

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING  
Minutes (approved 10/22/15)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 15, 2015  
7:00 p.m.

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*Members Present:* Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik  
*Members Absent:* Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino  
*Others:* Bonnie Bisbicos, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr, ABRHS Student Representatives

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1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik.

2. **Chairman's Introduction**

Dr. Brand welcomed the ABRHS School Committee Representatives: Leanne Quinn, Hannah Forgo, Vennela Pandaraboyina and Arnav Mehra. Three of the students are seniors and one is a freshman.

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

3.1. Minutes of the meeting on 10/1/15 will be done at the next meeting.

3.2. Warrant # 16-008 dated 10/8/15 in the amount of \$2,362,824.62 and warrant #16-008PR dated 10/15/15 in the amount of \$507,416.65 were signed by the Committee.

4. **Public Participation** - none

5. **Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SpEd PAC) Presentation**

Special Education Parent Advisory Council Cochairs Amanda Bailey and Bill Guthlein presented on the group's 2015-2016 goals and preliminary report findings. Goals include: APPLE Plan follow up, Broaden Diversity and Expand Outreach, Update Resources on PAC Site, Update Special Education Parent Handbook, and Publish their 2015 Parent/Guardian Survey Report, Population Trends Update, and MCAS Analysis. Other Priorities for 2015-2016 include: Explore new practice of teachers signing off on IEPs/504s within five days of receiving a signed plan, Meeting special educators and specialists system-wide to forge relationships, Continuing to emphasize inclusion and seamless partnership between regular and special education staff, and Lobbying for special education training for all staff and administrators.

Amanda explained that they are trying to reach out in many ways because only one group of families comes to meetings. Some families do not even know that the Sped PAC exists, so they are trying to publicize in many different ways to reach as many groups as possible. Paul Murphy stated that the definition of "low income" being redefined concerns him. Marilyn Bisbicos explained that the state is trying to align itself with the federal criteria and that has changed a few things. Kristina Rychlik said that the Committee will have to figure this out during budget season in particular.

Amanda and Bill were thanked for all of their hard work and especially for the reports.

6. **MASC District Governance Program Update** – *Kristina Rychlik*

6.1. ABRSC 2015 - 2016 Operating Protocols

6.2. ABRSD Mission, Values and Long Range Strategic Plan:  
<http://www.abschools.org/district/mission-and-values>

6.3. Superintendent's FY16 Goals

Kristina stated that the Committee's homework for next week is to consider the District goals and tie them back to the Long Range Strategic Plan. Dorothy Presser will be facilitating the workshop again.

**7. Budget Update – Clare Jeannotte**

**7.1. FY15 End of Year Update**

Clare Jeannotte stated that the General Fund closed the year \$666.9K favorable to the budget with \$23K being revenues and the balance being expense favorability. Favorability in the health insurance line was confirmed in April which was very helpful, but a one time event. Another one time favorable item was a refund from the CASE Collaborative. We are limited by the State to 5% for reserves. Certification will not be done until January or February. The fund balance that the District is starting to work with is \$1,955,000 at this time but DOR (Department of Revenue) may change that slightly.

The annual audit is substantially complete and Clare is waiting for the final financial statements. The Auditor will then report to the School Committee.

In response to a question about 9C cuts, Clare stated that it is the governor's purview to cut the budget during the year if he feels it is necessary. As a result, this is highly unpredictable. Clare emphasized the importance of the pressure put on politicians and MARS on this topic this past year and stressed that it made a difference for the regional districts like AB. Kristina thanked Clare for her very thorough report.

**8. Recommendation to Authorize ABRSD Treasurer to Borrow – VOTE – Clare Jeannotte**

This same vote was done a year ago at Tess Summer's suggestion and could be valuable to vote every year, just in case it is needed.

Paul Murphy moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** To authorize the Treasurer to borrow in anticipation of revenue for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015, in accordance with the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 16(d), and to renew any note or notes with the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 16 (d).

**9. FY18 School Vacation Discussion – Next Steps – Kristina Rychlik**

Kristina stated that this discussion will not impact next year's calendar. Based on the last School Committee meeting discussion of alternatives to our current one week off in February and one week off in April, there were three options: begin researching what other communities are doing and present that at a community forum, work on a state initiative, or decide not to proceed with changes. Kristina asked for volunteers for the options.

It was the sense of the Committee to proceed with Option 1. Brigid Bieber pointed out that the state does not dictate the vacation schedule, although it does dictate the number of days required (180). It was suggested that the Committee start by reaching out to the teachers and staff for their input educationally.

The Committee agreed to start with Option 1. Kathleen Neville and Maya Minkin volunteered to lead this effort and keep the School Committee posted.

**10. Subcommittee Reports**

10.1. Budget – Kristina Rychlik (10/14/15)

Maria Neyland agreed to chair the budget subcommittee. Next meeting is Oct 28.

10.2. Outreach – Kathleen Neville (10/14/15)

Kathleen and Kristina met with Amy Bisiewicz yesterday and are working on the School Committee section of the website. People can now sign up to receive the School Committee meeting agendas via Constant Contact when they are posted on Friday nights.

10.3. Regionalization Financial Oversight Committee (10/6/15)

Kristina reported that the committee met on October 6<sup>th</sup>. They reviewed Clare's Financial Reporting memo. The sub-committee requested preliminary data before January, if possible, and that per pupil cost be calculated similar to the per pupil cost on the DESE web site, which is different than Clare's recommendation. Mary Brolin will discuss this with Clare. The sub-committee identified that its major tasks this year will be to continue tracking financial benefits and to review the per pupil costs.

10.4. Demographic Study Update – *Kristina Rychlik*

On Oct 5, Mary Brolin, Mike Coppolino, Glenn Brand and Andrew Shen met to discuss next steps. Advice was to keep the focus very narrow to be most beneficial. What do we want to know? This one should focus on policy and practice, more than values. Next step is to meet with the Boston College staff.

10.5. Legislative – Paul Murphy

10.5.1. Draft Letter from ABRSC re: Standardized Testing

Paul Murphy and Kathleen Neville have not met since the last meeting. School Committee members agreed to sign the draft letter found in the packet regarding PARCC testing. This will be sent to the Mass Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**11. School Committee Member Reports - oral reports**

11.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Kristina Rychlik, Paul Murphy*

11.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) – *Maria Neyland*

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

11.4. Acton Finance Committee – *Kristina Rychlik, Deanne O'Sullivan*

11.5. Acton Board of Selectmen – *Mike Coppolino, Paul Murphy*

11.6. Boxborough Finance Committee- *Mary Brolin*

11.7. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – *Maria Neyland, Brigid Bieber*

11.8. Minuteman Tech Update – *Diane Baum*

11.9. PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs– *Deanne O'Sullivan*

**12. Acton Special Town Meeting re Citizens' Petition (11/10/15) – *Kristina Rychlik***

Kristina reviewed her memo of suggestions/corrections regarding the timing of the Committee making a statement about this issue.

Brigid Bieber expressed confusion because as a regional school district, Acton Town Meeting does not dictate what the ABRSC does. She said it is hard to know how this would apply, beyond it being a non binding resolution for Acton citizens. She does not feel like the School Committee should get into the factual accuracy of the petition on Town Meeting floor.

Maria Neyland attended the Acton Fincom meeting with Kristina last night to hear the petitioners. The School Committee has been clear over the past couple of years about how they feel about PARCC testing, etc. She stated that there is a lot of time and energy being put into this petition and it should be directed to the state and federal level because it cannot be changed at the local level. She proposed a short statement from the Committee at the Town Meeting. Paul Murphy stated that he cannot support the petition with the language it currently has in it.

Kristina read a statement from Mary Brolin that pointed out since Acton Town Meeting cannot actually resolve to do the things stated in the petition, Acton should present the article as a sense of

Town Meeting. That way residents can send their input to the School Committee but they cannot take direct action. The petitioners also use “standardized testing” when they probably mean “high stakes testing”, one of several inaccuracies in the document. Kristina is concerned about the approach that is being taken with this issue, especially given that the School Committee has publicly agreed with a portion of this position for a number of years. Amy Krishnamurthy stated that she is uncomfortable with this petition going before the public because there are mistakes and it is not a clear statement that the Committee can make. Steve Noone spoke from the audience and said that the Acton FinCom will not vote a position until the 3 Board meeting. Kristina suggested that the School Committee may continue this discussion (about the Petition) at the workshop meeting next Thursday night.

Corrine Hogseth, one of the petitioners, spoke regarding the privacy issue emphasizing that this testing will collect a large amount of information about our children that should not be held by the state. Regarding the expense of technology in the classroom, she feels there is too much of it in our classrooms and it takes away from instruction.

Kristina will draft a recommendation memo for the Acton Board of Selectmen and Fincom, and if questions exist after that is distributed, the School Committee can decide how they want to answer them.

13. **FY16 No School/Delayed Opening/Emergency Release Procedures – Glenn Brand**

This information will be sent out to families and staff and posted on the website.

14. **Superintendent’s Report – Glenn Brand**

14.1. School Capital and Space Planning Subcommittee Update

In the recent ABConnector newsletter, Dr. Brand asked for volunteers for this subcommittee and expects them to meet in early December. Interested volunteers should contact him.

14.2. Superintendent’s Safety Task Force

This group met a little over a week ago. It is comprised of staff and police officers from Acton and Boxborough. Three primary areas of focus include: revisiting recommendations made by the last Committee, reviewing preparations/procedures for readiness, and reviewing the different lockdown procedures currently in place. The work of this committee will be brought to the community when appropriate for parent/guardian input.

14.3. Superintendent’s Wellness Committee

This group will meet on October 20th.

15. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

Dr. Brand highlighted the following:

15.1. School Council Orientation Meeting slides, 10/5/15

15.2. Family Learning Series: *PreK – 2 Early Literacy Learning*, Matt Glover, Oct 29 at 7:00 p.m. in the R.J. Grey Jr High Auditorium – a great new initiative.

15.3. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Presentation, Wednesday, Oct 21 at 7:00 p.m.

Location: ABRHS Room 115N

*Results of 2014 Survey & Discussion of upcoming Spring 2016 Survey*

The AB Connector newsletter was distributed via Constant Contact last Friday. Sign up on the website to receive issues directly via email, or see issue posted on [www.ab.mec.edu](http://www.ab.mec.edu).

Dr. Brand acknowledged the recent passing of former Building and School Committee member and active community volunteer, Michael Scanlon. He will be missed.

The ABRSC was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda