



Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting

December 3, 2020

7:00 p.m. Open Meeting
8:00 p.m. Executive Session

Via zoom webinar:

<https://abschools.zoom.us/j/95248771505>

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING AGENDA

Virtual Public Zoom Webinar Meeting

December 3, 2020

To attend open meeting: <https://abschools.zoom.us/j/95248771505>

7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

To call in: 312 626 6799

8:00 p.m. Executive Session

Live streaming: <http://actontv.org/on-demand/livestream/government>

1. **Call to Order** (7:00)
2. **Chairperson's Welcome** - *Tessa McKinley*
3. **Public Participation** – *Please use “Hand Raise” feature to participate (not the “Chat”)*
4. **Superintendent's Update** – *Peter Light*
5. **PRESENTATIONS** (7:15)
 - a. **Superintendent Goals 2020-2021** - First Read- *Peter Light (addendum)*
6. **ONGOING BUSINESS** (7:45)
 - a. **Approval of Meeting Minutes** of 11/19/20 – **VOTE** - *Tessa McKinley*
 - b. **Subcommittee and Member Reports**
 - i. **Health Insurance Trust** - *John Petersen*
7. **Statement of Warrants & Recommendation to Approve** – **VOTE** – *T McKinley*
8. **FYI**
9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** (8:00)

To be convened under M.G.L. c.30A, Sec. 21(a) purpose (1): to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual. This is in regard to the Open Meeting Law complaint dated November 13, 2020 received from Martin Benson.
10. **Return to the Open Meeting for the Sole Purpose of Adjourning**

NEXT MEETINGS: December 17 and January 7 at 7:00 p.m. via zoom

Posted on 11/30/2020 at 5:00 p.m.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION (FYI)

- a. **2020-2021 ABR School Committee Meetings**, *revised 11/19/20*
- b. **FY22 Budget Schedule**, *voted 11/19/20*
- c. **QPR Training**: Learn the 3 simple steps to save a life from suicide. People trained as QPR Gatekeepers learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help. Gatekeepers can be anyone, but include parents, friends, neighbors, and many others who can recognize and refer someone at risk of suicide. Sign up for one of the free (virtual) QPR trainings AB Cares is offering. Click on this [QPR Training Flyer](#) for details and to sign up online. Next one: Dec 9 at 7 p.m.

Public Participation:

Per policy BEDH, members of the public may speak for up to 3 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.



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720
978-264-4700
www.abschools.org

Peter J. Light
Superintendent of Schools

To: Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee
From: Peter Light, Superintendent of Schools
Date: December 2, 2020
Re: Superintendent's Goals 2020-21

At our meeting on December 3, 2020, I would like to seek feedback on a first read of my goals for the 2020-21 school year. Needless to say, this has been a year like no other due to the pandemic. Much of the work of the district has been singularly focused on "pandemic school." The proposed goals reflect this reality and are intended to be both purposeful and realistic in focusing my work and that of our leadership on critical aspects of providing an effective education for our students given these extraordinary circumstances.

I am proposing a total of four goals this year. One goal focused on improving student learning, one goal focused on professional practice and two additional district-wide goals. The student learning and professional practice goals are aligned with initiatives in our DRAFT multi-year strategy. The additional goals were selected because they represent significant work needed to move our district forward with purpose.

I have added some possible action steps for discussion purposes in order to help you gain a better understanding of my thinking. These possible action steps are not intended to be complete. After you have an opportunity to provide me feedback tomorrow night, I will revise these goals and add action steps for presentation and a vote on December 17.

I have also included a copy of our most recent DRAFT Strategy. Please note that there have been changes to this document since the last version that was shared with you. I expect this DRAFT document to continue to evolve over the course of the school year as our thinking becomes more complex around our lessons learned during the pandemic.

I look forward to hearing your feedback.

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

Superintendent's Goals 2020-21

Student Learning:

- ❑ **1.5 Support educators and families to implement strategies to increase student engagement through effective synchronous and asynchronous instructional practices.**

Possible action steps (for discussion purposes only): Professional learning provided to educators and leaders, work of Superintendent and leadership team in looking at student work, supports provided to teachers around synchronous and asynchronous learning strategies

Professional Practice:

- ❑ **2.1 Engage stakeholders to better understand the diverse student and family experiences in our District related to cultural beliefs, race and racism, socioeconomic status, gender and sexual identity, disability, language, and more in order to create more equitable and inclusive schools**

Possible action steps: DEI Family Advisory work, affinity groups, focus groups, hiring committees, parent/student surveys

Additional District Goals:

- ❑ **Work with the school committee and leadership team to refine and finalize the multi-year District strategy to incorporate key learning and opportunities from pandemic schooling (including the plan to fully reopen schools as public health circumstances permit) and begin to align school improvement plans with district-wide strategic objectives.**

Possible action steps: possible stakeholder survey to gather lessons learned from pandemic schooling that can inform strategy, school committee workshop around strategy, revisions to strategy by leadership, school committee vote to adopt strategy

- ❑ **Engage a broad, representative group of stakeholders to plan for and support successful leadership transitions in special education and at the high school.**

Possible action steps: recruitment processes, hiring committee representation, hiring processes, work with new leaders to support development of effective entry plans, work with district leadership team to support successful transition of new leaders into the existing leadership team

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

Strategic Objective	Strategic Initiative
Engaged Learning Improve cognitive, behavioral and emotional engagement in learning by increasing the variety and relevance of learning experiences.	1.1 Involve school and community stakeholders to develop a unified vision of the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to prepare all students for life after high school.
	1.2 Align instructional programs, courses, and curricula with the District's PK-12 unified vision in order to increase and expand the variety and relevance of learning experiences.
	1.3 Expand learning opportunities for all students in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) particularly for low-income, Latinx and Black and Special Education students as well as English Learners.
	1.4 Align instructional, assessment, grading, and course leveling practices with the District's unified vision in order to promote increased cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement for students.
	1.5 Support educators in implementing strategies to increase student engagement through effective synchronous and asynchronous instructional practices.
Inclusive Practices Ensure that all students, staff, and families feel welcomed, included and see cultural differences as an asset by strengthening school culture and climate and intentionally implementing anti-bias and anti-racist instructional practices and materials.	2.1 Engage stakeholders to better understand the diverse student and family experiences in our District related to cultural beliefs, race and racism, socioeconomic status, gender and sexual identity, disability, language, and more in order to create more equitable and inclusive schools
	2.2 Increase the number of certified staff members in the district who are Black, Latinx, and Asian.
	2.3 Ensure that all staff engage in ongoing anti-bias and anti-racist professional learning.
	2.4 Strengthen school culture and climate by strengthening relationships between students and adults within the schools, with an emphasis on low-income, Latinx, Black, and Special Education students as well as English Learners.
	2.5 Ensure that all schools and classrooms use instructional practices and materials that reflect and are responsive to the diversity of our students and families
	2.6 Strengthen restorative justice practices and ensure all students, particularly students who are Latinx, Black, with low socioeconomic status, students with IEPs, and multilingual learners are treated fairly and equitably.
Equitable Opportunities and Outcomes Ensure that every student has access to equitable opportunities and outcomes, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, race, disability, gender identity or other differentiating characteristics.	3.1 Establish an environment that challenges all students to achieve at high levels and be engaged in their learning by increasing access and opportunities for low-income, Latinx, Black, and Special Education students as well as English Learners.
	3.2 Identify and implement practices that promote more equitable representation of students in advanced coursework including low-income, Latinx, Black, and Special Education students as well as English Learners.
	3.3 Ensure effective evidence-based screening, instruction, and assessment in literacy and mathematics in all general education classrooms PK-12.
	3.4 Ensure that school schedules provide students opportunities to access core instruction and supplemental support in the general education setting.
	3.5 Implement the Child Study and Student Support Process consistently across settings to eliminate variation in practices, data usage, and roles and responsibilities of staffing supporting students academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs.
	3.6 Develop a districtwide PK-12 continuum of support for students in literacy and mathematics that aligns the roles and responsibilities of all educators in providing services for students.
Social-emotional Learning (SEL) Improve social-emotional development through an aligned continuum of skills,	4.1 Identify core social-emotional competencies that students will develop.
	4.2 Embed and integrate social-emotional instruction in all education settings.
	4.3 Align and implement a PK-12 continuum of social-emotional and behavioral support for all students particularly for students facing adversity, trauma and/or special education needs.

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

instruction, and support for students PK-12.	4.4 Use Child Study and Student Support Team Process to support consistent social, emotional and behavioral intervention practices, data usage, and roles and responsibilities of staff
--	---

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

WELLNESS • EQUITY • ENGAGEMENT

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING DRAFT MINUTES

Virtual Public Zoom Webinar Meeting

November 19, 2020

To attend open meeting: <https://abschools.zoom.us/j/95248771505>

7:00 p.m.

To call in: 312 626 6799

Live streaming: <http://actontv.org/on-demand/livestream/government>

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang
Members Absent: Diane Baum
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. Call to Order (7:00)

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

She noted that the meeting was being conducted remotely via a Zoom webinar. With the exception of Diane Baum who was absent, ten of the eleven members were participating on the zoom. Per Remote Participation policy, BEDJA, all votes were done by roll call. The meeting was taped by Acton TV.

2. Chairperson's Welcome - Tessa McKinley

3. Public Participation – Please use “Hand Raise” feature to participate (not the “Chat”)

Eight members of the public shared their thoughts regarding the process used to retire the AB mascot. While most were critical of the process (it was rushed, one sided and alienated many community members), several spoke in favor of the Committee's decision (we have more pressing issues to deal with, and are grateful for the Committee and Leadership's hard work and thoughtful deliberation). Charlie Kadlec urged both sides to start over so they can understand each other and find common ground. While the students did what they thought was appropriate, he felt that the adults who guided them should have done more to avoid the division that has been created.

4. Superintendent's Update – Peter Light

This was included in Mr. Light's presentation below.

5. PRESENTATIONS

a. Public Health and Covid-19 Update - Peter Light

Superintendent Light, Nurse Leader Joanne Chadwick R.N., and Assistant Superintendent Dawn Bentley presented on the recent covid cases seen in our schools and considerations about further opening or closing of the buildings. The slides and memo contain a large amount of detailed information, which was very much appreciated by members. In summary, considerations for how open our

schools can be involve physical distancing recommendations, transportation requirements, and expanded access to surveillance testing. The total cases in our schools is now 30.

Questions and comments from the Committee included:

- Is there a tipping point where our staff cannot handle all the contact tracing that needs to be done? Mr. Light: Learning of 4 positive cases today was challenging. The nurses and staff have spent a significant amount of extra time, all depending on when the calls come in. It has averaged 8-10 hours per case.
- With numbers increasing and Thanksgiving next week, why not go all remote? Mr. Light: We want to “keep good data and metrics in front of us” as decisions are made. He will speak with the leadership team tomorrow re the past 72 hours. The transition website has extensive data on our district.
- We want to keep our students and community safe and kids in school. Are there tests or action items that we can require? Mr. Light: No new policies are needed but we “don’t want to be the community police”. We have to impress on everyone to use their good judgment.
- Are we considering the short and long term effects? Can families switch to remote if they see short term effects happening for their children? Mr. Light: Dawn Bentley is working with Emerson Hospital on a survey regarding the effects. Data will be shared when available. Changes to learning programs cannot be made at this time because of staffing limitations and the 6 foot distance requirements. There is a short wait list but there are challenging constraints.
- How are close contacts determined? Mr. Light: Jr High and High School students change classes much more often than elementary students so many more contacts are involved when a positive case is identified. A close contact is someone who has been with an infected person for 20 minutes or more.

Mr. Light concluded that a decision to pause in person learning will not be made using any one metric. The existing challenge is staffing and the number of students in quarantine (previously 248 students, now approximately 350). A pause could be done to try to squash a virus surge, but it would depend on family and student behaviors. March was described as “crisis situation learning” whereas a shut down now, because of all that we have learned, would not disrupt students’ learning. A member of the public stated that the district was being too risk averse and that students should be back in school.

Valerie Gransewicz was thanked for doing an excellent job as Principal of the Remote Learning Program. Mr. Light agreed.

b. Annual 10/1 Enrollment Projections - *Marie Altieri*

Total K-12 Enrollment for 2020-2021 is down 177 students, compared to being down 155 last year. This is a 6% decline over 2 years. Total K-12 Enrollment vs. Projection is down 149 students, or 3%. Kindergarten enrollment for Acton and

Boxborough combined is under projection by 51 students, or 16%. Marie discussed general kindergarten enrollment volatility, on top of families' pandemic concerns. Students who are being homeschooled will be surveyed to see if they plan to return in person. More detail will be discussed as part of the budget process. While the economically disadvantaged students numbers stayed at 11%, not everyone had to complete the form this year so that may not be accurate.

Members discussed how good numbers will be generated for FY22 to make up for this year's irregularities. A member asked for more detailed demographic data. What is provided is the same as in previous years. It was agreed that the DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) work will involve examining issues such as how the Jr High and High School students' school experiences are similar to the general community's (as far as race goes), but the elementary students' experiences do not reflect the community because several of the elementary schools do not have a balanced demographic mix of students.

6. ONGOING BUSINESS

a. **Recommendation to Approve Consent Agenda - VOTE** - Tessa McKinley

Tessa asked for holds on the agenda items. There were none.

- i. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 10/29/20 & 11/5/20 – VOTE
- ii. Recommendation to Accept Gift of \$1,000 from Lifetouch Studios to the Junior High School for Student Activities - VOTE
- iii. Recommendation to Accept STEAM Donation in Honor of Don MacKenzie from the Telephone Pioneers of America - VOTE

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

VOTED by roll call: to approve the consent agenda with gratitude.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

b. **Approval of Superintendent Light's Successor Contract – VOTE** - Tessa McKinley

Tessa explained that because Mr. Light did not have superintendent experience when he was hired, his starting salary was relatively low. Over the past 3 years, he has "proved his worth to us and other districts" and using comparable salary data, the proposed five year contract included FY22 salary of \$228,000. The contract was described as "clean" with everything included in the salary.

Amy Krishnamurthy enthusiastically moved to approve the successor contract for Superintendent Peter Light as proposed. Ginny Kremer seconded the motion.

Members unanimously praised Mr. Light's performance. Comments included:

- Peter has done amazing work, particularly through the covid pandemic with the lack of federal and state guidance/leadership.
- Peter approaches the job as a general manager. He doesn't try to be an expert in everything. He uses his team resources well.
- He has an expansive view of what it means to be an educator and embraces all of it. "Do what you're interested in and try it."

- Peter's excellent communication skills, compassion and transparency have been key this year. He is a great listener.
- He is a consummate professional.
- He is the superintendent for everyone in our diverse community, no matter what group. His efforts are very much appreciated.
- Offering to not take his raise last year, when money was tight, was a true testament of leadership.

Mr. Light appreciated the compliments, noting that the work is also done by many people behind the scenes. He has been struck by the quality of people in the community and is very grateful and happy to commit to working with everyone for 5 more years.

The Committee unanimously **VOTED** by roll call to approve Mr. Light's successor contract "with lots of gratitude". (YES: Abayaah-Issah, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

c. **Budget Update - Dave Verdolino**

i. FY22 Budget Timeline - **VOTE** - Adam Klein

The proposed revision to the timeline brings it in line with Boxborough's Town Meeting plans.

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to approve the FY22 Budget Timeline as presented. (YES: Abayaah-Issah, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

d. **Review of Open Meeting Law Complaint - Peter Light**

i. Recommendation to Authorize District Counsel to Investigate and Respond for the ABRSC – **VOTE**

Mr. Light explained that a complaint was filed by a member of the community regarding the mascot decision made at the School Committee meeting on 10/15/20. Counsel has been consulted and it is recommended that the Committee vote to refer the matter to her to investigate and then get back to the School Committee with a response and, if necessary, a recommendation for possible remedies. A response is due by December 4th.

Mr. Light suggested that the Committee authorize District Counsel to investigate and respond for the School Committee and if any actions are necessary, she will recommend them. Amy Krishnamurthy made the motion and it was seconded by Nora Shine.

In response to a question, Mr. Light thought this legal advice, depending on what is learned, would cost the district under \$1,000. (2-4 hours of counsel's time x \$200 per hour). He recommends a thorough process, such as what counsel would do – fact finding, followed by remedy if needed.

The Committee unanimously **VOTED by roll call** to support the motion.
(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

7. Subcommittee and Member Reports

- i. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) - *Tessa McKinley*
- ii. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – Amy Krishnamurthy
They met that morning and are reviewing the FY21 budget by quarters.
- iii. MASC Annual Meeting 11/7/20 - *Amy Krishnamurthy*
Resolutions were voted and all passed at the conference.
- iv. EDCO Update - *Peter Light*
The Executive Director has resigned and been replaced by Cindy Taymore. EDCO is in major transition with extraordinary financial challenges. Mr. Light is on the executive finance committee now.
- v. Other
Ginny Kremer met with Rep Tami Gouveia re covid assistance and the increasing frustration. It was suggested that the School Committee could send a letter to the state demanding that a timely budget schedule be confirmed because it creates great difficulty for communities.
Nora Shine and Kyra Cook attended the EDCO Roundtable.
Amy Krishnamurthy reported that the Acton FinCom is working on their Point of View document.
Kyra Cook reported that the DEI Committee is meeting and has cochairs.
Evelyn Abayaah-Issah reported that the new ABRHS Parents of Color Advisory Group just met and 50 parents attended. Great representation from all ethnic groups was reported. She is leading this group with Counselor Lindsay Rosenman.

8. Statement of Warrants & Recommendation to Approve – VOTE – T McKinley

Tessa McKinley moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: see motion on memo

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

9. FYI

10. Adjourn

At 10:12 p.m. Adam Klein moved, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to adjourn the ABRSC

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS: December 3 at 7:00 p.m. via zoom



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road - Acton, MA 01720
www.abschools.org

Finance Department
David A. Verdolino, Director
(978) 264-4700
dverdolino@abschools.org

December 3, 2020

To: School Committee Chair
From: Dave Verdolino /dav/
Re: School Committee Agenda - Warrants

Members –

Below please find a summary of warrants for which I am respectfully requesting your consideration and approval at tonight's regular meeting.

The Warrant Subcommittee has previously reviewed these warrants, for the purpose of check distribution. A majority of the Subcommittee conveyed their approval electronically and the related disbursements have been made. The full School Committee should vote its authorization of these expenditures of budgeted and other funds in its custody. All members have received for each warrant the information provided as shown below, namely:

1. (for vendor warrants, including payroll withholding remittances)
 - Declining balance register of payments ("Declining Dollar report")
 - Warrant detail (payments by vendor)
2. (payroll)
 - Payroll Warrant summary

As you know, these Warrants are customarily provided to you in hard copy format for your review and manual signature. Obtaining your approval in this manner will eliminate the future need to produce what could be many paper reports, all requiring your signatures.

Thank you for your consideration and cooperation with this request.

<u>Warrant Type</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Warrant #</u>		<u>Amount</u>
PAYROLL	11/19/2020	P2111	\$	2,726,538.15
VENDOR	11/19/2020	21-011PR (PR deductions)	\$	1,113,825.93
	11/25/2020	21-011 (regular vendors)	\$	1,944,079.24



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road - Acton, MA 01720
www.abschools.org

Finance Department
David A. Verdolino, Director
(978) 264-4700
dverdolino@abschools.org

Recommended Motion Wording

I move that the School Committee vote to approve:

Payroll warrant(s) as follows –

Number P2111 dated 11/19/2020 in the amount of \$2,726,538.15;

Payroll deduction warrant(s) as follows –

Number 21-011PR dated 11/19/2020 in the amount of \$1,113,825.93;

Vendor warrant(s) as follows –

Number 21-011 dated 11/25/2020 in the amount of \$1,944,079.24.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the Attorney General
One Ashburton Place
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAINT FORM

Instructions for completing the Open Meeting Law Complaint Form

The Attorney General's Division of Open Government interprets and enforces the Open Meeting Law, Chapter 30A of the Massachusetts General Laws, Sections 18-25. Below is the procedure for filing and responding to an Open Meeting Law complaint.

Instructions for filing a complaint:

- o Fill out the attached two-page form completely. Sign and date the second page. File the complaint with the public body within 30 days of the alleged violation. If the violation was not reasonably discoverable at the time it occurred, you must file the complaint within 30 days of the date the violation was reasonably discoverable. A violation that occurs during an open session of a meeting is reasonably discoverable on the date of the meeting.
- o To file the complaint:
 - o For a local or municipal public body, you must submit a copy of the complaint to the chair of the public body AND to the municipal clerk.
 - o For all other public bodies, you must submit a copy of the complaint to the chair of the public body.
 - o Complaints may be filed by mail, by email, or by hand. Please retain a copy for your records.
- o If the public body does not respond within 14 business days and does not request an extension to respond, contact the Division for further assistance.

Instructions for a public body that receives a complaint:

- o The chair must disseminate the complaint to the members of the public body.
- o The public body must meet to review the complaint within 14 business days (usually 20-22 calendar days).
- o After review, but within 14 business days, the public body must respond to the complaint in writing and must send the complainant a response and a description of any action the public body has taken to address the allegations in the complaint. At the same time, the body must send the Attorney General a copy of the complaint and a copy of the response. The public body may delegate this responsibility to an individual member of the public body, its counsel, or a staff member, but only after the public body has met to review the complaint.
- o If a public body requires more time to review the complaint and respond, it may request an extension of time for good cause by contacting the Division of Open Government.

Once the public body has responded to the complaint:

- o If you are not satisfied with the public body's response to your complaint, you may file a copy of the complaint with the Division by mail, by email, or by hand, but only once you have waited for 30 days after filing the complaint with the public body. Mail may be sent to: The Division of Open Government, Office of the Attorney General, One Ashburton Place - 20th Floor, Boston, MA 02108. Emails may be sent to: openmeeting@state.ma.us.
- o When you file your complaint with the Division, please include the complaint form and all documentation relevant to the alleged violation. You may wish to attach a cover letter explaining why the public body's response does not adequately address your complaint.
- o The Division will not review complaints filed with us more than 90 days after the violation, unless we granted an extension to the public body or you can demonstrate good cause for the delay.

If you have questions concerning the Open Meeting Law complaint process, we encourage you to contact the Division of Open Government by phone at (617) 963-2540 or by email at openmeeting@state.ma.us.

Description of alleged violation:

Describe the alleged violation that this complaint is about. If you believe the alleged violation was intentional, please say so and include the reasons supporting your belief.

Note: This text field has a maximum of 3000 characters.

See statement of alleged violations attached.

What action do you want the public body to take in response to your complaint?

Note: This text field has a maximum of 500 characters.

In order to resolve these Open Meeting Law Violations, the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee shall do the following:

- 1) Vote to vacate its vote from October 15, 2020, to retire the Colonial 's name.
- 2) Tessa McKinley shall issue a public apology to the Acton-Boxborough community on behalf of the School Committee for disregarding community interest and input on this historic subject.
- 3) If and when the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee decides to change the Colonial name, the Committee shall have studied the issue for a year and considered input and suggestions from any and all students, staff members, alumni, and community members before voting on the issue.

Review, sign, and submit your complaint

I. Disclosure of Your Complaint.

Public Record. Under most circumstances, your complaint, and any documents submitted with your complaint, is considered a public record and will be available to any member of the public upon request.

Publication to Website. As part of the Open Data Initiative, the AGO will publish to its website certain information regarding your complaint, including your name and the name of the public body. The AGO will not publish your contact information.

II. Consulting With a Private Attorney.

The AGO cannot give you legal advice and is not able to be your private attorney, but represents the public interest. If you have any questions concerning your individual legal rights or responsibilities you should contact a private attorney.

III. Submit Your Complaint to the Public Body.

The complaint must be filed first with the public body. If you have any questions, please contact the Division of Open Government by calling (617) 963-2540 or by email to openmeeting@state.ma.us.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the provisions above and certify that the information I have provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: Martin Y. Benson

Date: 11/13/20

For Use By Public Body

Date Received by Public Body:

For Use By AGO

Date Received by AGO:

Description of Alleged Violations

I am writing to register a complaint regarding two violations of the Open Meeting Law, Chapter 30A of the Massachusetts General Laws, Sections 18-25, which were committed and/or first observed by the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee at their October 15, 2020 meeting from at or around 7:00 PM to at or around 9:56 PM, as recorded on the zoom meeting (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>). The primary topic of discussion during this meeting focused on retiring the school system's mascot and name "The Colonials". During this meeting the School Committee voted to retire both the name and the image of the mascot after little study or discussion despite significant public interest. Two incidents occurred which indicate violations of the Open Meeting Law both of which were intentional.

As background, the Colonials have represented the Acton-Boxborough Regional School System since the 1950's. The Colonial symbolizes the Citizen Soldiers from both towns who heroically fought the colonizing British Empire at the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Three Acton residents Captain Isaac Davis, James Hayward and Abner Hosmer were killed during the battle and are interred at the base of a monument in the town center. In 1994, a booster group purchased and began using a Colonial mascot costume. About a decade later, another booster group began using an image of a Colonial on some of their clothing.

In early June of 2020, a student group called the Acton-Boxborough Students for Equity and Justice (ABSEJ) started a Change.org Petition called "Let's Change the AB 'Colonials' Mascot" which garnered 1500 signatures. Citing the number of signatures the School Committee agreed to their request to make a presentation. The group was permitted to present at the School Committee meeting on September 17, 2020. From September 17

through October 14, 2020, the School Committee invited public comments through email. No official school-wide student survey was administered. Meanwhile, a separate petition called "Save the Acton Boxborough Regional Colonial Mascot" was also created and amassed over 2,663 signatures. Prior to the meeting on October 15, 2020, no other student groups, faculty members, alumni, historians, or community members were permitted to present in support of keeping the Colonial. Many were frustrated that there seemed to be a misunderstanding of the difference between the word "colonial" and "colonizing". Additionally, there was confusion regarding the issue at hand, whether the School Committee was retiring the term "The Colonials" or just the image of the mascot. The School Committee allowed for little discussion, clarification, or speakers who were knowledgeable on the subject. During the Public Participation portion speakers were limited to only a minute of speaking time. The School Committee voted that night to retire both the name and the mascot leaving many angered by the lack of a fair process. To an outside observer it was clear that this decision had been reached prior to the meeting.

The first intentional violation occurred sometime over the summer or fall of 2020 and occurred at a bias training called the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Program. At the October 15, 2020 meeting of the School Committee, at or around 7:15 PM, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:15:33 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>) School Committee Chair Tessa McKinley said, "The School Committee has taken a lot of time to do anti-bias training. I am so grateful that we've been able to participate in the SEED training, that the district has offered to educators and requires of educators at this point." A few minutes later, at or around 7:21 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at

or around 1:21:08 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>) Committee member Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, who was elected in May of 2020 said, "Yeah, so I guess, you know the way that I approach this whole issue. I remember we were sitting here and having our SEED training and the issue of the mascot came up. And Diane had said, 'I don't even want it to come up'." Evelyn Abayaah-Issah's statement indicates that the topic of the Colonial mascot was discussed at an anti-bias training not open to the public and amongst a quorum of the School Committee. This was a topic that the School Committee was presently deliberating for a vote. Throughout the October 15, 2020 meeting multiple members discussed what they learned together at SEED training and used it to justify their decision for retiring the Colonial. The School Committee's discussions and deliberations of the Colonial mascot during trainings closed to the public is a clear violation of the Open Meeting Law as the deliberation was outside of a properly noticed meeting. These acts indicate an intention to discuss this issue in a closed door setting.

Second, there is considerable reason to believe that a quorum or sub-quorum of committee members were discussing or deliberating this topic through texts or mobile messaging services, both in the months leading up to the vote and during the meeting on October 15th, 2020. At the School Committee meeting on October 15, 2020 all School Committee members participated in person at the meeting at R.J Grey Jr. High school, while members Kyra Cook, Amy Krishnamurthy, and another member joined the meeting remotely on Zoom. Throughout the meeting, there were numerous camera and screen changes to reflect who in the meeting is speaking.

Chair Tessa McKinley, Kyra Cook, Amy Krishnamurthy can be seen on their phones throughout the meeting texting, a communication unavailable to others during an open meeting to the public. Throughout the meeting Chair Tessa McKinley had her phone in front of her the entire time. She sent and received numerous texts and at certain points of the meeting, open chat dialogues were visible on her phone screen. Throughout the Public Participation portion of the meeting Kyra Cook and Amy Krishnamurthy can be seen sending and receiving a sequence of text messages to each other. The highest volume of phone texts messages occurred between Amy Krishnamurthy and Kyra Cook. Observation of this repeated behavior during the meeting demonstrates the intentionality of non-public communication. The instances described immediately above can be viewed on a portion of a pending records request to the Acton-Boxborough School Committee, submitted on November 5, 2020.

10) Any and all texts messages (including but not limited to text messages, group chats, WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook Messenger) to or from any one or more of the following individuals, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, that relates in any way to the retiring of the colonial mascot from March 1, 2020 to the present, including texts from personal or school district phones.

11) Any and all texts messages (including but not limited to text messages, group chats, WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook Messenger) to or from Nora Shine, that relates in any way to the retiring of the colonial mascot from September 15, 2020 to October 17, 2020, including texts from personal or school district phones.

Items 10 and 11 shall include the following text messages (including but not limited to texts, group chats, Viber, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger);

a) Any and all texts messages (including but not limited to texts, group chats, Viber, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger) to or from any one or more of the following individuals, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Nora Shine, that occurred during the October 15th, 2020 meeting of the Acton Boxborough Regional School

committee, from at or around 7:00 PM to at or around 9:56 PM, as recorded on the zoom meeting (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

b) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 8:09 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:09:44 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

c) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 8:10 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:10:05 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

d) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to any and all school committee member or members at or around 8:11 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:11:28 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

e) The text that was received by Tessa McKinley at or around 8:21 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:21:16 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

f) The text that was received by Tessa McKinley at or around 8:22 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:22:04 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

g) The text that was sent from Tessa McKinley at or around 8:27 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:27:14 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

h) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to any and all school committee member or members at or around 8:41 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:41:23 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

i) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Ginny Kremer at or around 8:41 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:41:36 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

k) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 8:57 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:57:19 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

l) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 8:57 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:57:26 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

- m) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 8:57 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:57:48 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- n) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 8:58 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:58:51 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- o) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 8:59 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:59:00 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- p) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 8:59 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:59:54 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- q) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 8:59 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 1:59:58 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- r) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 9:00 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:00:16 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- s) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 9:00 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:00:22 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- t) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 9:00 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:00:29 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- u) The text that was received by Tessa McKinley at or around 9:02 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:02:08 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- v) The text that was sent from either Kyra Cook or Amy Krishnamurthy to Tessa McKinley at or around 9:03 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:03:05 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);
- w) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 9:03 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:03:59 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

x) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 9:04 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:04:08 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

y) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 9:06 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:06:33 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

z) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 9:07 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:07:57 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

aa) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 9:08 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:08:05 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

bb) The text that was sent from either Kyra Cook or Amy Krishnamurthy to Tessa McKinley at or around 9:09 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:09:04 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

cc) The text that was sent from Amy Krishnamurthy to Kyra Cook at or around 9:10 PM on October 15th, 2020, as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:10:14 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>);

dd) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 9:10 PM on October 15th, 2020 as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:10:32 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>)

ee) The text that was sent from Kyra Cook to Amy Krishnamurthy at or around 9:13 PM on October 15th, 2020 as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:13:02 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>)

ff) The text that was sent from Tessa McKinley to Kyra Cook at or around 9:16 PM on October 15th, 2020 as recorded on the zoom meeting at or around 2:16:47 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDFXfSGkeOo>)

Throughout this meeting members clearly and blatantly texted each other. Many members had phones on their desks and were seen typing throughout the meeting. It's unclear at this time if they were communicating to each other individually or were participating in a group chat. Given the lack of discussion on the issue and the quick and unpopular decision to

vote to retire the Colonial, it is clear that private text communications between members of this committee played a role in the discussions and deliberation on this topic. Even individual text conversations between members of the School Committee or small groups chats, could potentially lead to sub quorum deliberations when information is exchanged between members.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee committed two Open Meeting law violations in the process of deliberating and debating on the retirement of the Colonial. The first violation occurred sometime during SEED training, at an unknown date during the summer or early fall of 2020. During the SEED training the School Committee discussed retiring the Colonial during a meeting that was closed to the public. Prior to the meeting on October 15, 2020, the public was not made aware that this topic was being discussed in SEED trainings. The second violation, the use of text messaging by a quorum or sub quorum of the board led to private discussion and deliberation amongst committee members during the October 15, 2020 meeting and in the weeks prior to the vote. Both of incidents are intentional violations of the Open Meeting Law and were on clear display during their meeting on October 15, 2020.

