

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) WORKSHOP  
MINUTES (approved 8/8/16)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

Wednesday, June 29, 2016  
6:00 p.m. Dinner  
6:30 p.m. School Committee Workshop

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*Members Present:* Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin (6:45), Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan (6:50), Kristina Rychlik, Eileen Zhang  
*Members Absent:* none  
*Others:* Glenn Brand, Beth Petr

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The ABRSC was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairperson Mary Brolin.

**1. Statement of Warrants**

The warrants were read by the Chairperson (see attachment) and circulated to the Committee for their review and signatures.

**2. Recommendation to Accept Grant from the Acton Boxborough United Way (ABUW) to A-B Community Education Summer Day Program – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

Katie Neville moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to accept the grant from ABUW to the AB Community Education Summer Day Program.

**3. Policy Subcommittee – Consent Agenda (8 policies) – Second Read – VOTE – Brigid Bieber**

**3.1. Prohibition of Harassment**, File: ACAB, JBA, GBA

**3.2. Evaluation of the Superintendent**, File: CBI

**3.3. Staff Conduct**, File: GBEB

**3.4. Fingerprint-Based Criminal History Record Information Checks**, File: ADDB

**3.5. Drug Free Workplace**, File: GBEC

**3.6. Administration of Medication to Students**, File: JLCD

**3.7. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use by Students Prohibited**, File: JICH

**3.8. Retirement of Facilities**, File: FCB –HOLD

Mary Brolin read the names of the policies and a Hold was requested for Retirement of Facilities, File: FCB.

Maria Neyland moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the consent agenda of 7 policies as proposed.

Regarding the Retirement of Facilities policy, Kristina Rychlik asked why the last sentence in the second paragraph was deleted. Brigid Bieber said that it is redundant with the sentence before it so it is not needed.

Maria Neyland moved, Katie Neville seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to accept the Retirement of Facilities policy as proposed.

**4. Review of Last Year's Workshop**

The Committee briefly reviewed the minutes of the School Committee Workshop on 7/22/15.

## 5. Discussion of Potential School Committee Areas of Focus for 2016-2017

Mary Brolin began the discussion by stating that the objective for the workshop was to agree on overall goals for the School Committee for the new year. She reminded Committee members that the workshop was not to resolve or work on these issues, just to consider whether they should be part of the goals.

### 5.1. FY16 Goals (How did we do?) – *Mary Brolin*

#### 5.1.1. Professional Practice Goal #1

Kristina Rychlik was thanked for her commitment last year to having the Committee complete the MASC's District Governance Program. This goal was fully achieved and it was agreed that the Program made the Committee more efficient and effective.

#### 5.1.2. District Improvement Goal #1

The Committee felt they did well in beginning to address capital needs of the District and will add to this goal for the new year. Clear and consistent communication to the public will be key to success. It was suggested that "talking points" be distributed to Committee members as important issues come up.

#### 5.1.3. District Improvement Goal #2

Community engagement was addressed through a revision of the School Committee section of the website and the PTO Co-chairs meetings, but more could always be done. There was some confusion about roles/expectations for the SC liaisons to the schools. Combining the Outreach subcommittee and the PTO Co-chairs activity might be beneficial. Distributing meeting agendas sooner would be helpful. The Committee considered the value of having principals attend School Committee meetings, given all of the other demands on their time. Outreach is an important goal to continue working on, particularly around the Capital and Wellness topics.

#### 5.1.4. Student Learning Goal #1

The Committee felt this goal was met fairly well although the new Long Range Strategic Plan is needed.

### 5.2. Preliminary Superintendent's FY17 Goals – *Glenn Brand*

Dr. Brand reviewed his preliminary plans for FY17 goals and welcomed comments from the Committee.

Diane Baum wondered why the child study team's involvement in the Student Learning Goal last year was not included again. Dr. Brand has just received the end of year report from the child study team, and will be sharing it with the Committee soon. With Dawn Bentley and Pam Smith starting next week, he will have members of the two working groups present the findings to Dawn and Pam and see how they want to proceed. He did not include this item in his preliminary goals because he intends to include it in the work of the leadership team. Several members agreed that they hope there will be follow up on this item this year.

Mary Brolin asked where the Capital Study work is included. She is concerned that if Dr. Brand adds all of these pieces to last year's goals, there will be too much to accomplish successfully. Mary asked the Superintendent to consider, "To what end? If you collect all of this data, what will you do with it?"

Kristina Rychlik advocated for increased focus on the needs of the Junior High and High School. She agrees with Dr. Brand's focus but feels much of the past 3 years has been on elementary school issues. Amy Krishnamurthy would like to see Wellness goals, including the school start time discussion. Mary Brolin noted that "School Climate" could include Wellness.

Brigid Bieber noted that there are many questions and items being discussed that would go into the Long Range Strategic Plan (LRSP). Although that document is not complete yet, it would be the guiding document for much of what was being discussed.

The Committee discussed how the culture affects learning. Dr. Brand plans to do an Administration survey and broaden it to the entire community. He envisions the development of a survey tool that will be used in all of our schools with a report at the end for all families, staff and School Committee to view. Mary Brolin stressed that the survey needs to lead to an action, not just a gathering of data. Maria Neyland spoke strongly in favor of a survey like this because it would give families a voice. She also asked that students be included in the survey, and not just the usual student groups. The Committee agreed that culture does affect learning.

Dr. Brand believes that by the end of next school year, the survey could be done and the data gathered. Paul Murphy stressed that he really wants the next phase to be implementation of the results, not just a gathering of data. He would like a goal that continues for two years, if that is what it takes to complete.

Maria Neyland spoke in favor of a goal that helps to “manage” the six elementary schools, given the diversity among them. Kristina Rychlik said that it would be easy to expand this District Improvement goal to include the Junior High and High School. Mary Brolin noted that this document will be converted into SMART Goals in the future.

#### 5.3. Demographic Survey/Educational Values Update – *Kristina Rychlik*

3 years ago, Mike Coppolino wanted to redo this survey but there was not enough time. This was at the same time as the bus passing changes were being discussed and many parents spoke up about their expectations of the district. Boston College provided the draft in the packet material based on the last discussions. Kristina feels it is “bland” and is unsure the administration will get what they are looking for the way it is proposed. It does not hit on some of the main issues of concern last year.

The Committee considered whether to wait until the LRSP is completed to be sure the Plan coincides with the survey. Eileen Zhang would really like this survey to be done. She considers most of the points to be excellent and they could help make some policy changes for our community and schools. Deanne O’Sullivan would like the survey to be more specific. She wants to be able to answer it based on various ages of children.

It is possible that the tool that Dr. Brand referred to, could be linked to this one. The Committee must be aware of the timing of all of the surveys being planned. The end goal is to support the School Committee in outreach and communication and revising future policies. The original survey confirmed that student stress should be a focus and that was helpful.

#### 5.4. Comparative Communities Subcommittee Report – *Diane Baum*

Mike Coppolino’s idea of looking at similar high performing communities that spend less than AB was the original focus. Diane feels that much of the information available is too detailed to use and she asked for guidance from the Committee. Mary Brolin suggested that the data could go to the budget subcommittee and that could wrap up this subcommittee. Alternatively, Diane could present a report to School Committee in the fall, after the subcommittee members have collected and analyzed their data.

A number of issues make comparing this data difficult, including how school choice makes our transportation very expensive. Kristina Rychlik emphasized that the Committee knows

and understands this aspect of our district. She suggested that the out of district transportation costs could be more valuable to look at. Mary Brolin reminded the Committee that the purpose is to think about how to use this discussion to create a goal around the topic, or not.

#### 5.5. New District Strategic Plan Process Update –*Glenn Brand*

Almost 400 responses to the recent survey were received. Dr. Brand is engaging the District Leadership Team in analyzing the results. Social and emotional wellness continues to be a concern. The next step is to ask how these issues percolate to the teachers at the various school levels and through the subjects. Dr. Brand invited School Committee members to attend the Leadership Institute on August 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> to be part of that discussion. He will share the agenda with them when it is final.

Deborah Bookis, Sinnika Garry and Lynn Laramie have been helping Dr. Brand with updating the Long Range Strategic Plan. He will be expanding this planning group to include the school communities and wider community this fall. Dr. Brand confirmed that the School Committee will not have the LRSP to guide them in creating their goals this year.

#### 5.6. Recommendation from Wellness Committee – School Start Times – *Glenn Brand (see presentation at ABRSC meeting on 6/9/16)*

Three reports came out of these 3 subgroups. Kirsty Kerrin will bring them together in one document. Dr. Brand asked for the School Committee's thoughts on this topic so he can decide on the next step.

#### 5.7. ABRSD Capital Planning Effort

<http://www.abschools.org/district/school-capital-and-space-planning>

Dr. Brand appreciated the comments on the importance of clear communication around the Capital Planning Effort. Not much new is happening at this time. The groups are continuing to work, with Dore and Whittier honing in on the enrollment projections done by NESDEC and the Ashtons. The priority is Phase 1 of the project and the Capital Improvement Plan. With JD Head and the Working Group, priorities are being identified and will be part of the FY18 budget process. A strategy will then be needed to address a multi-year plan. Although, the full study will not be done until November, the Capital Improvement Plan must be created. The Future School Needs group will meet in late July.

#### 5.8. Elementary School Per Pupil Costs – *Mary Brolin*

##### 5.8.1. Regional Financial Oversight Committee Analysis

Mary Brolin will provide the correct table to replace the one in the packet. It might have only gone out to the Budget Subcommittee. The Committee discussed the disparity that can be created when some schools have their own after school programs. Mary Brolin noted that this topic is within School Committee's purview of budget and policy. Paul Murphy believed that Dr. Mills had addressed this issue during his tenure. Other members felt he had only partially addressed the topic.

#### 5.9. Preliminary FY17 ABRSC Goals – *Mary Brolin (SEE FY16 GOALS)*

Mary asked the Committee to consider how they work together and if there were any suggestions for how they can work more effectively. It was suggested that perhaps members could all read and discuss a specific book, or that a speaker could be found for a specific topic.

#### District Improvement Goals:

Mary Brolin advocated for keeping the capital needs and community engagement goals for FY17. It was suggested that capital needs should be included every year, as part of the School Committee and Superintendent's responsibilities. Mary agreed but explained that the

Committee does not seem to have this area down well enough so that it is routinized. Some items in this category will be routine and some will be special projects. A comment was made that the District needs to change people's attitudes around capital needs planning and that it may not be a goal. Maria Neyland pointed out that the District now has a plan and fine tuning it should be an ongoing job. Getting the report in November is a goal that will be done. Deanne O'Sullivan asked for milestones in this area to help reach the goals.

Capital Needs could be considered both Outreach and Budget, or it could be its own goal. Capital has been on the front burner for one year. Paul Murphy noted that there is a formula that districts should be setting aside a percentage for capital needs and AB has not done this.

The Committee agreed that the same budget goal would be included with the addition of, "... to support the long range Capital plans of the District."

Some members want a community education goal (see District Goal #2) that includes engaging the community around capital planning. Examples would include: ALICE training, handbooks, and revisiting some of previous goals, such as front door locks on the school buildings.

Regarding the demographic survey, the Committee felt if they could look at the data that results and make it useable, than it could be part of a goal. If it was not usable, it could be ok not to include it. Brigid Bieber felt it could come off as a goal and an action plan could be to complete the survey, and then use the results to inform the goal setting instead.

