money in the trust be used for health insurance for OPEB retirees in the future. A future School Committee could decide.

2. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)  
Kim reported that HIT met last week. The rate of increase is 9.5% which is a little higher than expected. The retiree rate is increasing to 5%. Next meeting is May 1<sup>st</sup> and Kim will have been replaced on the School Committee. A new rep will be chosen at the next Committee meeting.

3. Boxborough Board of Selectmen  
Maria Neyland reported that the new Minuteman Tech Agreement was discussed.

## **12. Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Choral Field Trip to Spain/France**

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to approve the ABRHS Choral field trip to Spain and France.

## **13. Acton and Boxborough Local Election/Town Meeting**

The LWV Candidates’ Night is on March 17<sup>th</sup>. Boxborough elections are May 12<sup>th</sup>.

## **14. Follow up from Previous Meeting re School Mandates**

Liza Huber addressed concerns from Allen Nitschelm. She stated that it is not the schools’ intention to become a social services agency, although they have often become one by default.

Mike Coppelino will follow up on the Boston College professors’ Demographic Survey presentation for a possible presentation at the next meeting.

The ABRSC, ABTSC and APSC were adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda