

**ACTON-BOXBOROUGH TRANSITIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABTSC), ACTON-
BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) and
ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE (APSC) MEETINGS**
Minutes (approved 11/7/13)

Library

R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 17, 2013

7:00 p.m. Joint APSC/ABRSC Executive Session

7:15 p.m. ABTSC Meeting

8:00 p.m. APSC Meeting

8:15 p.m. APSC Executive Session

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Kim McOsker, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik,
Members Absent: Michael Coppolino, Paul Murphy
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr,

The Acton Public School Committee and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee were called to order by Dennis Bruce and Maria Neyland, respective chairs, at 7:00 p.m.

JOINT APSC and ABRSC EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:01 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, 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 7:01 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, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)

Dennis Bruce 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 7:25 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Joint Executive Session.

The APSC was suspended at 7:24 p.m. The ABRSC was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

The Acton Boxborough Transitional School Committee was called to order at 7:25 p.m.

ABTSC MEETING

4. **Senate Bill SB228** - *an act relative to regional school district capital project funding*

Nancy Banks, Acton Minuteman Tech School Committee rep and Cheryl Mahoney, Boxborough Minuteman Tech School Committee rep gave a brief overview of this upcoming Senate Bill about building reimbursement through MA School Building Authority (MSBA). Senator Eldridge is in support of this. The Acton Board of Selectmen asked for input from the School Committee before they vote a position. Nancy explained that reimbursement rates for vocational and typical schools are different because it costs more to build a vocational school than a traditional one. Maria Neyland expressed concerned and is not supportive of this bill because of the two different reimbursement rates. There was also some concern that the Committee was not fully informed.

It was the sense of the ABTSC that this amendment could benefit our community now that we will be an even larger region and the Committee is generally in support. It is an incentive for other communities to regionalize. Maria Neyland will send a letter to the Boards of Selectmen, Rep. Cory Atkins, Rep. Jennifer Benson and Senator James Eldridge stating this opinion.

5. **Acton Finance Committee**

Steve Noone reviewed the Acton Finance Committee's Point of View document regarding planning for the FY15 Town and School Budgets. They rely on the FinCom's Long Range Financial Planning model for trends and forecasts. The Finance Committee is asking for comment from the Boards and the public.

From the overview: "Given continued very low inflation, declining enrollment in the schools, cost savings from regionalization, sturdy labor negotiations, lower than anticipated OPEB liability projections and stronger than anticipated marginal fee income, the Finance Committee believes the opportunity exists to provide high quality services.... while also planning for a medium term, multi-term pattern of tax increases below the 2.5% gateway level, for the benefit of our tax paying citizenry."

Assumptions about savings from regionalization are included. The Fincom's conclusion is a recommendation to tax at 2% next year and for three more years to give taxpayers a break. Steve Noone stated that reserves are now at 10% of budget and a regional school committee could only keep 5%. Fincom is advocating for conservative use of some of the reserves now. Dennis Bruce asked about any planned capital spending. Steve said there are no major plans. There are no planned warrant articles yet for this.

Maria Neyland emphasized that the ABRSD E&D account that is expected to be certified at \$1.5 M, with \$1.2 M being Acton's share, is not Acton or Boxborough's money. It is the region's money. Steve Noone explained that the Committee has to look at the Town side numbers and that is just how they have done it. Steve was thanked for his presentation.

6. **Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Superintendent Search**

Dr. Richard Warren from *Future Management Systems* was introduced by Andrew Shen.

Superintendents' Salary Review and Qualifications Desired

Dr. Warren stated that FMS does not typically like to include a salary in the advertising, but they do need to know what the School Committee is thinking. Our currently salary is in the high range. The salary range list was discussed. The towns chosen are based on many factors even though our district is larger and none of them are regional. Maria stated that these towns were used because they are the ones we compare ourselves to affordability wise. Dr. Warren pointed out that this is only salaries and does not include all benefits. That was a conscious decision. Additional benefits could be: an annuity purchased for some individuals, insurance, a whole life insurance, professional development, moving expenses, etc. Dr. Warren will supply how long the superintendents in these other communities have been in that position.

The Committee was not ready to agree on a salary or range. They discussed having a salary limit, and if not having a range might mean you attract candidates who are not really viable. Members felt the key attributes would drive the salary. It was noted that someone in a high performing district may need to be paid more to get them to move. The Committee will make the salary range decision at the November 7th meeting. They are mostly concerned with the high end number.

Regarding the qualifications required, Dr. Warren offered questions to consider:

- Do we need a current Superintendent or someone who is ready for the position? Someone with a good track record, trained by a strong person, could be excellent.
- Should they have building level administrative experience?
- Central Office experience is very valuable, but is it necessary?
- Instead of requiring a Doctorate degree, Dr. Warren suggested asking, "What has the candidate done as a leader?"

- He advised against making the position requirements so rigid that a good candidate may be lost.

One of the Committee members stated that this is a great opportunity for someone who has demonstrated leadership and that it is key that the candidate understands the changing nature of our regionalization. These are two communities that are similar but diverse, and that must be understood. A doctorate is not necessary.

Another member feels that building level experience including Central Office experience is valuable, and someone who has been working toward a position like this might be a good candidate.

Dr. Mills was asked for his thoughts. He urged the Committee to cast a wide net and not to require a doctorate. It could be someone who has lots of different experience. Dr. Warren said that the person does not need to have all the answers, but needs to know how to get them.

Committee members felt the following were important:

- someone who can put forth a vision of the district and bring people together to work and move forward with it
- strong leadership and communication skills
- an appreciation for school choice is essential
- someone who supports innovation and appreciates data. They don't have to know it themselves, but must appreciate it and motivate others to be innovative and data driven as appropriate.
- someone who wants to spend some time in our community, with positive goals for our district that would make their mark. This would not be someone who wants to use the position as a stepping stone to something else.
- strong business background
- regional experience is valuable but not required
- not required to have superintendent experience

This will be used to create the ad. A preliminary version was distributed by Dr. Warren. The three School Committee chairs (Dennis Bruce, Maria Neyland, Brigid Bieber) will review it before it is final.

Dr. Warren will return to the next meeting. He was asked to bring more information about the size of the schools and the experience/tenure of the superintendent whose salary is listed. Because we are competing with other districts for a new superintendent, Andrew will collect that information as it comes in and share with Dr. Warren.

FMS will develop a leadership profile after all of the survey results and other public input are collected.

Charge to the Search Committee

It was the sense of the Committee to use the charge from the 2008 Superintendent Search with the addition of a bullet about confidentially and one about it being a group process:

- Interview all internal candidates. Feel free to consider and interview as many applicants as you wish,
- Recommend to the School Committee 3-5 finalists, if you can. However, do not advance any candidate whom you are not prepared to have as the superintendent for ABRSD. If there are not a sufficient number of candidates, refrain from advancing candidates whom you do not view as viable,
- Actively participate in a group process, including a vote, if necessary, to select the candidates who will be forwarded to the School Committee for interviews and further consideration, and
- Treat the entire process of participation on the Screening Committee with complete confidentiality.

ABTSC VOTE to Approve Search Committee Chairperson

Dennis Bruce nominated Brigid Bieber to chair the Search Committee. Mary Brolin seconded the motion and it was unanimously VOTED to approve Brigid as the chair.

7. **Enrollment Report**

1. Enrollment Report, *October 1, 2013*

Marie Altieri reported that all in all we are down about 100 students total in all of the schools (K-12, Acton, Boxborough, Acton-Boxborough) compared to last year. The enrollment by race chart shows we are really diversifying with Conant School having 64% minority students, followed by Gates at 45%.

2. Class Size Policies: Acton and Boxborough

School Committee really needs to consider the Acton and Boxborough Class Size policies and how to combine them. In Acton classrooms, these are the best numbers we have had for a long time. Peter and Mary Ann Ashton will give more clarity to this when they present the student enrollment projections at the December 5th School Committee meeting.

Mary Brolin was the chair of the Boxborough School Committee when they did their Class Size policy review. There is an advantage to having a limit to small classes due to the kind of interactions that are essential. The most important thing is the relationship that the teachers have with the students and their families. Acton's practice is not far off from Boxborough's guidelines. About 5 years ago about 60% of Acton's classes were over guidelines.

The Acton School Committee members like Boxborough's policy found in the packet. Brigid will have the policy subcommittee draft a proposed new policy and bring it to School Committee.

The ABTSC adjourned and the APSC reconvened at 9:08 p.m.

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT of WARRANT

APS Warrant #201408 dated 10/15/13 in the amount of \$210,821.51 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

12. **APSC BUSINESS**

1. Recommendation to Accept PTO Gifts to the Elementary Schools

1. Gift Letters: Conant, Douglas, Gates, McCarthy-Towne, Merriam

Kim McOsker moved, Deanne O'Sullivan seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept with gratitude the gifts from the elementary school PTOS.

2. History of PTO Gifts FY'09 – FY'14

The goal is to try to rely less on PTOs for assistant funding and move these expenses to the fiscal budget. Chris Whitbeck and the Douglas School have tried to reduce their program to be more in line with Community Education programs costs.

2. Recommendation to Accept Donations from Community Education

Kim McOsker moved, Deanne O'Sullivan seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the donations from Community Education.

3. FYI - Classroom Assistant Funding memos – Merriam and Douglas

4. School Based Funding for Personnel Chart - Dr. Mills highlighted this chart.
5. School Committee Member Reports
 1. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– Kim McOsker reported that the Trust met this morning and the trend is good.
 2. Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Task Force– Dennis Bruce reported that they met last week. Dennis was at the Search Firm meeting so Don Aicardi reported. There is a hearing at the State House to see how OPEB liability across the state might affect them. There will be another OPEB meeting after that. \$1.1 M is the target number for this year (ALG), projected to go into the budget. Members should let Dennis know if they disagree with this number.
 3. Acton Finance Committee - Dennis Bruce asked School Committee members to review the POV that Steve Noone presented and give him and Kim input to take back to the Finance Committee and ALG.
13. **APSC EXECUTIVE SESSION**
 At 9:23 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,
VOTED by role call: that the **Acton Public School Committee** go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation. (**YES** - Bruce, McOsker, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)
 Dennis Bruce 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 solely to adjourn.
14. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**
 The FY14 School Improvement Plans were included in the FYI.
15. **NEXT MEETINGS**
 - November 7, 7:00 p.m. APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC Meeting, R.J. Grey Junior High Library
 - November 21, 7:00 p.m. APSC Meeting, R.J. Grey Junior High Library

The School Committee adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
 Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda