

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 10/20/16)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 6, 2016
7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Amy Krishnamurthy, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan (7:12 p.m.), Kristina Rychlik, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: Maya Minkin
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

Chairperson Mary Brolin called the ABRSC to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Chairman's Introduction

The Superintendent read a statement acknowledging the recent death of one of our High School students and thanking the community for the outpouring of support to the family and school staff. The District has made student mental health and student stress priorities for the past several years and Dr. Brand cited the partnership between the District and Stanford University's Challenge Success Program as one example of how we are trying to help students find a healthy balance. He encouraged everyone to attend Dr. Pope's presentation on November 8th and also explore the District's new website at <https://www.smore.com/app/pages/preview/0dbh3>

2. Statement of Warrant & Approval of Minutes

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

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 9/15/16 as written.

The attached list of ABRSD Warrants were reviewed and signed by the ABRSC members.

3. Public Participation - none

4. ABRSD Master Plan Study Report Presentation Preview- Dore & Whittier

4.1. Agenda

4.2. Community Presentation on Wednesday, November 9 at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Auditorium

4.3. Slides, Short List of Master Planning Options, Draft Planning Level Cost Estimates for Options

Dr. Brand introduced the staff from Dore & Whittier and invited everyone to attend the Community Presentation of this material on November 9th at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Auditorium. Details of the past 16 months of review of the District's capital and infrastructure needs may be found at <http://www.abschools.org/district/school-capital-and-space-planning>. The District Master Plan Study Report will be completed in early November.

Jason Boone stated that the intent for this meeting (10/6/16) is a progress update including the options developed during Phase II for the Master Plan Study, and ultimately what decisions are on the table for the School Committee's consideration at this time. Factors that contributed to the development of the options included: condition of buildings, space needs, and summaries of the Visioning Meetings. Key issues explored during option development included: grade configuration, school count, and building count.

The seven Master Planning Options found on the short list were reviewed. There is no priority order at this time. Douglas, Conant, and Gates were the most needy physically. The same 3 schools showed the most educational needs as well. Enrollment projections were discussed at the previous School Committee meeting. The challenge is how big or how many schools should the District consider. Decisions will be based on a 10 year window. A next step for the School Committee is to decide whether an elementary school or a middle school is a priority.

This is the only short term decision needed at this time. If a middle school is the priority path, the MSBA application would have to be changed.

Dore & Whittier will finalize the Master Plan Study Report and present it on 11/9/16.

Marie Altieri was asked to explain the Early Childhood Center because it had been valuable at the last Visioning Session. PreKindergarten and Kindergarten students would all be taught in one school. It may be a stand alone model, or attached to another school. This would allow the District to provide All Day Kindergarten to all families who desire it. Deborah Bookis pointed out that an advantage would be that students are known developmentally before they are placed in an elementary school. (Families would choose a school for 1st Grade, not Kindergarten as they do now.)

Regarding the Cost Estimates sheet, hard costs are materials, labor, and all the physical things that go into a facility except furniture and technology. Soft costs are everything else, including contingencies, fees, currently about 1/3 of the construction costs. These estimates are all at the concept level. They are in 2016 dollars so the final column adjusts for how many years it would take to complete each option.

When asked to explain one of the twin school options compared to our current Parker Damon Building (PDB), Jason cautioned about comparing because they can be very different. Should the district do a twin school in the future, a higher level of separation would be desired than what is currently found at PDB. As a result, more square footage has been built into this model. MSBA construction cost data has been reviewed since 2007 and construction costs have doubled between then and now.

Paul Murphy asked if the District would know the level of contribution for each option, or if the MSBA would reveal that only after choosing an option. Jason explained that the MSBA has a percentage for each town and anything that is eligible is started at that rate but the District won't know until discussions begin. There can be a wide delta at the end. A "3011 Form" documents every cost in a project and what is eligible for reimbursement and not.

Kristina Rychlik confirmed that the grade level(s) is the discussion that needs to take place at this time. Deborah Bookis is gathering information on this topic now. After the final report is presented, this decision will need to be made. Everyone was encouraged to come on November 9th and the public was asked to bring their friends and committees.

5. **FY17 School Improvement Plans Presentation**

5.1. Merriam School – *Principal Ed Kaufman, Assistant Principal Juliana Schneider, Teacher Kristy Nealon*
Goals for this year are:

1. Continue developing projects and aligning curriculum maps at each grade level in order to integrate both reading and writing instruction.
2. Provide opportunities to promote wellness (year one focus around homework)
3. Bring a sense of gratitude* into our school in a way that fosters a love of learning, sense of community, and deepening of relationships (*school theme this year)

The Committee really liked the gratitude theme for this year. Mary Brolin noted that she believes gratitude also leads to wellness. Questions were asked about the math programs. Originally the math program was only for K-5 and the staff talked about how they could adapt it for 6th grade re language, etc. They continue to work with Heather Haines on this.

