



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720

978-264-4700

www.abschools.org

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting

February 2, 2023 Meeting at 7:00 p.m. / Executive Session at 8:15 p.m.

Administration Building Auditorium To view only: <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

Approved Open Minutes

- Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook, Liz Fowlks, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy (7:20 p.m.), Tessa McKinley, Andrew Schwartz, Yebin Wang, Rebeccah Wilson
- Members Absent: none
- Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino
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1. CALL TO ORDER (7:00)

The ABRSC meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Kyra Cook. She stated that the Open Meeting was being recorded by Acton TV.

Tessa McKinley, Yebin Wang and Evelyn Abayaah-Issah announced that they would not be running for another term due to the amount of time involved. They encouraged others to get involved and "have a voice at the table".

2. CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME - *Kyra Cook*

a. ABRHS Student Representative Update - *Rohan Ravindran, Harshini Magesh, Molly Norris, Diksha Mhatre, Julia Zhou*

Molly thanked the members for serving on the School Committee. She spoke in favor of the free period at the High School. Although it has been seen as controversial by some students and staff, many students really appreciate having a break in the day. It is healthier not to be in a classroom all day and if students have a job, it's really helpful to have time to do homework during school. Another rep noted how fun Valentine's Day is at school, including the singing and carnations that are sold during lunch.

b. Public Participation

John Petersen served on the Committee with Tessa and Evelyn and thanked them for their service. Having five new School Committee members next year (Kyra and Amy announced their retirement previously.), is almost half of the 11 member committee. He encouraged those running to reach out to sitting as well as the retiring members.

c. Superintendent's Update - *Peter Light*

Mr. Light thanked the members who are not running again, noting that this is a volunteer role and a partnership between the Superintendent and School Committee that allows the district to work so well for the kids.

Mr. Light highlighted that February is Black History Month and that 67 people volunteered to serve on the new committee of stakeholders to address problems with hate speech. The group will include about 20 members, including Ben Bloomenthal and Liz Fowlks from the School Committee. One more Committee member is welcome to join. The Superintendent is looking forward to getting this group together.

3. ONGOING BUSINESS

a. Finance Update - *David Verdolino*

i. Second Quarter Financial Report

Dave, Marie and Peter spent the past three days reviewing these numbers.

Projected Yearend Variance FY23: \$771,282 compared to final FY22 of \$437,215.

Slide 5 shows a projected \$338,000 deficit but this typically improves after Q2. When asked how much money is encumbered for FY23, Dave responded that Personnel encumbers who they have hired and at what rate. Not all departments encumber their projected costs. Facilities does a blanket PO for a supply company for their expected amount for the year. No POs have large unspent balances at this time. Scrubbing POs is a part of the normal process every year for the finance department. The percent expended in the spreadsheet represents what has been paid out of the POs.

Departments do not have a consistent approach. E&D certification is in process.

Extension of the Free Students Meals for FY24 is unknown. The Governor's Budget and the Capital Needs Report have not been released yet.

b. FY24 Budget Presentation #3 - *Peter Light*

i. All Day Kindergarten- (ADK) - Possible **VOTE** (on tuition) - Kyra Cook

Mr. Light reviewed his memo. Since the meeting on Jan 26th, there have been no significant updates to staffing or the understanding of capital needs. At that meeting members expressed interest in keeping tuition at \$1800 for FY24 and asked for more detail regarding ADK costs, revenue and tuition. The memo included a summary of the many discussions over the years of ADK tuition. Tuition has to be set so families who are registering can be told. Over the years, ADK requests have increased so that now we have 97% students who request it. We have actively been extending scholarships to families that needed it. In 2019-2020 we transitioned to hybrid K so we could offer ADK to all families that wanted it, and accommodate any who changed their mind mid year.

Referring to the charts in the memo, members discussed the various options for covering tuition and how each decision affects the other pieces or levers of the whole picture. Page 11 of the packet shows there is no one way to get there. It was noted that any projection is only good for one year due to all the variables. The three levers are cost of tuition, duration, and how much has to be

added to the budget. We have to build up the revolving fund because we have to keep paying for three years. This is an important element of understanding the decision. The three proposed models were reviewed. It was emphasized that it is the combination of levers that the Committee needs to consider. Mr. Light said that the District does have sufficient funds to keep tuition at \$1,800.

With Dave and Marie retiring in June, and many new School Committee members, it was suggested that a working group be formed to really look at ADK next year. This could be a fresh start for getting to free ADK tuition that is sustainable and flexible. When the FY25 budget season starts, the School Committee would better understand the issues.

Although projections are not always dependable, they are helpful. We can continue to build support for how we can advocate for different options, at the state level, as well as building support in the community for why ADK is important. There is a real need to explain why early education is so important for kids. The School Committee needs to feel in control of ADK tuition. A member advocated for also starting to discuss universal PreK. This could come up next Fall when budget guidelines are done. If the Committee says ADK is a priority, then other priorities need to be lowered. It was noted that if another classroom needs to be added due to enrollment, all the numbers change.

Ginny Kremer, who has regularly spoken with our elected officials on this subject, wanted to hear from our Kindergarten teachers regarding the differences they see in half day vs full day K. The state discussion is moving to universal Early Childhood Education so we are behind. Advocates have offered to come speak with the Committee or anyone who has questions. Several members agreed that tuition should not be increased for next year.

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to set the ADK tuition at \$1,800 per student for the 2023-24 school year.

- c. Subcommittee and Member Reports - none
- d. Consent Agenda/Action Items - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*
 - i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 1/26/23
 - ii. Approval of \$1200 donation from ABRPTSO to ABR High School for Community Service awards night

Ginny Kremer moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the consent agenda.

- e. Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*

Adam Klein moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the warrants (see memo for language).

FYI

- Bill H692 Genocide Education memo - highlighted
- Green Advisory Council (GAC) meeting-February 11, 2023 - highlighted
- Youth Mental Health First Aid Training-February 23, 2023 - highlighted
- Acton and Boxborough Town Election Calendars

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Kyra stated the need to meet in executive session pursuant to:

- MGL Ch 30A, sec.21(a) Purpose 3: to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee. She stated that the School Committee would not return to Open Meeting.

Adam Klein moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and at 8:22 p.m. it was unanimously,
VOTED by roll call: to enter executive session pursuant to MGL Ch 30A, sec.21(a) Purpose 3: to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee.
(YES: Abayahh-Issah, Bloomenthal, Cook, Fowlks, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Schwartz, Wang, Wilson)

4. ADJOURN

NEXT MEETINGS: February 16 & March 2 at ABRSC at 7:00 p.m. in the Admin. Building Auditorium

Respectfully submitted
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: agenda, agenda item summary pages, FY23 Q2 Financial Presentation slides - D. Verdolino 2/2/23, Budget Update and All Day Kindergarten Information memo - P. Light 1/30/23, Draft Minutes of ABRSC meeting on 1/26/23 - B. Petr, Donation check from ABRPTSO to the ABRHS for Community Service Program, Warrants Memo - D. Verdolino 1/30/23, An Act Concerning Genocide Education memo - D. Bookis January 2023, Green Advisory Council 2/11/23 Meeting invitation - J. Eldridge, Youth Mental Health & First Aid Training on 2/23/23 flyer, Acton and Boxborough Election Calendars