



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720

978-264-4700

www.abschools.org

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting

November 1, 2022 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

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

APPROVED MINUTES

- Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah (7:05), Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook, Liz Fowlks, Adam Klein, Tessa McKinley, Andrew Schwartz, Yebin Wang, Rebecca Wilson
- Members Absent: Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy
- Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino
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1. Call to Order

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Kyra Cook.

Members of the public were invited to watch the meeting online using Acton tv's youtube channel. It was stated that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.

2. Chairperson's Welcome - *Kyra Cook*

- a. ABRHS Student Rep Update - Rohan Ravindran, Harshini Magesh, Molly Norris
Harshini spoke about the need for more gender neutral restrooms at the High School. There are currently only three. Having more of these would foster a more inclusive community. Molly agreed. Molly also spoke about the crowded hallways, especially around doorways and stairways, making it hard to get to class on time given the five minute passing period. She also noted that the school has a dust problem, which affects allergies and the ability for some to learn. It is nice to see people getting back to their old rhythms now.
- b. Public Participation
Steve Ballard continued his comments from the previous meeting regarding how the lock down at the High School on September 14th was handled. Acknowledging that Mr. Light did his best, he felt that the Administration did not make the school safer. Molly expressed concern over the wording of the email that was sent out that said the Administration was going to consider if there was racial profiling going on.
- c. Superintendent's Update - *Peter Light*

Mr. Light congratulated ABRHS gymnastics coach Bill Kane on being named MIMAA Coach of the Year, and the Girls' soccer team on a nice writeup in the Globe. A proclamation was just received from Sen. Eldridge and the Senate leadership congratulating the district on the opening of the new school building. Kyra Cook will be presenting on Culturally Responsive Practices and Adam Klein will present on Green Buildings at the upcoming MASC conference.

3. Guests & Presentations

a. Culturally Responsive Practices - Deborah Bookis and Jennifer Faber

i. SEED Overview - Karin Drowne and Maureen Linn

Much of the SEED training is about sharing experiences and content, and thinking deeply about them, not one where the facilitator directs everyone to think and believe certain things. It is very much about engaging individuals. In response to a comment that the training is all being done by older white women, Karin disagreed stating that training that she has been through has been some of the most diverse sessions in education that she has ever been a part of. Mr. Light added that it is easy to discount equity work, but there is a specific body of knowledge and skill set that is needed to do the work well. Music teachers need to develop skills before they teach, just like math teachers. In response to a comment that SEED training is amazing but it needs to extend faster, Maureen agreed stating that she is working on this at the Junior High. In response to a question about whether we have teachers of color who are involved, Karin replied that at least half of the teachers who took the training over the summer were of color.

ii. Leadership Academy and "Culturally Responsive" Teacher Leaders - J. Faber

We are working toward being a culturally responsive school. Everyone is learning how to do it because some educators have more foundational knowledge than others and can share their skills. A SEED seminar is a very introspective experience, but culturally responsive teaching is a broad idea.

iii. Curriculum Update - Deborah Bookis

Curriculum is what happens in the classroom. It is the design educators use to plan, implement and assess the learning outcomes for students.

Laurie Taylor, new PK-12 Library Media Department Chair, discussed the need for diverse and inclusive book collections. "Weeding" is done to remove materials that contain biases and stereotypes. This is not censorship. Dora Sanchez, 3-6 Literacy and Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator and Paige Carroll, Merriam Grades 2-3 Educator spoke about the Elementary Social Studies Programs. School Committee members appreciated the presentation. Tessa McKinley stressed that decisions that were made over the past few years resulted in these programs, including hiring librarians, and leading to culturally

responsive practices. It was noted that receiving funding like DESE's Civics Teaching and Learning Grant makes it possible for us to focus on these goals.

Kat Contini, 7th Grade Social Studies Teacher and Molly Wong, JH Library/Media Specialist spoke about the Junior High Civics Project. David Green, High School Social Studies Department Leader, and Karin Drowne and Alec Lewis, High School Social Studies Teachers spoke about the High School Understanding Race Course which they offered for the first time last year. Comments included:

- Kids are clear that the department and the community needs to do more of this type of work. The staff was impressed with their passion about it.
- Activism is a skill, like writing.
- "How do you talk to kids about whiteness?" "Where does racial stereotyping come from?"
- A member wished that everyone could take this class. Karin replied that that is what they hoped would happen.
- Cross discussion with 6th and 7th graders about social judgment and civic engagement is planned and will hopefully expand to all grades.
- A teacher said they believe in activism, but students also need to learn to think critically. They must be "intent listeners". Teachers have worked hard on helping students be "deep thinkers", not just activists.

Committee members expressed support for opening this class up to many kids, at all levels. David Green explained that like the High School class on genocide, the Understanding Race class is unleveled with an option for honors. Teachers were afraid that if it wasn't offered on an honors level, some kids would take a leveled elective class instead due to GPA concerns. The staff would like as many students as possible to take this class.

- iv. DEI Family Advisory - Maryann Young, Jennifer Faber
Maryann and Jennifer explained the new Welcome Center and its vision to, "Develop a central location for new and existing families to streamline the registration process, gather helpful information about the services, community partnerships and resources available." The program currently serves 325 multilingual learners including new families to the community, not just immigrant families. A grant process has been started and Mr. Light has spoken with a state official about possible funding. A Committee member stated that the importance of this effort cannot be overemphasized.

- 4. New Business
 - a. Finance Update - Dave Verdolino
 - i. 1st Quarter FY23 Report

ii. Financial Report on FY2022 Closeout Memo-FYI from 10/20/22 meeting
Dave reviewed the Q1 report for FY23 cautioning that while the Administration thinks this is where we may be at the end of the school year, it is very early. A projected variance of \$314,969 was shown at the end of Q1. This variance is about the same as last year, being conservative and knowing there is no variance on assessments and Chapter 70 is locked in.

b. FY24 Budget - Adam Klein (Chairperson of the Budget Subcommittee)

i. Budget Guidelines - First Read

ii. FY24 Budget Timeline

Adam reviewed the slides which were similar to those used at the joint meeting on October 25th. The hypothetical budget increases (slides 6 & 7) are only to show the relationship between the District's budget changes and how they affect the Towns' budgets. Acton has a hard limit on any tax increase next year.

The Budget Subcommittee met and came up with seven prioritized guidelines. The first three involved how we control the budget financially. The next four were aligned with our goals. Two overarching concerns are:

- What percentage should we limit the budget increase to?
- What is our target use of E&D reserves amount?

There was a discussion of how much the District usually turns back. For the past few years, the average turnback was \$1.25M according to Dave. If we use that figure again in our budget, our percent would go down. Adam explained that we don't really want the turnbacks, but coming back with a 1% turnback is reasonable because the budget cannot run out. It is difficult to make painful cuts and then have a large turnback at the end of the year. Dave estimates conservatively. When thinking about E&D, you must consider how much you will use and how much you will replenish at the end of the year. There is a lag between when the budget is set and when E&D is certified and can be used. When we use E&D money, it is surplus from the previous year, and it reduces the assessment cost to the town (but not the budget). It is a timing issue.

After much discussion, there was consensus from the Committee to accept Adam's suggestion of limiting the FY24 budget increase to 2.5% and to target use of Excess and Deficiency (E&D) reserves to \$1.3M.

The Budget Subcommittee will review the guidelines and then the School Committee will vote them. Feedback on the guidelines may be sent to Adam Klein by Sunday night before the Budget Subcommittee meeting.

5. Ongoing Business

- a. Consent Agenda/Action Items - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*
 - i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 10/20/22
 - ii. Approval of ABRSC Joint Meeting Minutes of 10/25/22
 - iii. Donation of \$4,950 to Blanchard Memorial from Littleton Electric Light and Water Department

No items were held from the consent agenda.
Adam Klein moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the consent agenda as proposed with gratitude.

 - b. Subcommittee and Member Reports
 - ii. Negotiations Subcommittee Update - *Marie Altieri*
Members are actively meeting with the ABEA teachers and evaluating proposals. They will return to the Committee with more information soon.
 - iii. Acton Select Board - *Ben Bloomenthal*
At the meeting on Oct 17th, the Select Board discussed the Finance Committee's Point of View (POV) as presented at the Joint School Committee meeting on 10/25.

 - c. Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*
Tessa McKinley moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the warrants as presented (see memo)
6. FYI
Community Coffee (virtual), November 9, 2022
7. Adjourn
Adam Klein moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to adjourn the ABRSC at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: agenda, agenda item summary pages, Culturally Responsive Practices memo from D. Bookis and J. Faber 10/24/22, Culturally Responsive Practices Presentation Slides, Financial Report FY23 Q1 Memo from D. Verdolino 11/1/22, Overview 10/27/22, Revenue by Type 10/28/22, Special Revenue/Revolving/Gift Funds 10/27/22, Financial Report on FY22 Closeout by D. Verdolino 9/22/22, Presentation Slides, ABRSC FY24 Budget Guidelines from A. Klein, Presentation Slides, FY24 Budget Development Schedule (draft) from D. Verdolino, Draft Minutes of ABRSC meetings on 10/20/22 and 10/25/22 from B. Petr, Memo re Littleton Electric, Light & Water Donation from D. Labb 10/21/22, Warrants memo from D. Verdolino 10/28/22.
NEXT MEETINGS: November 17 & December 1 ABRSC at 7:00 p.m. in the Admin. Building Auditorium