

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 6/25/15)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

June 11, 2015
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik

Members Absent: none

Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte,

Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik called the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. **Chairwoman’s Introduction** – Kristina Rychlik welcomed the many members of the public in attendance.
2. **Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**
 1. ABRSC Meetings on 4/30/15 and 5/21/15 will be voted at the next meeting.
 2. Warrant #15-023 dated 5/14/15 in the amount of \$3,548,896.75, #15-024 dated 5/28/15 in the amount of \$3,096,838.77 and #15-025 dated 6/11/15 in the amount of \$2,611,763.14 were circulated and signed by the Committee members.
3. **Public Participation** - none
4. **School Improvement Plans Presentation**
 1. **Douglas School** – Christopher Whitbeck, Rip Cail and Jenna Larrenaga
Dr. Whitbeck explained the Exhibitionary Learning philosophy that was implemented at Douglas this year and how it will continue next year including the addition of the Responsive Classroom program. Some of this came from Dr. Yong Zhao’s work. A Committee member noted that it is important to support professional development so staff can try new things like this. Beyond staff meetings, there was minimal training because the philosophy is to “learn by doing”. Chris noted that not all staff were enthusiastic about the change, although 100% of them participated in the Exhibitionary Presentations. Deborah Bookis noted that all curricular expectations are still in place as they are for all of the schools.
 2. **Merriam School** – Edward Kaufman
Ed Kaufman described successful progress this year on Merriam’s 4 goals. He outlined plans for next year including implementing a new math program for all grades, continuing to link literacy assessments to instruction, developing writing and reading projects and implementing the school theme, “Building Group Skill Across the Community”.
 3. **R.J. Grey Junior High School** – Andrew Shen
Andrew Shen noted that his School Council met 9 times this year to work on their 3 goals. Students and staff were enthusiastic about the chromebook carts for every team. They are always open to new ideas, including this year’s very popular origami and badminton clubs. Goals for next year include: emphasis on supporting literacy in all

subjects, enhanced academic support for “High Needs Population” students and continued focus on addressing the social and emotional health of the students.

5. ABRHS Handbook for 2015-2016, Review of Changes – Second Reading – VOTE - Maurin O’Grady, ABRHS Dean of Students (See handbook at <http://abrhs.abschools.org/>)

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

VOTED: to approve the 2015-2016 Acton-Boxborough Regional High School Handbook as proposed.

6. Curriculum Presentation: Elementary Science Revision

Jean Oviatt-Rothman, K-6 STEM Science Specialist/Coach, presented on the new Science revision noting how many things have changed in the past 15 years and how many involve science. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2yEWyvWznE&feature=youtu.be> for a description of the Next Generation Science Standards and why the District is excited about introducing them. A parent spoke against moving away from the scientific method. Jean explained that that is not what is happening. It is just a change in the language. Another parent spoke against the state dictating what our students should be studying.

7. Elementary Bus Passes – JD Head, Amy Krishnamurthy (member of ABRSC Policy Subcommittee)

1. Proposed policy and procedures revision, File: EEAAA and EEAAA-R – **First Read**
2. Memo from Glenn Brand and JD Head
3. Slides from SC meeting on 5/21/15

Director of Facilities and Transportation, JD Head explained that the decision to reconsider the Elementary Bus Passes policy and procedures began a year ago when the School Committee asked him to examine and present on the possibility of a one tier elementary bussing structure to avoid the alternating early/late schedules for our elementary schools. Out of that discussion, came a concern about the number of young students switching buses on a regular basis, the amount of time required by school office staff to process the requests, the added responsibility put on the bus drivers when questions came up, the time being added to some children’s bus rides as a result of adding stops/resolving questions and a general concern for student safety/school liability resulting from this convenient service provided to our families. JD reviewed the slides from the previous School Committee discussion at the meeting on 5/21/15. At that meeting the Committee asked him to work with the Policy Subcommittee to develop a proposed revision to this policy and procedure, for a First Reading at this meeting (6/11/15). Glenn Brand called the issue a true dilemma, given how many years the service has been provided and how accommodating the Transportation department and school offices have been. He and JD recognize how many families and local businesses have come to depend on children being able to ride a bus from their school to a wide variety of locations.

The proposed change to the policy would eliminate children bus passing to any stops other than licensed childcare and established stops on their schools’ routes starting in September. One day passes would not be permitted for children in kindergarten or first grade.

