

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING  
Minutes (approved 11/20/14)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

November 6, 2014  
6:45 p.m. Executive Session  
7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

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*Members Present:* Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik  
*Members Absent:* Dennis Bruce  
*Others:* Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

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Chairperson Kristina Rychlik called the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee to order at 6:45 p.m.

1. **ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 6:45 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

**VOTED** by role call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

(**YES** – Bieber, Brolin, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, O'Sullivan, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated 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 7:04 p.m. the ABRSC was polled to go out of Executive Session.

2. **RETURN TO OPEN MEETING**

3. **Chairman's Introduction**

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

4.1. Minutes of School Committee Meetings

4.1.1. The minutes of the "3 Board Meeting" on 10/28/14 (3 Board Meeting) were approved.

4.1.2. Remaining minutes would be considered at the next meeting.

5. **Public Participation - none**

6. **Annual Enrollment Projections Presentation**

Mary Ann and Peter Ashton presented student enrollment projections for our District for the 18<sup>th</sup> year. Enrollment trend continues to decline. They do not include choice students so their figures are sometimes slightly different from other projections. They have a very small error rate of less than 0.5% for difference between projection and actual for last year. Birth projections have been revised downward again. This is one of the most significant changes from last year. Regional elementary enrollment drops by about 550 students between now and 2022, then increases by about 100 students by 2026. The Jr High and High Schools continue to drop with a total decline of 740 students between

now and 2026. (Jr High drops to about 625 students in 2025 and High School to 1400 by 2026.) The Superintendent and Chairperson thanked the Ashtons for their valuable information.

Mike Coppelino asked how the Administration ensures that our students actually live in Acton and Boxborough. Marie Altieri explained that three types of proof of residency are required to register. If there is a question about residency at any time, it is pursued. The policy subcommittee will be reviewing this policy. Similar communities like Lexington and Newton are being looked at for best practices. Parents have been required to withdraw their children if they do not live here.

## 7. **FY16 School Calendar Discussion – FIRST READING**

7.1. Memo with policy IC/ICA

7.2. Proposed Draft #1- Schools Open 9/2/15 (before Labor Day), 3 religious holidays off

7.3. Proposed Draft #2 – Schools Open 9/8/15 (after Labor Day), 3 religious holidays off

7.4. Current FY15 School Calendar, fyi

Mr. Brand stated that the primary purpose at this meeting is to gather public opinion as a First Reading. Important school calendar considerations are: how religious holidays are handled, whether to start before or after Labor Day, and how late in June the last day of school falls. No change is being proposed next year regarding not having school on the 3 religious holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Good Friday.

The Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) surveyed their members and they were not in favor of teachers coming two days prior to Labor Day and students starting after Labor Day. Consequently, Draft 2 is not being recommended. The ABEA and the Administration recommend Draft 1 (Staff has professional development on 8/31 and 9/1. Students in K-7 and 9 begin 9/2 and all grades attend on 9/3. No school would be held on Friday, 9/4 (per ABEA contract) and Monday, 9/7 (Labor Day).

Some Committee members expressed concern about going too late in the year. Draft 1 would end on June 20 (with no snow days). They asked if there are other options. Concern was also expressed about the smoothness of the start of school for students. It was asked if two vacation weeks could be consolidated into one. The ABEA contract states that two weeks of vacation will be given in February and April. Another option is backing this up even further in August.

Marie Altieri suggested that another possibility may be to consider having two professional development days the week before and students could start August 31st. This would require ABEA and Administrative feedback. It was agreed that changing vacations is an important conversation that requires lots of public input and it is too late for next year. Brigid Bieber spoke in favor of Draft 1 and is not concerned about ending on June 20. FY15's last day is June 19.

The Superintendent will bring an earlier start proposal to the next meeting after talking with ABEA and Administration. He hopes to present two options and have the Committee vote a decision at the next meeting.

## 8. **Single Tier Elementary Busing Presentation**

JD Head began by stating that the information presented last year on this topic was very preliminary. Now that full regionalization has begun, he has had a chance to look more fully into the issues. He was clear that it would be difficult to find the number of licensed bus drivers needed to make the one tier elementary school transportation work, and to secure the number of buses needed, but if the School Committee is fully committed to this model, he would make it happen. JD and Glenn Brand

emphasized that if that were the case, there is a significant budgetary component that would have to be included in the budget going forward.

The Committee asked about regional transportation reimbursement and how transportation for students who walk is handled. JD explained that they schedule busing for all students, because due to school choice, there are very few students that live very close to the schools they attend. The Committee agreed that the current handling of bus passes needs to be reviewed and revised as it is causing a significant amount of additional work for school staff and drivers to ensure students' safety.