Elaine Zhang is curious about the homework policy. She asked how the homework policy at Merriam is decided and if parents have input. Ed stated that they are in the early stages of the homework question, looking at research and talking. Decisions have not been made yet and many people will be asked for input. Deborah Bookis added that homework is one of the areas that the District is highlighting via Challenge Success this year. The District homework policy will be updated this year.

5.2. C.T. Douglas School – *Principal Chris Whitbeck, Assistant Principal Jenna Larrenaga, Teacher Melissa Hubble, Teacher Deborah Key, School Council Member/Parent Karen Jarsky*

Goals for this year are:

1. Pilot and adopt a mathematics curriculum aligned with the MA curriculum frameworks
2. Continue to grow exhibitionary learning model
3. Explore adoption of Responsive Classroom approach

Katie Neville noted that 3 of the 4 presentations so far have schools choosing math programs and asked why so much time is being spent in this area. Deborah Bookis replied that Douglas 6th grade teachers are piloting different math programs because their current program only covers K-5. She said that Douglas is using Everyday Math and they have not updated their program for the framework, so they have been using an old program for a long time. The 3 schools all have good reasons to be looking at different programs. There is no one perfect math program. Cost savings can only be met if you can buy multiple years worth of material to get to a large enough order to save much. Our district cannot do that. Deborah also noted how valuable it is to have teachers really invested in the program that they use.

Dr. Whitbeck was asked if it is the teachers' decision, or if parents have input. He replied that they have a tool designed to get parent feedback. The school council is involved which includes parents. The math models were presented at a PTO meeting and a good discussion followed. Dr. Whitbeck will continue to get feedback that way this year. Math Specialist, Heather Haines has seen a benefit of being exposed to all of the schools' different approaches and has brought good insight to discussions at Douglas. Dr. Whitbeck said Heather has done a magnificent job of providing tools for math instruction.

Deanne O'Sullivan asked how parents with multiple children can help their students with all of the different programs being used. Dr. Whitbeck said that that is for the teacher and parent to work out. Parents should not be teaching their children math, but supporting them is encouraged. Teachers are wonderful about working with families in this area.

Douglas Parent Corinne Hogseth asked how a parent can help a child who gets no homework. She expressed concern about parents not knowing what is happening in the classroom. Dr. Whitbeck stated that as a parent himself, this is very important to him, to see what his kids are learning and how. He said that Douglas is not a school with no homework. It is a school where the norm has moved from homework every day for homework's sake in a certain number of minutes per grade to the norm being no homework unless it is absolutely necessary. The definition comes from the School Committee policy – it has to aid learning or build skill. As a result, classroom work becomes very important for parents to see. Homework is a big piece of Challenge Success and the Committee and leadership team are researching it.

6. **ABRSD Long Range Strategic Plan – First Reading – Glenn Brand**

Dr. Brand thanked his District Leadership Team (DLT), and particularly Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis and Dawn Bentley, for working on this new Plan since Fall 2015. The core components are:

Vision: To inspire a community of learners

Values: Wellness * Equity * Engagement

Mission: To develop engaged, well-balanced learners through collaborative, caring relationships.

The proposed strategic actions span the next two years and as actions are reviewed and evaluated annually, additional actions will be added and/or revised.

Kristina Rychlik stated that the wellness value is a shared responsibility with the parents, schools and community. It is not just a school goal. Brigid Bieber noted that this is a different approach from the last time. She needs time to read and consider it, and compare it to last year's Plan. The simple language used is powerful and straightforward. This drives all that the District does and how items are prioritized, it will impact budget and everything. Equity can be measured in many different ways. She is not sure how this could

be measured given how it is worded. She appreciates all the time that was put into it, but is not sure she will be ready to vote on it at the next meeting.

Paul Murphy agrees with Brigid and he would like more time. He also agrees with Kristina regarding the wellness goal and wants to emphasize that is it not just a district responsibility, but a shared one. Katie Neville pointed out that the Statement of Purpose quotes the mission so it will need to be updated when this is voted. Mary Brolin agreed with Brigid that this Plan guides the District and the School Committee work. She is concerned that it only covers 2 years because that will go by fast. She would like to see a statement about the next 3,4,5 years. She does not want to wait until the end of the Plan to do a new one again. There should never be a time when there is no plan in place because it is important. She loves the crisp language. Equity is a tough thing to define but something should be added.

Marie Altieri clarified that it was assumed that it is a 5 year plan, and the strategic actions are for 2 years. Every year a year of actions would be added. The last Plan's 3 – 5 year goals were not well defined in the beginning.

Dr. Brand agreed that it would be fine to give the Committee more time and vote at their meeting on 11/3/16. He will consider the feedback and make some refinements. He does not see changing the establishment of goals for year 3,4 or 5 yet. Mary Brolin stated that the goals probably would not change but the strategy for the years may. Mary asked Committee members to share their thoughts with the Superintendent and the Administration before the next School Committee meeting.

7. **Financial Updates**– *Clare Jeannotte*

7.1. FY18 Budget Planning Calendar and Guidelines

7.2. Hager Well Update

Clare Jeannotte reviewed the FY18 Calendar and Guidelines, as well as Boxborough's Hager Well operational costs issue. A memo of agreement between the two towns and the District is recommended.

8. **Subcommittee Reports**

8.1. Budget – *9/28/16 meeting* – Maria Neyland reported that the discussion was the same as Clare's report.

8.2. Policy - *FIRST READINGS* – *Brigid Bieber*

8.2.1. Entry Intending Harm, File: EBBC and –R

8.2.2. Threats to Safety, File: EBBB

8.2.3. Emergency Plans, File: EBC

8.2.4. Bomb Threats, File: EBCC

8.2.5. Evacuations, File: EBCCA

8.2.6. Building Security and Access, File: ECA and –R (new)

Mary Brolin commented on the Entry Intending Hard procedures. She asked for clarification of what "authorized individuals" meant in the Building Security and Access policy. Brigid said that it refers to an individual opening the building when it is not occupied by custodial staff.

8.3. Outreach (including PTO Co-chairs) – *9/21/16 meeting* - *Kristina Rychlik*

8.3.1. September Update

Kristina reviewed the new monthly update that will be shared with town boards, PTOs, families and staff. They planned the PTO co-chair meeting for Oct 4. During that meeting, Kristina reviewed the update and got some good feedback. The co-chairs wanted to know when parents should come and voice their opinion on items. They reviewed the Parent Communication Map which some co-chairs had never seen before, and agreed it is very valuable. The group appreciated hearing directly about School Committee items and being able to share that information with their families.

9. **School Committee Member Reports**

9.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – Amy Krishnamurthy, Paul Murphy (meeting to be on Oct 13)

9.2. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– Mary Brolin reported.

- 9.3. Acton Finance Committee – Amy Krishnamurthy reported that the Fincom’s Point of View (POV) document (regarding use of reserves) was discussed and will be presented at ALG. The 3-Board meeting is being planned for Tuesday, Nov 15. The Boxborough group feels that BLF covers this and they do not need a 3-Board meeting at this time.
- 9.4. Acton Board of Selectmen – Eileen Zhang reported that the Acton Senior Center passed at last night’s Special Town Meeting. It is being viewed as a 10 year solution and then there is talk about building a big new community center. This timing may affect the school building plans.
- 9.5. Minuteman Technical High School (MMT) Update – Diane Baum reported that the Ballot Vote on 9/20/16 was successful.

10. **Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Nordic Ski Team Trip to Norway, 2/17/17 – 2/26/17 – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

Maria Neyland moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the ski trip as proposed.

11. **Recommendation to Accept Regional PTSO Grant to ABRHS – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

Maria Neyland confirmed that this coverage for monitoring students in the library is for after school hours. Deanne O’Sullivan questioned whether it’s appropriate to ask the PTSO’s to pay for this. Brigid Bieber said that the Committee can discuss it for future budget planning if they wish.

Maria Neyland moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to accept this RPTSO grant gift as proposed with gratitude.

12. **Superintendent’s Report/Updates – Glenn Brand**

- 12.1. 2016-2017 Superintendent’s Wellness Committee Memo
- 12.2. 2016-2017 Superintendent’s Safety Task Force Memo
- 12.3. Family Learning Series: Early Childhood and Technology with Janell Burley Hofmann, 10/5/16 at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Auditorium –Deborah Bookis mentioned that Willow Books in Acton will set up a table of books recommended by the District in the store.

13. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

Deanne O’Sullivan asked if testing this year will be more like PARCC or MCAS. Deborah Bookis replied that last year the DESE included a few PARCC like questions in reading and math. This is the first year that we are doing MCAS 2.0 (see memo in FYI). Our commissioner was leading the PARCC effort and the state has purchased a bank of PARCC questions. It was an aggressive timeline for the state. They are being told that the banked PARCC questions will decrease over time as the state creates their own questions. This year nothing will be timed, which is much better for the students. 4th and 8th graders are required to take the computer based version this year. This is the direction that testing is going to go. Deborah is prepared to write a letter to the DESE about testing. She stated that our legacy MCAS has the same validity as the PARCC and our old MCAS does what it needs to do. As a result of the Committee’s interest, Deborah will bring a draft letter to the School Committee for review.

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, list of warrants

NEXT MEETINGS:

- October 20 - ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (packet posted October 14)
- November 3 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (packet posted October 28)
- November 9 – ABRSD Master Plan Study Report Community Presentation at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Auditorium