

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

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

November 21, 2013
7:00 p.m. Joint APSC ABRSC Meeting
7:15 p.m. Joint APSC ABRSC ABTSC Meeting

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Paul Murphy, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik,
Members Absent: Kim McOsker
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, 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.

1. **Presentation to APS Food Services Staff - Healthier US School Challenge Award**
Katie Millett from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education presented Kirsten Nelson and her five APS cafeteria managers with plaques for their achievement. Only 6% of the schools in the US have been given this award from the US Dept of Agriculture. She spoke about how nutrition in school meals is key. She commended Kirsten on her outstanding leadership including her recent work with an intern from Framingham State University.

2. **Recommendation to Accept Gift of \$450,000 from the Richard E. Dow Track Fundraising Committee/Friends of Leary Field – ABRSC VOTE – Steve Mills**
Dr. Mills thanked parent John Raguin for being persistent about this fundraising project from the very beginning. The group’s efforts were so successful that several items from the “wish list” will be accomplished in addition to the original plan. Construction has begun on Phase 1. Coach Brian Crossman was also instrumental in this effort. John thanked all involved and said that it was a big effort on many people’s part. Maria Neyland said this has been a fantastic public/private partnership for the school district.

ABRSC VOTE:

Brigid Bieber moved, Mike Coppolino seconded, and it was unanimously,
VOTED to accept the gift of \$450,000 for the Richard E. Dow Track Renovation with great gratitude.

APSC VOTE:

3. **Recommendation to Accept Gifts to the Acton Elementary School Libraries from the Friends of the Acton Libraries –VOTE**
Paul Murphy moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept the gift from the Friends of the Acton Libraries

ABRSC VOTE:

4. **Recommendation to Accept Gifts to the R.J. Grey Junior High and ABRHS Libraries from the Friends of the Acton Libraries –VOTE**
Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept the gift from the Friends of the Acton Libraries

The ABTSC was called to order at 7:15 p.m. and the Joint APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC Meeting began.

5. **Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes from the 11/7/13 APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC Meeting and the 10/3/13 APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC Meeting will be reviewed at the next meeting.

APS warrant #201410 dated 11/12/13 in the amount of \$164,404.99 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

6. **Public Participation** – none

The APSC and ABRSC were suspended and the ABTSC continued.

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

Brigid Bieber and Dr. Herb Levine from Future Management Systems gave an update. Brigid will share the SpedPAC information from the last School Committee meeting with the Search Committee. Currently FMS has received 20 inquiries, 10 have turned into applications, and 5 are from out of state. Dr. Levine considers this pretty good at this time in the process. Applications so far have been based on ads, not solicitations. Next meetings are December 6th and 17th. It is expected that a statement about the selection will be released on January 27th.

A Leadership Profile was developed from the input from the focus groups, survey and discussions. Dr. Levine said that three major issues have been identified that the new Superintendent will have to deal with immediately, most notably due to full regionalization:

1. Budget and Finance
2. The elementary school choice program and if it would have to change
3. Boxborough and how it will be brought into the school district. It is very important that Boxborough residents are heard and feel good about the process.

Longer term issues that came up include a capital plan for longer term, class size and decreasing student population. Ethnic diversity is a strength but could be a challenge for the next Superintendent to balance the schools and attendant resources that go with that kind of issue. This would include language resources. Another major issue was student stress and high expectations and if the schools have enough adults to deal with the students. Survey comments will be given to Beth Petr for review if Committee members would like them.

Dr. Levine thanked Andrew Shen and Brigid Bieber for their excellent assistance. He concluded that the skill that came through over and over as essential for the new Superintendent to possess was that he/she be a very clear communicator and someone who enjoys building relationships with Town boards and committees as well as listening to faculty, parents, and other stakeholders.

ABTSC VOTE:

Brigid Bieber moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the Leadership Profile as presented.

This profile will be used as a guide as the Search Committee moves forward to find the candidate with the best fit for our community.

The Committee discussed the Superintendents' salary charts in the packet. Brigid noted that there are so many data points for comparisons that she wonders how valuable it is to look too closely at them. She advocated for not deciding on a salary range yet, but to get further into the process. Dr. Levine agreed. Different candidates will have different needs and requests. He recommends waiting to decide on a salary. The sense of the Committee was not to set a salary range yet.

The APSC and ABRSC reconvened and the JOINT APSC, ABRSC and ABTSC continued.

8. **Elementary Class Size**

(Discussion only, FIRST READ of revised policy File: IIBA planned for 12/7/13 meeting)

1. Class Size Policy Options
2. Current Acton and Boxborough policies
3. Study Material from Boxborough School Committee presentation on 3/10/11 (posted with 11/7/13 School Committee meeting materials)
4. Class Size financial estimates (Section Planning)

Marie Altieri asked for the Committee's input regarding class size for planning for the upcoming year. She presented the cost of the four options with #1 and #3 being cost neutral. Option 3 is recommended by the Administration. An additional classroom with one teacher and benefits costs \$70,000. The Ashtons will present the annual enrollment projections at the 12/5/13 School Committee meeting.

The Committee discussed the value of adding more classroom assistants when class sizes have risen in past years. There is not currently an assistant in every Acton elementary classroom. While assistants are not the same as certified staff, with assistants included the adult-student ratio it is closer to 10 – 1. A base amount is funded in the appropriated budget for assistants and then PTOs subsidize this in all of the schools to varying degrees. There is approximately 18 hours of assistant time at each grade level (about 6 hours per classroom per week). The exception is at Merriam where there is an 18 hr/week assistant in every classroom. Marie noted that having additional All-Day Kindergarten seats available next year means less of an increase in the next year's Grade 1.

The Committee discussed what it means that the policy is only a guideline. Guidelines show what priorities are and set the tone for the classes. Several members voiced support for Option 3 because there is no cost implication and it is not a major change for this first year of regionalization. This could be reviewed again in a year.

The Administration would love to recommend option 2 or 4 but practically they recommend option 3 and then a review in a few years. Paul Murphy expressed concern about the grade 4 jump in curriculum but acknowledged the substantial cost. Kristina Rychlik was on Acton's class size subcommittee headed up by Amy Hedison a few years ago. She advocated for the chance to set guidelines that the Committee might be able to now meet. She also recognized that there are conflicting priorities regarding space constrictions and costs. Declining enrollment will help in the upcoming years. It was agreed that resulting future savings, however, will be applied wherever the School Committee and Town Meetings decide.

Nancy Sherburne spoke for the SpedPAC. She encouraged the Committee to embrace setting a policy based on their educational beliefs about what children need to be successful. She stated that if the Committee believes the research and values it, they should put it in a policy and discuss the financial aspects of it at another time. Brigid agreed that the Committee should not be basing policy on cost, but on education. That said, class size decisions must be prioritized with everything else. Maria Neyland shared the experience in Boxborough where a small group of students showed improvement due to their small class size.

Maria Neyland does not want the budget to drive the policy. Kristina reminded the Committee about the increased teacher workload with larger class sizes. The Committee will continue this discussion at their 12/5/13 meeting.

9. **APS/ABRSC/ABTSC Policy Update**

1. Notice re District Policies for this year – **SECOND READING**

ABTSC VOTE:

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the notice as presented for the period 7/1/13 – 6/30/14

APSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the notice as presented for the period 7/1/13 – 6/30/14

ABRSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the notice as presented for the period 7/1/13 – 6/30/14

2. Nondiscrimination (File: AC) revision – **SECOND READING**

ABTSC VOTE:

Dennis Bruce moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Nondiscrimination policy revision as proposed.

ABRSC VOTE:

Dennis Bruce moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Nondiscrimination policy revision as proposed.

APSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Nondiscrimination policy revision as proposed.

3. Prohibition of Harassment (Combining Files: ACAB, JBA, GBA) revision with form – **FIRST READING**

Liza Huber explained the changes. The language now compliments the revised Nondiscrimination policy.

4. ABTSC/APSC/ABRSC Policies - Consent Agenda #1 – **SECOND READING** (incorporating Blanchard policies with APS/ABRSD, see separately posted document)

a. Section A: Foundations and Basic Commitments (*selected policies*)

b. Section B: School Board Governance and Operations (*selected policies*)

The Committees discussed the proposed policy revisions. File: ACD-R, procedures for *Acknowledging Religious Holidays* would not be voted because the Committee only votes on policy. It was emphasized that the DESE list of holidays must accompany the School Calendar whenever it is posted. File BB: *School Committee Legal Status* was not included in the vote because “established by law” notation needed clarification.

ABTSC VOTE:

Brigid Bieber moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Consent Agenda of policies #1 with very minor editing revisions, excluding File: BB and File: ACD-R

Only ABTSC voted because Notice 9.1 (voted earlier in the meeting) states that “For the period July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014, all references to the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District in the Districts’ policies should be read to include the Acton Public Schools.”

10. **2013-2014 SMART Goals – SECOND READING**

A February update will be added to Goal #4.

ABRSC VOTE:

Brigid Bieber moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the FY14 SMART Goals as amended.

APSC VOTE:

Mike Coppolino moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the FY14 SMART Goals as amended.

11. **School Committee Member Reports**

3. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)

Dennis read a report from Kim McOsker about the HIT meeting that morning. The year to date cash flow is positive and encouraging. They are hopeful that it signals that the expenses are aligning with the income from co-payments. It is believed that the town and school budgets will reflect an 8% increase for planning purposes for next year's rates. There is some disagreement among members as to how high the increase will need to be but this will evolve as data comes in over the year.

5. Acton Finance Committee

Dennis Bruce attended the recent meeting and shared the Committee's feedback re FinCom's Point of View (POV) document. He summarized that the School Committee was feeling very apprehensive about the POV.

The ABRSC and ABTSC adjourned at 9:20 p.m. and the APSC continued.

12. **FY14 Financial Report – 1st Quarter**

Don Aicardi reported that this first quarter is very tight, like the ABRSD report at the last meeting, with a projected year end fund balance of \$4,935. He is looking for trends and lessons to incorporate into the FY15 budget. The year end fund balance will have a sharp effect on the turnback number. Particularly in the Facilities department, they have depended on turnback numbers for assistance at year end, and that won't happen this year. They will be more aggressive about using energy savings to create a type of capital budget plan that JD Head can use for these types of needs.

13. **Recommendation to Accept Gift from Douglas PTO – APSC VOTE**

Deanne O'Sullivan moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED:** to accept the Douglas PTO gift with gratitude.

20. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

7. The 2014-2015 ABRSD School Calendar is posted to the website.

8. The 2014-2015 Kindergarten Registration Schedule is posted. January 14, 2014 is Kindergarten Registration Night.

NEXT MEETINGS

- December 5, 7:00 p.m. APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC Meeting, R.J. Grey Junior High Library
- December 12, 7:30 p.m. Boxborough School Committee, Blanchard Library – This might be made into an ABTSC meeting as well.
- December 19, 7:00 p.m. APSC Meeting, R.J. Grey Junior High Library

The APSC adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of documents used: see agenda