The Committee asked JD to look into outsourcing the transportation service. This was done 9 years ago and there was not much response. JD will try again, which will require some minimal legal fees. It was emphasized that JD runs a huge operation, with many hidden costs and labor hours. Paul Murphy said that at a recent Acton BOS meeting, reps from Concord talked about the Knox Trail property. There was talk about a possible partnership for storing buses. JD said there is not currently so much an issue of too many students on the buses, but where they live compared to their school and how much travel time is required. Geography is an issue. Kristina Rychlik stated that this is confirmation that doing 2 tiers in the past has been saving the District money. She said, "This one tier plan is a huge cost without a lot of direct educational benefit." She questioned whether maybe the school start time committee might find more educational benefits to justify further consideration of the issue.

JD emphasized the shortage of licensed bus drivers. He feels some current drivers will leave if the one tier model is adopted because it will be a reduction in hours for some drivers. Kristina confirmed that the Committee wants to maintain the current transportation model and get a bid for both single tier and the current model for future consideration.

9. **MCAS Report** – *Deborah Bookis*

- 9.1. Presentation slides (*revised from original packet*)
- 9.2. MA DESE 2014 School Accountability Determinations slides
- 9.3. *Fewer Mass. Schools Earn Top State Rating*, Boston Globe, 9/29/14
- 9.4. *Competency Determination Decision for the Class of 2019*, DESE, 6/13/14
- 9.5. Spring 2014 MCAS results posted at:  
<http://www.abschools.org/departments/curriculum/assessment>

Deborah Bookis began stating that regarding PARCC results, it is impossible to compare MCAS results from last year to other years because so many students took PARCC and it skews the comparisons. She emphasized again that multiple measures are used for our educators' ratings, making it difficult to understand why the state wants to only use one measure. For the next three years, it is to be expected that what we teach our students in science will not be aligned with the testing required. No results will be provided for PARCC tests, which was explained from the beginning. Deborah said that many people are frustrated about the lack of information being shared, including those in the curriculum group at EDCO.

Challenge areas will be addressed using personnel, structures and resources, curriculum development and professional learning. This is particularly true in the writing open response questions tests where attention is needed.

10. **Finance Department Update** – *Clare Jeannotte*

10.1. FY15 Update

Work is still being done with the new MUNIS chart of accounts and finalizing numbers that will allow Clare to bring a clear report to the next School Committee meeting.

The FY'14 audit will be signed off shortly and the auditor will present results next month.

10.1.1. Recommendation to Approve Revision to Table 6 – **VOTE**

Clare reviewed the need to revise Table 6 due to the final voted state budget and the Middlesex Retirement Assessment.

1. \$392,649 increase from mostly regional school transportation
2. Agreements from each of the Towns to have each pay a portion of their Middlesex Retirement Assessment but the budget was not actually changed to reflect this. \$1.3 million was the original figure, but that amount had to be \$451,000 greater. This assessment does not change for either town. Clare spoke to Tess Summers, the two Towns' accountants and Don Aicardi on this and they are all in agreement.

The initial budget intended to take \$500,000 from E and D. This revision reduces the reliance on E and D to \$300,000 and puts the difference into a hedge for transportation reimbursement.

Brigid Bieber moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** that the total adjusted appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 be set at \$76,455,123 and that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Agreement and amendments thereto as follows: Acton \$49,690,145, Boxborough \$10,594,577, remainder to be accounted for by the Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$13,609,085, Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$133,282, Anticipated Regional Bonus Aid in the amount of \$139,000, Transportation Aid, Chapter 71, Section 16C in the amount of \$1,729,727, an anticipated transfer to the Regional School Transportation Reimbursement Fund in the amount of \$192,649, and Transition Year Middlesex Retirement reimbursement from Acton of \$384,255 and from Boxborough of \$67,042, a transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$300,000, and a transfer from the Junior High School Project Premium on Loan in the amount of \$658.

11. **OPEB Trust Fund Annual Meeting Report**

11.1. OPEB Trust Agreement, 12/6/12

11.2. FY14 Portfolio Review, 6/30/14

Kristina Rychlik gave a brief update.

12. **FY15 Superintendent and District Goals – FIRST READ**

The Superintendent reviewed his goals for the year. He asked for School Committee and community feedback and would ask for a vote of approval at the next meeting.

Mary Brolin noted with appreciation that one of the goals focuses on mental health and wellness, but asked how Mr. Brand could be evaluated on that item. She said that it will be incumbent on the Superintendent to show evidence that he has been successful on this point.

13. **Subcommittee Updates**

13.1. **Outreach** – *Kristina Rychlik*

The group met this morning, and will have a draft mission statement for the Committee to consider.

13.2. **Policy**

13.2.1. Consent Agenda #7 – **FIRST READ** – Maria Neyland (*to be done at next meeting*)

13.2.2. **Public Participation at School Committee Meetings**, File: BEDH (new) – **FIRST READ**

Comments should be sent to Beth by next Wednesday’s policy meeting. One member felt a 2 minute limit was too short, but it was emphasized that the Chair can permit speakers more time if appropriate.

13.2.3. **Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI)**, File: ADDA (new) – **FIRST READ**  
Marie Altieri stated that this is really no change from the current policy.

13.2.4. **Fingerprint-Based Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) Checks**, File: ADDB (new) ) – **FIRST READ**

Marie Altieri stated that all employees, age 18 and up, are required to be fingerprinted, but not volunteers. Procedurally, the Administration is wondering if contractors should be included in the requirement but they continue to discuss that. Employees pay for this activity.

13.3. **Regionalization Financial Oversight**

Mike Coppelino gave a summary of the meeting on 10/23/14. All agreed the Middlesex Retirement item is a big bump in the budget and the importance of the public understanding this.

13.4. **Establish Budget Subcommittee members -VOTE**

Kristina Rychlik explained that the intent is to meet with Glenn Brand and Clare Jeannotte every other week, proposing Wednesdays 8 – 9 a.m.

Mike Coppelino moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED** that Brigid Bieber, Maria Neyland, Dennis Bruce, Paul Murphy and Kristina Rychlik be members of the new Budget Subcommittee.

14. **School Committee Member Reports**

14.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Kristina Rychlik* – next meeting is Nov 13

14.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) – *Maria Neyland* - next meeting is Dec 3

14.3. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– *Mary Brolin*

Treasurer’s reports differ significantly from Cook and Company’s numbers. This will be researched. It could be due to married couple employees. Now estimated at 6% based on historic trend.

14.4. Acton Finance Committee – *Kristina Rychlik*

Acton Fincom is reaching out to PTOs and other groups such as the Senior Center.

Kristina asked if School Committee members would like to sign up to attend some of the meetings to hear what is being discussed. Deanne O’Sullivan offered to do any of them.

14.5. Acton Board of Selectmen - *Paul Murphy*

Special Town Meeting will be held on Nov 12 re: Nursing Service, zoning, Knox Trail.

14.6. Acton-Boxborough SpedPAC – *Paul Murphy*

SPedPac has met several times and is working to have their School Committee policy and procedures updated. They are looking at surveys from previous years, and are advocating for teachers to sign off on students’ IEPs.

14.7. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – *Brigid Bieber*

The Fiber Optics issue came up again and needs to be addressed.

14.8. Three Board Meeting - Acton Selectmen, Finance Committee and ABRSC on 10/28/14 –

Kristina Rychlik reported that this meeting focused on long range planning and getting to know the other Boards’ members. It was arranged by the Finance Committee.

14.9. Boxborough Master Plan Update – *Maria Neyland*

A public forum will be held on Nov 19 at Boxborough Town Hall.

Paul Murphy reported on Rep. Cory Atkins’ recent forum. She found Bill Guthlein’s Population Trends Report very interesting. Paul proposed writing a letter from the School Committee

requesting the state to change the 71B circuit breaker formula. Rep. Atkins said if there is going to be any change, now is the time to get a letter out. Mike Coppolino asked if it should be shared with EDCO or CASE as well. Brigid Bieber offered to help circulate it to EDCO. Paul will send draft letter to Kristina who will receive comments from Committee members.

15. **Recommendation to Approve Field Trip to Quebec – VOTE - Glenn Brand**

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

**VOTED:** to approve the ski trip to Quebec over vacation.

16. **Superintendent's Report – Glenn Brand**

16.1. Update on District Committees

16.1.1.1. District Safety & Emergency, chaired by the Superintendent

16.1.1.2. Superintendent's Safety Task Force, chaired by the Superintendent

16.1.1.3. Anti-Bullying & Harassment Review, chaired by Todd Chicko & Priscilla Kotyk

16.1.1.4. School Wellness Advisory, chaired by Diana McNicholas & Diane Spring

Mr. Brand reviewed the four district committees. Membership is being confirmed now. He said that the school start time group would be also be forming and report back to the Committee.

17. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

The Superintendent highlighted the "No School, Delayed Opening & Emergency Release Procedures memo to families" in the packet.

He continues meeting with community members and groups and asked people to fill out his brief Entry Plan survey found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/superentry>

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

**NEXT MEETINGS:**

11/20/14 and 12/4/14, ABRSC Meetings, 7:00 p.m. Junior High Library

The Committee will start regular meetings at 7:00 p.m. now.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda