

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
Approved Minutes

NEW! Auditorium
Administration Building
15 Charter Road

October 3, 2019
7:00 p.m. Open Meeting to Enter Executive Session
7:02 p.m. Executive Session
7:15 p.m. Return to Open Meeting

Members Present: Diane Baum (7:04 p.m.), Michael Bo, Amy Krishnamurthy, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer Tessa McKinley, Paul Murphy, John Petersen, Nora Shine (7:04 p.m.), Angie Tso
Members Absent: Maya Minkin
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley.

2. **Enter Executive Session**

The Chairperson stated that there was need for an Executive Session to be convened pursuant to MGL Ch 30A, sec.21(a) Purpose 3: to discussion strategy with respect to litigation because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Committee. She stated that members would return to the open meeting at approximately 7:15 p.m.

John Petersen moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by ROLL CALL: to enter Executive Session pursuant to MGL Ch 30A, sec.21(a) Purpose 3: to discussion strategy with respect to litigation because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Committee.
(YES: Bo, Krishnamurthy, Klein, Kremer, McKinley, Murphy, Petersen, Tso)

3. **Return to OPEN Meeting - WELCOME! Routine Business**

3.1. **Chairperson's Opening Remarks**

At 7:30 p.m., the Chairperson welcomed everyone to the Committee's new meeting space in the Administration Building Auditorium. She thanked Acton TV for taping this meeting and providing it on their website, ActonTV.org

3.2. **Public Participation - none**

3.3. **High School Student Representatives Update**

Charles spoke about the new schedule at the High School. Although there is more variety in the day now, it can get confusing. He will talk to Mr. Dorey about this. Many students would like an app that would tell them what day it is. At Mr. Light's son's school a student created an app for this. A member asked about the 3 lunch periods now and if it is crowded. Charles thought it was ok, although it is full.

3.4. **Superintendent's Update**

The Community Coffees with the Superintendent and School Committee Chair are coming up. Sixty two people have volunteered to be part of the new DEI activity, which is wonderful. He intends to include everyone in this activity. Since September 7,

members of the Building Committee and staff have attended 15 events in Acton and Boxborough. The Superintendent thanked them all for their efforts.

4. NEW BUSINESS

4.1. **Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Field Trip to Europe, April 2020 – VOTE**

Although this is a new destination, a veteran faculty member is coordinating the trip and the travel company has been used successfully before.

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the ABRHS Field Trip to Europe

4.2. **Recommendation to Approve Donation from Danny's Place Youth Services to Community Education's Leader in Training Program – VOTE**

Paul Murphy moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the donation from Danny's Place Youth Services to the Community Education's Leader in Training Program.

Amy Krishnamurthy abstained because she is on the Danny's Place Board.

4.3. **Recommendation to Approve Donations from AB PTSO to ABRHS and RJGJHS – VOTE**

Paul Murphy moved, John Petersen seconded, and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the donations from AB PTSO to ABRHS and RJGJHS with gratitude.

4.4. **Recommendation to Approve Donations from AB PTSO, Danny's Place Youth Services and Town of Acton to ABRSD to support the William James Interface referral service – VOTE**

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the donations from AB PTSO, Danny's Place Youth Services and Town of Acton to ABRSD to support the William James Interface referral service with gratitude.

5. GUESTS & PRESENTATIONS

5.1. **Welcome and Introduction – *Deborah Dixson, Interim Special Education Director***

Peter Light introduced Debbie Dixson as the new Interim Special Education Director, replacing Pam Smith. Because Pam's resignation was late in the school year, it was decided that an interim would be best. Debbie said that she is honored and privileged to be here and working with our administrators and staff, as well as on our initiatives.

5.2. **Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) – *Co-Chairs Amanda Bailey and Carrie Weaver***

Carrie Weaver began by saying that there is a lot to celebrate this year. She and Amanda Bailey presented on SEPAC's survey results and 2019-2020 priorities. Three quarters of survey respondents felt that collaboration between members of the IEP team was good. Recommendations included: Ensuring that parents/guardians know how to access special education documents in the portal, communicating when new materials are added, mailing progress reports, and following up with parents/guardians about access and usability before adding the DocuSign component. They encouraged all to attend the Intelligent Lives film screening on Oct 28th co-sponsored by the local SEPACs and ABRSD Student Services.

Members really appreciated the presentation and the work being done by SEPAC. Some concern was expressed about the data regarding the survey question about

parent/guardians' ability to speak freely without negative consequences (9.6% disagreed somewhat and 4.3% disagreed strongly). Amanda and Carrie were asked to let members know if they had suggestions for improving this. A member would like to see data over the past few years for comparison. It was stated that this has been a pretty steady number in previous surveys.

Several members commented on the slide entitled: Including Percentiles in Evaluation Findings and expressed support for SEPAC's request that the District ensure that special education testing reports shared with parents/caregivers include percentile rankings in addition to scaled scores, noting that this would enable parents to better understand what test scores mean for their child.

Amanda and Carrie were asked what SEPAC would like to see, what kinds of conversations, regarding each child achieving their personal best. Amanda offered - "What makes you happy?", "What do you love?", along with a request for equitable outcomes.

5.3. STEAM Presentation – Deborah Bookis and members of the STEAM Committee: Leo Muellner, Peggy Harvey, Heather Haines, David Baumritter

Deborah explained that STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) is a statement and a foundation, a way of thinking, and a way of learning. There are strengths and challenges in our current program. It aligns with our core values and is also a focus for the DESE. The STEAM committee consisted of 16 staff and community members. The 4 subcommittees were: Framework and Vision, Community/Family Engagement, Professional Learning, and Assessing the State of the District. Our six elementary schools will be participating in the AB STEAM Fair during ABRSD STEAM weeks of Oct 21-25 and Oct 28-Nov 1. Work will also be done at the Jr High and High School levels.

School Committee members were all enthusiastically supportive of this exciting new initiative. Comments included:

- I would love for this to become the norm for teaching.
- It is great that there is a focus on the Jr High and High School because that is where the interdisciplinary work is difficult but so necessary for student engagement.
- STEAM learning should be considered in the wellness category. It creates a love of learning and a more positive environment.
- The art presentation last spring showed that students take ownership of their learning and the connections with the real world issues and problems. This gives children an idea of who they are and what is around them. This is wonderful.
- I love seeing the play and joy in the videos.

When asked what the barriers for implementing STEAM in the Jr High and High School are, Peggy explained that this is an exploration year. Teachers start seeing the value of this approach as pieces are added. The teams at the Jr High do a lot of collaboration so this makes it easier for them. Dave added that Science classes at the High School have really begun to embrace it. It will take time to develop, and will require professional learning time in particular. The structure of their schedule and the building spaces makes it a bit harder. It may start as electives. Leo said that the woodworking shop is another

example where lots of collaboration is happening and they are trying to see if it could be expanded.

A member commented that for our district, the most important thing is to provide lots of opportunities to our students because it leads to all kinds of real life skills. This goal of providing choices for students should be our priority. Another member added that a lot of this is going on already at AB. So much of it is not just educating on topics, but the social emotional pieces as well.

The question was asked that of our 180 school days, what percentage is STEAM-like. This is not easy to measure at this time. The Minuteman Tech classes at the Jr High are a great example. Some of the elementary schools are doing more of it than others right now. It tends to happen “in pockets”. A member encouraged data collection on STEAM learning. Another member commented that sometimes the look of engagement and joy for learning on her daughter's face is all the data she needs. A member noted that the videos promoting STEAM focus attention on the product, and she would like to see more messaging on all the great thinking processes that give rise to the product.

6. ONGOING BUSINESS

6.1. **Approval of Minutes of Meeting on 9/19/19 – VOTE** – *Tessa McKinley*

Paul Murphy moved, Nora Shine seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the minutes as written. Ginny Kremer abstained.

6.2. **School Building Committee Update** – *Adam Klein*

Adam reported that the Project Scope and Budget meeting was held at the MSBA offices today and asked Mr. Light to share the outcome of that meeting. This was a chance for our staff to meet with MSBA and understand what will be reimbursed, providing a clearer picture of the budget. Core space for math and reading support rooms was above and beyond what the MSBA initially would reimburse, however they have now agreed to reimburse this and have approved all the special education spaces. Because the Gates side of the cafeteria is a raised platform, and not reimbursable, it was decided not to do the second raised stage so we will get full reimbursement. There were areas where we hoped to negotiate more reimbursement but have been denied. The MSBA will only reimburse for one demolition site so the Douglas demolition space does not qualify. They will also not fund any hazmat expenses for asbestos. In addition, they will not reimburse for the modulars for Gates (\$1 million). That number may be reduced somewhat after review. The overall net change is that the original \$39 M that we thought would be reimbursed is now at \$38 M. This does not change the cost to taxpayers significantly. The largest chunk of non-reimbursable items is the construction costs differential between actual costs of construction and the MSBA cap of \$333/square foot.

The second part of the meeting was very positive about how we will move forward with next steps. As numbers change Mr. Light emphasized that we are trying to be transparent and will continue to give the public all of the information we can via the website and forums.

6.3. **Subcommittee Business**

6.3.1. Policy – Oct 1

Ginny Kremer reported that an organizational meeting was held and a priority list of policies was reviewed. The next meetings will be October 29 and November 19.

Ginny also provided a legislative update. She met with Senator James Eldridge and Rep. Tami Goveia recently. They are both very supportive of the proposed Student Opportunity Act. This could mean an increase in funding of \$1.5B over 7 years. Diane noted concern that it's not clear that the Student Opportunity Act will benefit districts currently in hold harmless status like AB and urged members to educate themselves on how this bill will impact our District. The governor has just sent out his numbers but they are considered unreliable by some. Ginny will meet with Rep. Jennifer Benson this week. There is increasing sentiment that the state has not been meeting their obligations. Mr. Light said that there are some conflicting budget numbers being reported right now. MASC has asked people to be careful about using some of the numbers until things are final. He will send the governor's numbers out to members as requested, but he urged them to review the material cautiously.

6.4. School Committee Liaison Reports

6.4.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *no report*

6.4.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)

The Building Committee is presenting to BLF on Monday night at a joint meeting.

6.4.3. Health Insurance Trust on 9/26/19

John Petersen reported that the treasurer's report showed a loss of \$1.1 million on revenues of \$17.4 million for the year ended June 30, 2019. These financials are consistent with the cash flow presented by Cook & Co. The loss is in line with expectations and leaves the Trust with an unrestricted fund balance of \$6.7 million. Premiums were set to result in a probable loss for the current FY to bring the unrestricted balance in line with the Trust requirements, less than 30% of expected expenses (slightly less than \$6 million). The Trust will be adding a Trust web page to the boards and committees pages on the Town of Acton web site. Some Trust documents in addition to the currently posted minutes and agendas will be added to DocuShare.

6.4.4. Acton Finance Committee – *Diane Baum*

Diane Baum reported that at the meeting on the 24th, after an update on the North Acton Fire Station, Acton FinCom members provided feedback on Peter's 9/10 presentation to FinCom on the new school building project. Members were overwhelmingly supportive of the new building project noting that the project "is a good reflection of what we want for our town". FinCom members also commented on the desire to maximize economies of scale whenever possible and on the details of the reimbursement from the MSBA.

6.5 Statement of Warrants

Tessa McKinley read the warrant information and members signed the documents.

7. FYI

Acton TV was thanked for the new equipment and the improved acoustics were noted. The ABRSC adjourned at 9:29 p.m. (moved by Paul Murphy, seconded by Amy Krishnamurthy)

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda with list of documents