Regarding the Comparative Community work, it was agreed that it should go to Budget Subcommittee at this time.

Amy Krishnamurthy advocated that Wellness is important enough that it should be a measureable goal for the School Committee. The Committee discussed how this would fall under the Outreach subcommittee. For any decisions, such as changing school start times, coordinated outreach would be essential to success. Maria Neyland agreed that discussion and decisionmaking needs to be done concurrently with outreach, as was done during regionalization. Talking points need to be consistent and clear for all members.

Brigid Bieber noted that school start times are getting a lot of press statewide. There is opportunity for the District to be a leader and do outreach to other communities. This Wellness piece will go under Community Outreach working with the Administration.

When asked where the elementary school budget piece fits in the School Committee goals, Kristina Rychlik suggested that the Superintendent could handle this and address all of the various pieces including technology, curriculum and fundraising. Mary Brolin stated that at some point, there is a role for the budget and policy subcommittees to be involved but perhaps it is not the time to make this a Committee goal yet. Maria Neyland felt that it is important for the Committee to support Dr. Brand and his efforts around this. She advocated for it to be a district-wide activity. Because it encroaches on budget and policy, she would like to see it somewhere in a goal or be a goal. Thus, the SC will have a goal that supports the Superintendent with appropriate policy and budget work as he clarifies the organizational structure of the District's schools.

6. **2016-2017 Subcommittee Structure and Assignments** – *Mary Brolin (vote at next meeting)*
  - 6.1. 2015-2016 Subcommittees and Members
  - 6.2. Draft ideas for 2016-2017

The Committee discussed membership of the subcommittees and assignments to other positions. It was agreed that the PTSO Liaisons could be moved under the Community Outreach Subcommittee. The Legislative Issues subcommittee was more clearly defined as a support for issues that the School Committee wants to focus on, not an effort to find more opportunities for the Committee to consider. The Boxborough BOS Vocational Education Advisory Committee is no longer active.

**7. School Committee Business Items**

7.1. New State Public Records Laws, effective 1/1/17

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/prenotice.htm>

Beth Petr asked the Committee to review the update from the State found in the packet.

7.2. [abrsc@abschools.org](mailto:abrsc@abschools.org) -

Dr. Brand asked if the School Committee email shell should include the Deputy/Assistant Superintendents and Finance Director, in addition to Superintendent and Executive Assistant (who are currently included). This could facilitate answering questions from the public. Originally, these administrators were included but they were removed about 6 years ago at the Committee's request. The Committee discussed concern that the public would think they are emailing the School Committee, when in fact they are also emailing the Superintendent and other Administrators, even if an explanation is added to the website. Maria Neyland, Brigid Bieber, Kristina Rychlik and Maya Minkin advocated for not revising the email shell and the Committee agreed. The Chair and Superintendent will continue to forward emails to Administrators as appropriate.

7.3. Student Involvement in Decision-making Policy, File: JIB

Dr. Brand spoke to Dr. Campbell about her thoughts regarding the High School student representatives to the School Committee. In the past, the Superintendent and sometimes the School Committee Chairperson would meet with the students the week of the first meeting of each month to discuss the agenda. Students would attend meetings once a month. Maya Minkin expressed interest in meeting with the students. (She is also the SC liaison to the High School.) This item will be on the August meeting agenda. Reference to M.G.L. 71:38M was made.

**8. FYI**

8.1. Ethics

8.1.1. State Required Ethics Training <http://www.mass.gov/ethics>

8.1.2. School Committee Member Ethics Policy, File: BCA

8.2. Committee Member Conflict of Interest Policy, File: BCB

8.3. School Committee – Staff Communications Policy, File: BHC, GBD

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, list of warrants

**Next Meetings:**

ABRSC, Monday, August 8, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library (packet posted August 2)

ABRSC, Thursday, September 1, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library (packet posted August 26)