Kristina Rychlik noted that a number of calls had been made to the Superintendent’s Office, and emails sent to the School Committee over the past week from families and businesses advocating strongly for not changing this service. While many understood the schools’ position, none of them supported changing the availability of bus passes.

Mary Brolin asked if it is a requirement that children be met by an adult when getting off at a stop that is not their home busstop. JD responded that it is an expectation, just like good behavior on the bus. JD gave an example of a bus that recently had a substitute driver that had to stop the bus twice during the trip to address inappropriate behavior by a group of children riding to a business location.

In addition to the safety issue, all the other children on the bus were late getting home, and the bus was then late for the next school that was scheduled for pick up.

Several members felt this change was being proposed too quickly. They asked for more specific details about the issues and proposal. Mike Coppolino stated that the administrative burden must be addressed, perhaps with technology. JD is looking into that. Several people felt that specifically mentioning the Community Education Programs in the policy was not appropriate. Policy members felt it important to remind families that the schools offer licensed daycare on school grounds, and the profit goes back into the school district. Brigid Bieber asked if the District wants to be in the business of taking children from school to businesses (instead of their homes) and if so, they have to do it safely and well. A number of Committee members said, throughout the meeting, that they want to hear from the public on this issue. Glenn Brand and JD Head said that they were not aware of any other school district that offered this type of free bus service to their families.

Several members were very concerned about student safety. Maria Neyland is concerned that this policy is not being changed soon enough to prevent a tragedy. She noted that the proposed revision still permits bus passing to daycare or a friend's house. She also noted that every hour that a staff member spends processing these requests, answering questions, or reassuring a confused child/parent/busdriver, is time/money that could be spent on education. She stated that the School Committee's job is to provide education for children.

Mary Brolin suggested that the Committee consider accepting bus passes for children going to the same place every day, even if it is not a daycare. She asked for explanation of changing the minimum age from first to second grade.

There were many people in the audience who wanted to speak on the topic. The Principal of the Russian School of Math presented a petition from his business, signed by 180 people, advocating for not changing the policy/procedures. He said that after 6 years of operation, they have had no drop off safety issues with their students. He stated that traffic on Main Street would increase if bus transportation is not available.

Matthew Moncrieff spoke about his Martial Arts school which has operated for 20 years. He said he would be willing to adapt to these changes if required, but in only 8 weeks, it would be very difficult. He meets students at the bus with a clipboard to check off who is there. He offered to pay a fee if that would be necessary.

The Committee took a 5 minute recess at this point in the meeting.

The Morris' spoke about their Acton School of Ballet, which has been in business here for 49 years, and expressed appreciation for how accommodating the Transportation department has been for their students. They described their operation as a "childcare resource", welcoming children off the bus, hours before their classes began offering them a library for doing homework, space to eat lunch and socialize before class.

Several parents spoke about wanting their children to be involved in classes after school, not just daycare or being home alone and bus passing made that possible. Bill Guthlein spoke for the families in the Special Education Parent Advisory Council, noting that their children need extra social and emotional experiences and support and bus passes provide some of those opportunities. He suggested that families be charged for the service. JD explained that as a regional school district, we cannot charge families. One parent asked for clarification about who could vote on this policy/procedure change. School Committee members only vote on policies. The Administration decides on

procedures. One mother said, “This is a community focused on educating and enriching children’s lives.” She considered bus passing a creative solution and hoped that it could continue.

A representative from the Angel Dance Company asked that the Committee to consider a middle ground instead of the proposed change. He felt risks could be mitigated. Mike Coppolino advocated for giving the change more time, but definitely to address the issue, even if it means adding a meeting. Paul Murphy does not want to upset the local businesses. Brigid Bieber asked the Committee what they wanted to do, given that at the previous meeting on 5/21/15, they instructed the Policy subcommittee to eliminate the stops to local businesses and only bus to homes. Maria Neyland emphasized that she is now hearing that an adult needs to meet children when they get off the bus (if they are not at their home stop). Mike Coppolino said the Committee has more insight now after all the public input, and acknowledged that there is concern about safety and liability. He does not want the District to go out of its way to stop at new places.

Mary Brolin would like to see a second revision that includes some business stops, as well as procedures that address safety and explicitly how children will be taken off the bus. Deanne O’Sullivan asked if this would apply to Junior High and High School students. It was pointed out that the current policy only applies to elementary students.

The Superintendent stated that the distinction between the policy and procedures is important. As long as the policy is in place, safety will be a priority. Dr. Brand will meet with JD Head and the Administration regarding revising the procedures for the next meeting on 6/25/15.

8. ABRSD FY15/16 Budget Updates– Clare Jeannotte

1. FY15 Budget Update - Health Insurance Deductions Correction - **VOTE**
Marie Altieri reviewed how insurance deductions have been handled in the past, and why the amount requested needs to be transferred.
Michael Coppolino moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to authorize payment of \$49,830.54 from the School Choice Fund for Health Insurance Expenses as proposed.

9. Leadership Update – Glenn Brand

1. Interim Director of Pupil Services
Two candidates were interviewed and Dr. Brand will keep the Committee updated. He anticipates a decision by the next meeting on June 25.

10. Recommendation to Approve Changes to FY16 Administrators’ Benefits Manual

Glenn Brand described the changes including legal updates for this annual vote. This was a full legal review by our attorney.
Mary Brolin moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the changes to the FY16 Administrators’ Benefits Manual as proposed.

11. Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Nordic Ski Team Trip to Quebec, Canada 12/26/15 – 12/31/15

Maria Neyland moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the trip as proposed.

12. Recommendation to Approve FY16 Food and Related Products (TEC) Bid Award

Maria Neyland moved, Kathleen Neville seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the FY16 TEC Bid Award as proposed.

13. Recommendation to Approve ABRPTSO Gift to RJGJHS – VOTE

Mary Brolin moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the ABRPTSO gift to the Junior High School

14. Recommendation to Approve 2014 – 2015 Gifts to ABRHS – VOTE

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the 2014 – 2015 gifts to the High School.

15. Subcommittee Updates

1. **Budget** – meetings on 5/6/15 and 6/4/15 – *Kristina Rychlik*

The FY16 budget process was reviewed as well as budget Saturday, and a 3 Board meeting to discuss how the budget works prior to beginning work on the next season.

2. **Policy**

i. **Naming School Facilities, File: FF – First Reading - *Brigid Bieber***

The past several times a facility has been named, the process has been questioned. One change is the waiting period to lessen the emotion when someone has recently retired or passed away. Also, the subcommittee wanted to encourage scholarships, as other communities do. Kristina gave an example of how waiting for 3 years may not be the best option.

ii. **Consent Agenda: Remote Participation, File: BEDJA, Voting Method, File: BEDF, Executive Sessions, File: BEC – First Reading – *Brigid Bieber***

Only changes were due to regionalization and legal reference. On executive sessions, changes referenced the Open Meeting Law, instead of listing the specifics. Mike Coppelino asked why the specifics on executive sessions were eliminated because it's easier for the public to see the reasons right in the policy. Brigid said a link could be added, or the list could be added.

16. School Committee Member Reports

1. Acton Finance Committee – Kristina Rychlik said that Glenn Brand and Clare Jeannotte presented the Q3 Report. Mike Majors was elected the new chair. Quarterly updates to the Fincom are in the bylaws of the town of Acton when Acton Public Schools existed. It is being looking into whether this needs to continue now with K-12 regionalization.
2. Acton-Boxborough SpedPAC – Paul Murphy – has met twice. They are doing a survey for parents and looking forward to the Director of Pupil Service Search.

17. Superintendent's Report – *Glenn Brand*

1. Update on Naming of Elm Street Courts – *Dedication June 17 at 6:15 p.m.*
Mike Coppelino offered to speak at the dedication representing the schools. He knew Mr. Cartwright personally.
2. PARCC Forum – June 22 at 4:00 in Lynn, MA
Dr. Brand and several Committee members plan to attend and give input on whether or not to continue using PARCC.

18. FY16 School Committee Meetings Calendar – Second Reading – VOTE - *Kristina Rychlik*

1. Draft 1: Twice monthly starting in September, one in April and one in May
2. Draft 2: Meeting every 3 weeks
3. July 22 (Wed) Workshop – evening
4. August 10 (Mon) Business Meeting?

Maria Neyland moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve Draft 1 as the FY16 ABRSC meeting calendar

19. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

1. Schedule for Last Day of School, Thursday, June 25, 2015
2. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report - ABRSD Students in Grades 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12
This will be presented to the community in the fall.
3. Reminder: Annual Superintendent's Summative Evaluation– *Kristina Rychlik*
Final Committee members' comments to the Chairperson by June 16

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda