

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
Approved Minutes

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 18, 2018
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Michael Bo, Mary Brolin, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (7:08 p.m.), Amy Krishnamurthy (7:18 p.m.), Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Angie Tso, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr

1. **Call to Order (7:00)**
2. **Chairman's Introduction – Diane Baum**
3. **Public Participation - none**
Per policy BEDH, members of the public may speak for up to 2 minutes on items not included on this agenda. Comments regarding items on the agenda should be made during that part of the meeting. Typically, the Committee/Administration will not respond to comments during public participation.
4. **Student Representatives' Update**
Junior Betty Markman reported that career speakers and college visits have started at the High School. The first wellness lunch of the year was well received. Students got to plant in the garden. The Freshman class election just took place. The Band and Color Guard are doing the MICCA competition this week and next.
5. **Statement of Warrants & Approval of Minutes – Diane Baum**
Diane Baum read the warrant information and the Committee signed the documents. Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED** to approve the minutes as written.
6. **Superintendent's Update – Peter Light**
These updates are posted on the Superintendent's section of the website, as well as sent via email to all of our families in the language that they have requested to receive information in.
7. **Presentation: Minuteman Technical High School – Pam Nourse, School Committee member from Acton, George Clement, Assistant Principal for Academics, Amy Walsh, Student Services Director**
Mr. Clement and Ms. Walsh shared some of the Minuteman Technical School philosophy. Their Building Project is on budget and on time. Pam Nourse invited School Committee members to tour their building project. Angie Tso will help with this. They have designed their programs and new building for integration, using an Academy Model. They were just notified of becoming a National Blue Ribbon High School, one of only 3 vocational schools in the country to receive this recognition. Ms. Walsh stated that 47% of their students are on Individual Education Programs. They really appreciate the great relationship they have with the R.J. Grey administration and their facilitation of communication with Acton parents. They

recently had a very well received family information night for Acton students who might consider attending Minuteman.

Mary Brolin, who works in public health, appreciated that they work with cosmetology students as that is a very important segment of the community regarding communicating about sensitive topics. Middle school programs are run in Stow, Bolton and Lancaster as well as R.J. Grey.

8. Presentation: Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) New Accountability Overview – Deborah Bookis

Deborah Bookis and Peter Light will be attending a roundtable with EDCO and the Commissioner to share thoughts on this new system that resulted from the enactment of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the state's transition to the Next Generation MCAS assessment. Superintendent Light noted that the addition of the lowest quartile is important. There is a new focus on the idea that however well your students are doing, you have to focus on the lower 25% to be sure they are doing their best. It is also important to ask, as a high performing district, "High performing for whom?" We need to be sure our kids are lifelong learners with a passion.

Committee members asked questions about how the data is reviewed. The lower 25% is broken out by school, gender, race, students who have IEPs, etc. There are many different ways but not by grade yet. In response to how this could affect curriculum, the administration is keeping an eye on mathematics. In the context of looking at performance, this is one data piece. There are additional pieces including our own grade level assessments, surveys for comparing by grade, etc. Educators will continue to look at the whole student. Diane Baum attended a conference this summer and was told that the DESE is aware that these indicators are not the only way to measure students. She would like to know why teacher attendance rates were excluded in DESE's final accountability system. There will always be a bottom 25% of student performance. Deborah emphasized that they need to always be looking at that quartile and if the same students are in that bottom level for several years, then that needs to be considered.

9. Presentation: October 1, 2018 Student Enrollment – Marie Altieri

Every district in the state pulls the October enrollment data and sends it to the state electronically via SIMS. This is considered the official enrollment for the school year.

Marie Altieri reviewed the enrollment for this year as compared to projections. Enrollment throughout the district is flat, with a total of 5,654 students. The elementary schools have 2,706 students, 923 at the Jr. High and 1,837 at the high school. There are 105 PreK students and 86 Out of District or Postgrad students. The enrollment for this year is consistent with projections except for Kindergarten.

The projection for Kindergarten was for 313 students. There are 330 students enrolled, or 17 more than the projection. Marie reported that the bigger concern is how different the enrollment is from the projection by town. Boxborough has 60 students enrolled as compared to a projection of 75 (under projection by 15 students). Acton has 266 students enrolled as compared to 239 projected (over projection by 21 students).

The Committee discussed the relationship between kindergarten and grade 1 numbers. Marie Altieri explained that we might see the 15 children projected for Boxborough that didn't

come, show up next year because the data comes by census by calendar year, not school year. Also some families do private Kindergarten and then move to public first grade. It would be very helpful if families would enroll their kids early so classes can be most accurately planned for. It was stressed that our class sizes are still within guidelines because we planned for enough sections. Dawn Bentley added that preschoolers are still being screened for English Language (EL) so some of those numbers are likely to increase.

Not all of the Acton students on the wait list for Blanchard were accepted because anyone who moves to Boxborough is permitted to attend Blanchard. They don't want to outsize the building because they have to have space available. Marie explained the dramatic increase in our number of economically disadvantaged students. The State qualifies students based on income and there are many more low income families moving here. There was a change in the law in 2013 that the state now automatically qualifies families as economically disadvantaged if they qualify for other federal programs, although the criteria has not changed. Families may also fill out forms to be considered for qualification. The District's numbers are all the Free and Reduced Lunch qualified students. This aid provides federal funding for lunches. Breakfast is now offered in all of our schools. The District also gets some Medicaid reimbursement that is reported to the School Committee as part of the budget. Waivers for field trips and supplies and booster club activities are all part of making sure all students are included in activities. Members agreed that the Committee must think about helping these families when it is budget planning time.

Peter Light mentioned that for an overall look at the data, MASSStats.com has lots of community by community information. Angie Tso asked if the District has similar data for students on IEPs. Marie said that this is usually done in January as part of the budget discussion.

10. **School Building Committee** – *Mary Brolin*

10.1. meeting on October 10

10.2. ABRSD Educational Plan for MSBA – First Read

This document is required to be at MSBA by November 7. The Committee will be asked to vote to approve it at their next meeting on 11/1/18.

Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis and Dawn Bentley were thanked for their efforts in putting this document together. It is the Educational Plan that is part of the large architectural document being produced. It was very good that almost all School Committee members participated in one of the visioning sessions. There were several sessions with different groups.

Adam Klein considered it a great synthesis of all of the work done for the past year or two. He felt that the document should have a consistent focus on what is needed in the future, not the issues with current facilities. Regarding PE and Health, the need for the softball fields should be highlighted because much of the community and public want this. More detail should be included in the special education introduction, including not just inclusion, but programs we are trying to keep in district. Peter Light is meeting with CASE administration so the text about that topic will be clarified. The emphasis on needing a large and comfortable space for the lunch program should be included. More detail should be added about transportation including elaboration about the need for multiple exits, parking issues and congestion, entrances, large number of buses, and more. Don't leave the reading and math specialists out of the project goals bullets. Consider including something about the schools' surroundings and how the building would fit into it. Based on the Parker Damon Building

issues, include mention of a relationship between nature and the building, that it be well placed and landscaped.

When asked if this means that the 3 schools will have the same philosophy with this Education Plan, Mr. Light said that the facilities need to be equitable between all schools. Whatever space that is built has to be flexible and equitable to last.

Future design in the visual and performing arts could be added, to be parallel to other sections. It was decided not to be too specific about the number of offices in some areas given where they were at in the planning process. Mention of “walkability” will be added to the transportation section. Flexible space will be key for adapting to future changes and needs. Overall, members were very excited to read the plan. The deadline for sending feedback on the document to Peter Light with cc to Beth Petr is Monday.

11. FY19 Superintendent Goals – First Read – *Peter Light*

Mr. Light began saying that he knows the use of the rubrics is very cumbersome. Rubrics should be used for someone to focus on how to improve. In his plan, he tried to tie the actions of the goals into the standards, rubric and indicators. He thought this provided some focus.

Mary Brolin noted that in the past, the Committee has had issues with having too many goals and too much on the superintendent’s plate. Mr. Light has included full district goals and entry goals and Mary asked him to confirm that he is comfortable with this. He said that he was. He described his effectiveness as only how well he can coordinate the staff to execute all of the plans. So many people are doing this work and overseeing this is the superintendent’s job. He added that goals are created to improve the work you already do, not to create your work.

Mr. Light was asked why he chose not to be specific about the tangible outcomes and when they will be delivered. He responded that regarding the district goals, like by Spring 2019, when surveys are done, we have to be sensitive to students’ timing and other constraints. He likes benchmarks for completion of work because otherwise, it can set you up for failure not to be able to do something on time. He plans to update the Committee on the District goals via School Committee meeting presentations. At mid year, he will provide a memo regarding progress toward the goals, and then heading into the evaluation process a deliverable on what has been done. Additional feedback may be sent to him via email, however if it is substantial, it should be brought up at the next meeting.

12. School Committee Meeting Venue Discussion – *Diane Baum*

Diane Baum asked the Committee for their thoughts on trying a different venue for their regular meetings, given the discussion at their workshop last November with Rob Evans. Accessibility to the public is key. Diane reached out to the Acton Commission on Disabilities and they placed assessing accessibility of the auditorium in the Administration Building on their meeting agenda for November 20. The auditorium was seen as having potential, but lighting and sound would need to be addressed. It can be difficult for members to hear each other in the Jr High Library. Diane felt that changing the furniture and table layout would be key. Members need to be able to see each other. She would not want the Committee to sit on the stage.

The Sargent Library was mentioned as a nice space. A member worried about the public perception of the Committee being tucked away at the Administrative building and the lack

of good parking. Members generally agreed to try a new location. Some members liked the idea of buying better furniture and or a better sound system for the Jr High Library.

Infrastructure is essential for good taping by Acton TV so they have to be part of the discussion. There was some discussion of moving to Acton Town Hall due to the new equipment there, but many members do not like that option. As a regional committee, it was felt that that would make the Committee feel like an Acton group.

Diane suggested that the Committee meet in the Administrative Building Auditorium once to see what it is like. It was suggested that when considering seating plans, the student reps be kept in mind. When asked if the administrators need to sit at the table, it was stated that they have always sat with the Committee.

13. Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB PTSO to the R.J. Grey Junior High for the FY19 Student Plan Books – VOTE – Peter Light (8:45)

Maya Minkin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED** to accept this gift from the AB PTSO with gratitude.

14. Subcommittee Reports – Diane Baum

14.1. Policy – next Oct 30 at Amy Krishnamurthy

The orientation document would be posted on the policy section of the website as a good reference.

14.2. Capital Improvement (*first meeting was on 10/10/18*)

The next meeting will be on 10/24 before the Building Committee. They are trying to get an accurate listing of items and funding. They are asking how these items can be funded while ensuring adequate funding for items that come up unexpected during the year.

15. School Committee Member Reports – Diane Baum

Ginny Kremer reported that the MA Legislature just passed a law adding a dyslexia advocate to an early education panel to add guidelines to help districts develop screening procedures for getting a timely and proper diagnosis for neurological learning disabilities including dyslexia.

16. FYI

16.1. ABRSC Operating Protocols, voted 9/20/18

16.2. Acton Finance Committee FY19 Point of View (POV), *October 2018*

Diane Baum highlighted this document saying that it will be part of the discussion during the Budget Process.

16.3. “Who’s Raising our Kids? Nurturing Human Values in a Digital World” with Sharon Maxwell, Ph.D., Nov 5th 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. in the R.J. Grey Junior High Auditorium Family Learning Series

16.4. FY19 No School/Delayed Opening/Emergency Release Memo –

Mr. Light highlighted this annual document. There was a brief discussion of the parent notification time. The Superintendent will let families know ahead of time if possible. He plans to have school open so he will continue to monitor the weather as long as possible before making a decision about closing or changing the time.

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

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LIST OF DOCUMENTS USED

- 5. Statement of Warrants & Approval of Minutes – Diane Baum**
Meeting minutes of October 4, 2018 – **VOTE**
- 6. Superintendent’s Update – Peter Light**
- 8. Presentation: Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) New Accountability Overview – Deborah Bookis**
- 9. Presentation: October 1, 2018 Student Enrollment – Marie Altieri**
Memo regarding October 1, 2018 Enrollment Report
- 10. School Building Committee – Mary Brolin**
 - 10.1 Materials from meeting on October 10
 - 10.2 ABRSD Educational Plan for MSBA – First Read – *Marie Altieri (vote required on 11/1/18)*
- 11. FY19 Superintendent Goals – First Read – Peter Light**
 - 11.1 Superintendent Goals Overview
 - 11.2 Superintendent Goals 2018-19
 - 11.3 Acton-Boxborough Regional School District 2018-2019 Goals, voted 10/4/18
 - 11.4 MA Superintendent Rubric
(Appendix A of DESE MA Model System for Educator Evaluation Part III)
- 13. Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB PTSO to the R.J. Grey Junior High for the FY19 Student Plan Books – VOTE – Peter Light**
- 14. Subcommittee Reports – Diane Baum**
 - 14.1 Policy – *Amy Krishnamurthy*
Training Materials from meeting on 10/3/18
- 16. FYI**
 - 16.1 ABRSC Operating Protocols, voted 9/20/18
 - 16.2 Acton Finance Committee FY19 Point of View (POV), *October 2018*
 - 16.3 “Who’s Raising our Kids? Nurturing Human Values in a Digital World” with Sharon Maxwell, Ph.D., Nov 5th 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. in the R.J. Grey Junior High Auditorium Family Learning Series
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