

**JOINT ACTON PUBLIC (APSC) and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL (ABRSC)
and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH TRANSITIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABTSC)
MEETINGS Minutes (approved 12/5/13)**

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

November 7, 2013
7:00 p.m. Joint APSC/ABRSC Executive Session
7:15 p.m. APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC Meeting
8:30 p.m. APSC/ABRSC Meeting

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Kim McOsker (7:32 p.m.), Paul Murphy, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik

Members Absent: none

Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr, approximately 50 parents and staff members

The Acton-Boxborough Regional and Acton Public School Committees were called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Maria Neyland and Dennis Bruce, respective Chairs.

JOINT APSC and ABRSC EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:02 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, Murphy, 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 7:02 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, Coppolino, 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 7:03 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, Bruce, Coppolino, 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.

The Committees were polled to go out of Executive Session at 7:18 p.m.

JOINT BUSINESS MEETING

It was moved, seconded and approved to take two agenda items (Field Trip and PARCC Motion) out of order given the number of staff and public members in the audience.

20. Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Field Trip to Martinique, June 2014

Dr. Mills introduced the proposed trip. Staff was in the audience for questions. Brigid Bieber stated that she is a big proponent of international travel and it is a huge responsibility to take our students overseas like this. She thanked the staff.

Brigid Bieber moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the field trip to Martinique

1. Call to Order – ABTSC for Joint APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC meeting

2. Chairmen’s Introduction

3. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the 10/3/13 meeting (APS, ABRSC, ABTSC) will be done at the next meeting. Minutes of the 10/9/13 meeting were approved by the ABTSC. Minutes of the 10/17/13 meeting were approved by the APSC, the ABRSC, and the ABTSC, with Michael Coppelino and Paul Murphy abstaining.

APS warrant #201409 dated 10/29/13 in the amount of \$225,874.73 was signed by the chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

ABRSD warrant #14-008 dated 10/17/13 in the amount of \$1,800,278.73, #14-008A dated 10/21/13 in the amount of \$4,634.62 and #14-009 dated 10/31/13 in the amount of \$2,082,008.31 were signed by the chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

4. Public Participation – none

Dr. Mills announced that Dr. JoAnn Campbell is the new ABRHS Principal after accepting the position as Interim Principal in July.

15. Recommendation to Approve Motion to Oppose Field-test Plans for PARCC and request Delay of Adoption from 2015 to 2016 – VOTE – Steve Mills

Dr. Mills explained the stress around this new testing requirement. He thanked Deborah Bookis for her help in making this motion possible, urging the DESE to put off the PARCC assessments for a year until they have more thoroughly tested it. AEA Vice President Karen Sonner thanked Dr. Mills and Deb Bookis for this effort, stating that the teachers and staff strongly support this statement. Mike Coppelino appreciates the effort as a teacher and a School Committee member.

ABRSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the motion to oppose field test plans for PARCC and request a delay of its adoption from 2015 to 2016 as proposed

ABTSC VOTE:

Dennis Bruce moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the motion to oppose field test plans for PARCC and request a delay of its adoption from 2015 to 2016 as proposed

APSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Mike Coppelino seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the motion to oppose field test plans for PARCC and request a delay of its adoption from 2015 to 2016 as proposed

The staff and people in the audience responded with loud applause.

5. Safety in Schools

Dr. Mills thanked Andrew Shen for a very smooth evacuation due to a recent bomb threat. All schools practice for these kinds of events. Because of how quickly word gets out now with cellphones, texts, etc. it is important to get accurate information out.

6. ABTSC 2014-2015 School Calendar – VOTE

1. Proposed 2014-2015 School Calendar Draft A – no school on Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday
2. Proposed 2014-2015 School Calendar Draft B
3. Statewide Legal and Other Holidays & Major Religious Observances-DESE
4. Calendar survey results follow up memo

Dr. Mills introduced the issues stating that this is a School Committee decision that is voted every year. It has been agreed to start after Labor Day next year due to how late the holiday falls. Dr. Mills feels it is possible to run the schools on these holidays based on the survey results. He recommends that school be held on Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday next year and that everyone pay close attention to the current school policy and procedures for observing religious holidays.

There were a number of comments from School Committee members in support of Calendar A (no school on these two holidays) including:

- Our students test well, they don't need more classroom time.
- It is a fairly significant part of the population in support of the no school days and there has been very little public comment asking to have school on these days.
- The Committee always listens to public feedback and a lot has been received on this.
- The District can have more full school days without holding classes on these holidays. There are other ways to get more school days.

Maria Neyland has been an outspoken advocate of Calendar B for years. She very much believes in people's freedom to practice their faith but if the Superintendent says he can run the school on those holidays, she urged the Committee to listen to him and support B.

ABTSC VOTE:

Seeing the consensus, Dennis Bruce moved and Michael Coppolino seconded the **MOTION**: to adopt Calendar A for next year as put forth by Dr. Mills with no school on Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday.

Several members of the public spoke in support of Calendar A.

The motion was VOTED and approved –

YES: Bieber, Brolin, Coppolino, McOsker, Murphy, O'Sullivan, Rychlik

NO: Bruce, Neyland

7. ABTSC Blanchard School Principal Search Update

Marie Altieri reported that about 30 applications have been received. Eight candidates will be interviewed. It is hoped that finalists will be announced before Thanksgiving and an appointment will be made by winter break.

8. ABRSD FY14 Financial Report – 1st Quarter

Don Aicardi reported that this budget is very tight at this early time in the year. The ABRSD ended the first quarter of FY14 with a \$1,292. projected year end fund balance.

9. ABTSC FY15 Budget Process

Don Aicardi stated that this is the first FY' 15 ABRSD Budget to be presented in a unified pre-K – Grade 12 format. Regional transportation revenues will increase significantly from FY14 as a result. Approximately \$400,000 in position-related reduction savings has been identified. Ground rules are now being established for the Administration to follow for the new budget deliberations.

Additional savings could be used to: decrease budgets, re-channel savings back into the budget to fix vulnerabilities and maintain level service, or re-direct toward unmet needs/programs, or a combination. A key question for the Transitional School Committee will be, "If current school-based positions can be "re-allocated" to meet unmet district-

wide needs, how will these positions be identified and what should be the context for how those positions should they be authorized?"

The process will be as transparent and simple as possible. The Committee discussed what level service means. Don assumes the budget will not be cut further next year. If that is not true, he needs to know asap. At the 12/5/13 meeting the Committee needs to come to agreement about items like preschool tuition, all day Kindergarten tuition, and other items that are different in the two towns' elementary schools. People were encouraged to talk to Don and Steve.

Mary Brolin noted that when the Committee discussed financial savings from regionalization, they planned on \$1 million, but they also planned on additional efficiencies that over the next 5 years would accrue to another million dollars. Most important to her is transparency and rationale. She urged the Committee to make conscious decisions about spending or not spending any savings and communicate that clearly to the communities.

Dennis Bruce emphasized that it was a long process to get to regionalization and at Acton Town Meeting part of what he said was that they expected targeted efficiencies and \$1 million dollars of anticipated savings. Dennis said the Committee was clear to the Selectmen and Finance Committee all along that regionalization would be an opportunity to look at the District as a whole and craft how people wanted it to be in the future. He asked that the School Committee be allowed to decide how money is spent using the same process as has been used every year. He requested that the slides on Budget Saturday show items "above and below the line" so the Committee fully understands the requests and the trade-offs. Dennis emphasized that the Superintendent's recommendations are certainly needed and requested, but he wants to let the School Committee decide on the final items that are funded.

10. ABTSC PreK – 12 Regionalization

Dr. Mills reported that the Transitional Administrative Team weekly meetings continue to be very productive. Erin Bettez's Community Education office may be able to help with the record keeping for the music lessons being held so successfully at Blanchard. This is one example of how structure in place in Acton/ABRSD can assist programs and services at Blanchard. A draft Intermunicipal Agreement with the Town of Acton has been created. This must be voted on by the AB Transitional School Committee and then the Acton Board of Selectmen but parts of it may require warrant articles. This will be similar with the Town of Boxborough. Vince Amoroso is in contact with Dr. Mills about this. The Committee requested that important information about regionalization continue to be kept updated on ab.mec.edu homepage. Deanne O'Sullivan reminded the Committee that monthly meetings with the PTSO Co-Chairs are being held. Kristina Rychlik is writing monthly updates for the newspapers.

11. APS/ABRSC/ABTSC Policy Update

1. Notice re District Policies for 2013-2014– FIRST READING

Brigid Bieber explained that the proposed notice states that policies approved between now and July 1, 2014 should be read to include the Acton Public Schools. There may be a few policies that this does not apply to, and that will be clearly spelled out on those few for this (FY14) school year.

2. Mission, Values and Goals (File: AD) revision and deletion of School District Goals and Objectives (File: ADA)– SECOND READING

A minor administrative change was requested.

ABTSC VOTE:

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve Mission, Values and Goals, File: AD as amended.

ABRSC VOTE:

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve Mission, Values and Goals, File: AD as amended.

APSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve Mission, Values and Goals, File: AD as amended.

3. **Elementary Class Size** (File: IIBA) revision

Maria Neyland explained that this discussion would be at the 11/21/13 meeting. The policy subcommittee would then consider it and a **FIRST READING** of a proposed policy could be at the 12/7/13 meeting. At the last School Committee meeting, the most current Boxborough policy was not used. Acton and Boxborough's current policies are different. A paper copy of the extensive study done by Boxborough's School Committee is available from Beth. Marie Altieri will provide financial information for the 11/21/13 meeting showing the costs of different options.

4. **Nondiscrimination** (File: AC) revision – **FIRST READING**

Liza Huber outlined the DESE required changes since July 2012 including those around gender identity and veteran status. The District's attorney recommends a simplified policy as proposed. It was noted that the proposed policy should refer only to the ABRSD, not APS and ABRSD, given upcoming regionalization.

5. **ABTSC/APSC/ABRSC Policies - Consent Agenda #1 – FIRST READING**

- i. Section A: Foundations and Basic Commitments (*selected policies*)
- ii. Section B: School Board Governance and Operations (*selected policies*)

Maria Neyland reported that the Transitional policy subcommittee is reviewing all policies in an effort to incorporate Blanchard's policies with those of APS/ABRSD. After their review, each section is passed on to the Joint APSC/ABRSC policy subcommittee for review. After their review, they will group the simpler proposed policy revisions in a consent agenda and give to the Joint APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC for Readings and Approval Votes. More complicated policies will be submitted individually to the School Committees. The Consent Agenda proposed policies will be posted separately under the meeting materials for easier reference.

12. **Educational Values and Interests Survey, January 2010, Data Study**

Mike Coppolino said that after work was done on the results of this survey in 2010 some School Committee members felt that there was more information to be mined but it was a too large a task at the time. A Boston College professor contacted by Mike has offered to study the results further. Mike thanked Amy Bisiewicz for her help in gathering the data. The professor assured Mike that there would be complete confidentiality, in writing, and in the future. She asked what other information the School Committee wanted gleaned from the study. The point was made that the data is now 4 years old. A goal may be to redo the survey at some point but the original survey would be a data point. One member suggested that given all that is going on this year, this is a "nice to have". Another member suggested that it be analyzed now and think about implementing a new survey in a year or two. Mary Brolin requested that although the schools would not be identified, the School Committees should have first read on anything written.

ABTSC adjourned. The APS/ABRSC Joint meeting continued at 8:50 p.m .

13. APS/ABRSC MCAS Report

Deborah Bookis was complimented on an excellent presentation of the 2012 MCAS results. See slides.

14. APS/ABRSD Special Education Parents Advisory Council (Sped PAC) Report

Nancy Sherburne and Bill Guthlein presented on the Sped PAC organization and goals and APS and ABRSD MCAS highlights.

The 2013-2014 Sped PAC goals are to:

- Analyze and report on special education student 2013 MCAS performance.
- Propose revisions to School Committee Procedure BDFB-R to clarify its implementation of the PAC's legal mandate.
- Help to facilitate the smooth transition of students with special needs and their families as the Acton and Boxborough school districts fully regionalize in 2014.

Regarding MCAS results, Bill said that the PAC may not agree with all of the Administration's positions, but they have been dialoguing a lot to gain an understanding of the issues. Mike Coppolino thanked Bill and Nancy for spending so much time and effort on their analysis. Concern was expressed about several particular groups of students' MCAS scores and a question about whether it is comparing apples to apples. Deborah Bookis stated that for the ELA tests, teachers employed more opportunities for students to write with prompts and that led to improvement. This is the kind of activity that teachers will try to do more of. Maria Neyland thanked Bill and Nancy for all that they do to help students and families through their leadership of SpedPAC.

15. *Recommendation to Approve Motion to Oppose Field-test Plans for PARCC and request Delay of Adoption from 2015 to 2016 – VOTE

This was taken out of order earlier in the meeting.

16. School Committee Member Reports

1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)
Dennis reported ALG met that day and discussed FinCom's Point of View (POV) and OPEB. There is a new spreadsheet being used. Next meeting is 12/12/13.
2. Acton Finance Committee
Dennis reported that the FinCom is requesting input from School Committee and BOS on their Point of View document found in the packet. This document describes what the Fincom would like to see the town of Acton adhere to for the upcoming year's budget. Dennis will attend FinCom on 11/12/13 to give them Committee feedback. Revenue, expenses and use of reserves outlined in the POV were discussed. Dennis asked the Committee to consider that for FY15 there is a recommendation that OPEB be \$1.1 million and for FY16 that go up to \$1.4 million. Kim pointed out that regarding OPEB numbers, it will not continue to go up \$300,000 every year but it is the sense of the working group that it will level off. Kristina Rychlik expressed concern regarding the last sentence under Level Service Budgeting that she sees as a blanket statement that FinCom is never open to additional hiring unless it is offset by expense reductions. Mike Coppolino said that the FinCom always makes this statement. Dennis asked if in the past, the School Committee has discussed what the Acton tax rate should be. Mike replied that FinCom has asked in the past, and School Committee should respond to them to let their opinions be known.

Dennis reported that according to BOS members who are on ALG, there was no consensus about the 2%. BOS member Katie Green spoke from the audience stating that looking out to FY18 and a 2% increase, reserves end up at 5% of the budget and that alarms her. Right now reserves are at 10%, which is high. BOS

would like to keep it at 6 - 8% but they are waiting to hear more from the Town Manager about his budget.

Maria Neyland is concerned that if Fincom wants a level service budget, how will the School Committee respond to them. She reminded Committee members that they have to be consistent. Brigid Bieber stated that her goal as a Regional School Committee member from Boxborough is to do budgeting for the Regional Schools. From the current position, it is to develop a level service budget for the students today, and then discuss any savings realized and spending priorities. This discussion must take place at the School Committee table and see where it leads members. She described this as the tension of the job School Committee members have to do and it comes first before expressing an opinion to either town's Finance Committee. Kim McOsker said that is the ALG opinion as well. Members are not in a position to make a statement until they have a better idea of what they are doing in their own roles. Mike agrees with Brigid. Paul Murphy echoed focusing on the budget and where we are. Additional feedback should be sent to Dennis before the FinCom meeting on 11/12/13.

3. Acton Board of Selectmen
Paul Murphy reported that the BOS approved a supporting letter for Senate Bill 228 with an amendment to include all regional schools not just vocational.

17. APS/ABRSC SMART Goals for FY14

As Superintendent, Dr. Mills is concerned about the School Committee's workload and planning agendas for all of the meetings with the regionalization transition. He proposed four simple SMART goals for this year. Comments can be sent by the next meeting.

The APSC adjourned at 9:57 p.m.

18. Recommendation to Accept Grant from ABR-PTSO to ABRHS – ABRSC VOTE

Brigid Bieber moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED:** to accept the PTSO grant to ABRHS with gratitude.

19. Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Field Trip to Martinique, June 2014 – VOTE

This was taken out of order earlier in the meeting.

20. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Dr. Mills highlighted a thank you from an ABRHS English Teacher for the School Committees' support for the additional English teachers at the High School this year.

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:01 p.m.

NEXT MEETINGS:

- November 14, 7:30 p.m. Boxborough School Committee meeting, Blanchard Library
- November 21, 7:00 p.m. AB Transitional School Committee followed by Acton Public School Committee meeting, Junior High Library
- December 5, 7:30 p.m. ABTSC, ABRSC, APSC meeting, Junior High Library
- December 19, 7:00 p.m. APSC meeting, Junior High Library

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda