

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

November 19, 2015
7:00 p.m.
Followed by Executive Session

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber (8:40 p.m.), Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan (7:10 p.m.), Kristina Rychlik

Members Absent: none

Others: Marie Altieri, Bonnie Bisbicos, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik.

2. **Chairman’s Introduction**

3. **Statement of Warrant**

Warrant # 16-010PR dated 11/12/15 in the amount of \$1,985,900.68 and warrant #16-011 dated 11/19/15 in the amount of \$2,058,964.13 were signed by the Committee members.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting on 11/10/15 were approved as written. Minutes of 11/5/15 will be voted at the next meeting.

5. **Public Participation - none**

6. **Existing Conditions Study Report Update from Dore & Whittier – Glenn Brand, JD Head**

Dr. Brand introduced the first progress presentation from Dore and Whittier. In December or January, the Committee will receive a comprehensive 500 page report. Lee Dore, principal of the firm, reported that his team has been through all nine of the school buildings. They are now reviewing all of the data and organizing it into line item budgets for the capital improvements proposal. This plan will be prioritized by school over time, based on current state regulations. Lee noted that our District’s focus on energy conservation is to be commended.

In Summary:

- Buildings overall are solidly constructed and well maintained.
- Buildings in most need of improvements are ones that have not had additions or renovations:
 - Administration Building (built in 1957)
 - Douglas (built in 1965)
 - Gates (built in 1967)
 - Conant (built in 1970)
- Codes and regulations have changed considerably since the older buildings have been constructed.
- A considerable investment will be required and that is not even to address educational needs. (Phase 2 will address educational needs.)

Questions from the Committee:

Lee confirmed that there are no sprinklers in some buildings, because they are grandfathered. There will be code triggers about this when work begins. Modularity was not taken into account because they are considered temporary. Lee offered to reassess including the modular rooms if the Committee desired.

Dr. Brand thanked the presenters emphasizing that this is a multi-year endeavor. The State and its MA State Building Authority (MSBA) grant program will also have an effect on the timeline. If successful, they would offset some of the costs, but it would trigger some code issues.

The options will become clearer as Phase 2 (“Educational Visioning and Master Plan Development”) progresses. Dr. Brand noted that the District has not committed any funding yet for the Phase 2 work. Part 1 is funded in the FY16 budget, and the plan was that Phase 2 would be incorporated into the FY17 budget. Dr. Brand advocated for moving forward more quickly on the study. He asked the School Committee if Phase 2 should be accelerated now to prevent a 5 or 6 month lag in learning what our options are. He pointed out that there is great interest at the town level on capital. He asked the Committee to consider exploring what Phase 2 funding might look like. The Request For Proposal (RFP) has been structured so that the District does not have to go out to bid for Phase 2. Dr. Brand will continue this discussion at a future meeting.

7. FY17 Fees Review/Recommendations Presentation –First Read - Glenn Brand

7.1. Athletics – Steve Martin

ABRSD Athletic Director Steve Martin presented on his programs’ fees. He proposed an increase to next year’s athletic fee of \$45. Sports that have an initial cost like ski, hockey and gymnastics would charge an additional \$250. He proposed a family cap of \$1,500 per year.

This is needed due to salary increases, the FY11 Budget cut of \$71,930, decrease in participants, increase in transportation costs and a decrease in gate receipts. This has resulted in the past four consecutive years ending with a deficit in his budget, despite cost saving/revenue generating attempts. He expects, at this time, for FY16 to end in a deficit as well, of approximately \$60,000. Steve has surveyed other communities and because there are so many ways to handle these expenses, it is difficult to compare the fees.

Mike Coppolino reminded the Committee that a few years ago they talked about cutting some 7th grade sports. Also many schools don’t have 7th grade teams so it is sometimes hard for AB to field ours. There are other basketball programs that kids could play (so perhaps we don’t have to keep all of our teams), compared to field hockey where there are not many other options to play that sport, so AB would keep all of their teams. He also suggested that some teams seem to change uniforms more often than might be necessary, and some savings might be found that way.

Paul Murphy asked if the Projected Gate revenue included use of the track for large events. Steve replied that it did not because the District would charge a minimal charge for its use, but money is made from the concessions. Steve clarified that concessions revenue usually goes to the boosters’ clubs. The Lions Club runs concessions for football games.

Mary Brolin noted that the running deficit seemed parallel to the cuts done in 2011, so maybe those cuts were not right. Deanne O’Sullivan asked why more has not been done to encourage corporate sponsors. Steve pointed out that Dr. Mills tried to encourage this idea but it did not take off, other than our traditional, very generous, current sponsors. When asked if he attributed the lower participation to the fees and changes in enrollment, Steve replied that he thought it was more due to changes in demographics and culture. Deanne O’Sullivan was concerned about the new family max. Mary Brolin appreciated that Steve is offering more assistance to families who are on waivers.

Maya Minkin asked if Steve had considered increasing the annual fee more to make the bottom line work out better. As a new Athletic Director, Steve said he is still trying to understand how things work in the department and did not feel right going any higher at this time. Maria Neyland cautioned about increasing the fee more because athletes' families are also paying a lot for equipment and fundraising every year.

Kristina Rychlik suggested that some of the items could be capital issues that may be considered differently. She agreed with increasing the family cap and helping those families that need financial assistance. Mike Coppolino advocated strongly for consideration of ending the girls and boys 7th grade basketball teams. He also thought it might be worth looking into corporate sponsorship again. Maya Minkin advocated strongly against cutting any 7th grade teams because she considers it an important feature in our towns. Deanne O'Sullivan disagreed with the increase because most families will not hit the family cap of \$1500.

The Committee will be asked to vote at their next meeting. If there are no changes, approximately \$70,000 will come from the budget to cover the deficit if the year ends with one.

7.2. Kindergarten – *Erin Bettez*

Erin Bettez recommended a tuition increase from \$4,300 to \$4,500 for next year. The hybrid method (a mix of all day and half day students) is good because it gives more choice to more families. It has been in place for a long time at Blanchard. Next year we will have two classrooms of hybrids.

7.3. ABRSD Early Childhood Program – *Joe Gibowicz*

The All Day Program fee would be unchanged for next year - \$3,530 for Half Day and \$6,830 for All Day. Joe Gibowicz provided comparisons with other communities' rates.

7.4. Occupational Development Program (ODP) – *Mary Emmons*

This rate did not change from FY15 to FY16. It is proposed that the rate increase 2% for FY17 to address staffing salary increases. Presently the Program has 16 students with 2 from out of district.

8. **Potential Solar Net Metering Agreement Overview** – *JD Head*

JD Head explained this new possibility for energy cost savings. Net metering is a system in which solar panels or other renewable energy generators are connected to a public-utility power grid (Nstar via the NEMA load zone) and surplus power is transferred onto the grid, allowing customers to offset the cost of power drawn from the utility. Acton's Land Fill is an example of net metering. Financial risk revolves around the cost of electricity and how much electricity the District consumes. The Committee had questions about the complicated technical aspects of this proposal. JD will meet with anyone who needs more details next week. He will bring more information to the School Committee meeting on 12/3/15. He hopes the Committee will vote to approve the proposal at that time.

9. **FY17 ABRSD School Calendar – Second Reading – VOTE** - *Glenn Brand, Marie Altieri*

9.1. School Year/School Calendar, Policy File: IC/ICA

9.2. Staff Survey Results

9.3. Draft FY17 Proposed Calendar (no change from 11/5/15 meeting)

Maria Neyland stated that she would not vote for this proposal because it observes religious holidays and she has not agreed with this for the 8 years that she has been on the Committee. As in the past, she stated that having only two religions' holidays as no school is wrong. She feels the District is ignoring the changes in demographics in our community, and is offended by this. She also feels that the High School students need all the school days they can get to prepare for AP tests. Mike Coppolino stated that having school on Tuesday, October 11, with no school the days before and after, is "silly".

Mary Brolin moved, Deanne O’Sullivan seconded and it was,

VOTED: to approve the FY17 ABRSD School Calendar changes as proposed.

(YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O’Sullivan , Rychlik NO: Neyland)

10. Financial Reports – Clare Jeannotte

- 10.1. 1st Quarter FY16 Financial Report
- 10.2. Foundation Budget Review Commission Report, 10/30/15
- 10.3. Recommendation to Accept Grant from Toshiba America Foundation to ABRHS –
VOTE – Glenn Brand

Clare Jeannotte reported. Kathleen Neville asked why the cost of nurse monitors falls on the district. Bonnie Bisbicos explained that the District has an unusually high number of students this year with this need in their educational plan.

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

VOTED: to accept this grant from Toshiba to ABRHS.

11. MASC District Governance Program Update – Kristina Rychlik

Given the late hour, the Committee decided to postpone this item to their next meeting.

- 11.1. Recommendation to Approve ABRSC Goals – **Second Reading – VOTE**
- 11.2. Final Workshop on January 6 at 7:00 p.m.

12. Subcommittee Reports

Given the late hour, the Committee decided to postpone these items to their next meeting.

- 12.1. Budget – *Maria Neyland (oral)*
- 12.2. Policy –
 - 12.2.1. **School Councils**, File: BDFA – **Second Read – VOTE - Glenn Brand**
 - 12.2.1.1. Procedures: School Improvement Plan, BDFA-R-1, Submission and Approval of the School Improvement Plan, BDFA-R-2, Conduct of School Council Business, BDFA-E-3
 - 12.2.2. **New School Committee Member Orientation**, File: BIA – **Second Read – VOTE - Kathleen Neville**
- 12.3. Demographic Study Update – *Mike Coppolino (oral)*
- 12.4. Legislative – *Paul Murphy (oral)*

13. School Committee Member Reports

Given the late hour, the Committee decided to postpone these items to their next meeting.

- 13.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Kristina Rychlik, Paul Murphy*
 - 13.1.1. Meeting minutes - 10/29/15
- 13.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) – *Maria Neyland (3 Board Meeting on 11/30/15)*
- 13.3. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– *Mary Brolin*
- 13.4. Acton Finance Committee – *Kristina Rychlik, Deanne O’Sullivan*
- 13.5. Acton Board of Selectmen – *Mike Coppolino, Paul Murphy*
- 13.6. Boxborough Finance Committee– *Mary Brolin*
- 13.7. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – *Maria Neyland, Brigid Bieber*
- 13.8. Minuteman Tech Update – *Diane Baum*
- 13.9. PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs– *Deanne O’Sullivan*
- 13.10. Letter of Support for Outdoor Playspaces Proposal to Boxborough Community Preservation Committee – *Katie Neville*
Given the timing, it was the sense of the Committee that this letter was acceptable.

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

- 14.1. Amended Article, distributed at Town Meeting
- 14.2. Final ABRSC Statement
- 14.3. Warrant found at <http://www.acton-ma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/7371>

Acton Town Meeting voted in favor (104-88) of the Citizens' Petition. Kristina Rychlik asked the Committee to consider what, if anything, this means for the committee/district/administration. She summarized that a number of things were learned as this process evolved: there is some sentiment against over testing, there is some sentiment against government involvement in education, and there is some sentiment concerned with data privacy. The Committee agreed that all should try to be sensitive to those sentiments moving forward. There are, however, a number of issues that continue to be misunderstood, particularly around Common Core. She repeated that someone asked, "Does the town really know that they voted to ask you to do something illegal?" It was the sense of the Committee that given that the District will not participate in PARCC testing, and Common Core is a reality, they could agree to disagree with the Citizens' Petition and Special Town Meeting decision.

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

- 15.1. Report of Professional Learning Day, 11/3/15
Deborah Bookis summarized this very successful event.
- 15.2. Advisement on Administration Compensation
Dr. Brand asked the Committee to appoint two Budget Subcommittee members to join him and the Director of Human Resources on an Administration Compensation Ad Hoc Committee. Salary ranges are an important part of attracting good candidates and the District does not have this type of resource. Benefits include increased transparency and it would maintain the District's competitiveness. The Budget Subcommittee will meet on Monday and discuss this.

16. **Senior Leadership Administrative Restructuring Proposal** – Second Reading – **VOTE**

(Note: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Clare Jeannotte and Bonnie Bisbicos left for this discussion.) Dr. Brand originally hoped the School Committee would vote his proposal at this meeting. MGL states that it is the Committee's responsibility to appoint certain positions including Assistant Superintendents. After meeting with the principals, cabinet and most of the School Committee members, he believes his proposal was generally well received. He has received some feedback that the District administrative structure could benefit from a clear distinction regarding someone who would be second in command as an assistant superintendent, or deputy superintendent.

Given his inability to solicit more feedback on this specific question, he recommended:

- 1. Tabling his recommendation for the two assistant superintendents for Teaching and Learning and Operations until he has more information.
- 2. Approving one reclassification of the current position of Director of Pupil Services to the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, to take effect July 1, 2016. This is time sensitive due to the search that will need to be done.

Dr. Brand proposed continuing consideration of the other two assistant superintendents (#1 above) at the next School Committee meeting, but it may need to be later given the holiday, certainly soon.

Mike Coppelino stated that he was not adequately persuaded, if the main reason for this change was to attract a higher quality candidate. He wanted to see the whole restructuring plan. Paul Murphy asked what additional data needed to be gathered. He felt that nothing had changed, and he was in support of the original proposal. He liked the idea of having a #2 position if the Superintendent is out. Dr. Brand stated that he wanted to provide a clear sense of how broad his vision was for the Committee. It was his belief that no matter what the titles are, the district could benefit from the formal designation of a #2 person.

Kristina Rychlik spoke in support of a deputy superintendent role instead of an assistant superintendent of operations. She felt here was a risk of voting only one position. A deputy superintendent role would show the breadth and depth of the person in this role. It represents this reality and what this person has done for several years. This position is less about the restructuring and more about the recognition. There is no downside to having a deputy superintendent and two assistant superintendents. Kristina stated that this job has been performed for a number of years and this is a way to recognize and formalize it.

Mike Coppolino felt that this was a dramatic change to what Dr Brand proposed in the packet. Brigid Bieber agreed with Kristina, but stated that that is not what Dr. Brand was asking the Committee to do now. Paul Murphy stated that he will support what Dr. Brand proposed as long as the Committee followed through at the next meeting. Diane Baum stated that the District needs a really strong leader in student services and she supports this proposal.

Maria Neyland moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was,

VOTED: to approve Dr. Brand’s proposal as presented this evening, not what is in the packet, to change the position of the Director of Pupil Services to the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.

(YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, O’Sullivan , Rychlik NO: Coppolino)

It was presumed that the Committee will take up discussion of the other two proposed positions at the next available School Committee meeting.

17. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**:

At 10:19 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session pursuant to MGL c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) to comply with any general or special law requirements (i.e., c. 30A, § 22(f) and(g)) for the approval of executive session minutes for: 12/11/14, 1/22/15, 3/19/15, 6/25/15 and 7/22/15.

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

Kristina Rychlik stated that the Committee would return to open session solely to adjourn.

At 10:20 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session pursuant to MGL c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to litigation (i.e., Decision dated November 13, 2015).

(YES – Baum, 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 litigating position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session solely to adjourn.

The ABRSC returned to open session and adjourned at 11:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of documents used: see agenda