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

2020-2021

Revised 11/19/20 due to delay of Annual Town Meeting(s)

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee meetings are usually held on the first and third Thursdays of the month, at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building Auditorium. Materials are posted at https://www.abschools.org/school_committee/meetings_agendas_packets_minutes usually on the Friday night prior to each meeting. Meeting agendas are posted at least 48 hours prior on the calendar at www.abschools.org per the Open Meeting Law.

Summer Business Meetings: July 1, August 13, August 27 (if needed)
Annual Training and Workshop: July 30

September 3
September 17

October 1
October 15

October 29 Workshop
November 5 Added meeting
November 19

December 3
December 17

January 7
January 21 Added meeting due to **Budget Saturday being cancelled**

February 4
February 11 Preliminary FY22 Budget Vote

March 4 Comprehensive FY22 Budget & Program Presentations
(in lieu of Budget Saturday)

March 18 **or 11?** Open Budget Hearing - required by law
(Final Budget VOTE not later than 45 days prior to earlier Town Meeting)

March 25
April 1
April 15

May 6
May 20

June 10
June 17

Note: Acton Town Meeting begins ? , 2021. Boxborough Town Meeting begins May , 2021.



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road - Acton, MA 01720
www.abschools.org

Finance Department
David A. Verdolino, Director
(978) 264-4700
dverdolino@abschools.org

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District – FY2022 Budget Development Schedule

Based on Boxborough's Town Meeting (scheduled on May 10) being the earlier of the two towns.
voted 11/19/2020

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 11/19/20 | <u>School Committee:</u> | Budget schedule adopted (SC vote)
(Guidelines were approved at November 5 meeting) |
| 11/20/20 | | FY2022 budget workbooks, forms and instructions transmitted to administrators
Administrators prepare FY22 budget requests (personnel; non-personnel; capital) |
| 12/03/20 | <u>School Committee:</u> | (TBD whether any FY22 budget-related agenda) |
| 12/17/20 | <u>School Committee:</u>
(last year 11/05) | Enrollment and class size update; Full-day K update
Federal relief program grant update (grants expire Dec. 30) |
| 12/18/20 | | Completed Budget Request Forms submitted to Finance |
| Thereafter: | | > Input department budget requests (Munis); review with CO administrators
> Staffing and salary budget review/update & updated enrollment projections
> Capital Committee review CIP status and any recommendations |
| 1/07/21 | <u>School Committee:</u> | FY2021 CIP update; Full-day K decision (SC vote) |
| 1/21/21
(added meeting) | <u>School Committee:</u>
(last year 12/05) | Budget Presentation #1 ("Supt. Preliminary Budget")
Preliminary Assessment projection |
| Wednesday,
1/27/21 | | Expected release of Governor's proposed FY22 Budget; Cherry Sheet estimates |
| 2/04/21 | <u>School Committee:</u>
(last year 1/09) | Budget Presentation #2 ("Supt. Recommended Budget")
Line item detail and projected Assessment update |
| 2/11/21 | <u>School Committee:</u>
(last year 1/25) | PRELIMINARY BUDGET VOTE
(20 days before final budget vote) |
| Friday,
2/26/21 | | Budget Binders Distributed
(last year 1/17) |
| Thursday,
3/04/21 | <u>School Committee:</u>
(last year Saturday, 1/25) | (in lieu of traditional Budget Saturday)
Comprehensive budget and program presentation |
| 3/11/21
or 3/18/21 | <u>School Committee:</u> | Budget Public Hearing (last year 2/06)
Superintendent's Final Budget Recommendation (last year 2/06)
FINAL BUDGET VOTE (45 days before earlier T/M) (last year 2/13) |



WORRIED ABOUT A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE?

**YOU NEVER KNOW
WHEN YOU MAY BE
CALLED UPON TO
HELP.**

**PLEASE JOIN US IN
SAYING YES TO
SAVING A LIFE.**

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)
teaches three simple steps anyone can
learn to help save a life.

As a QPR-trained Gatekeeper you will learn to:

- Recognize the warning signs of suicide
- Know how to offer hope
- Know how to get help and save a life



We are unable to record QPR training sessions.
To sign up for one of the QPR sessions listed below,
scan the QR code or click here: bit.ly/ABQPR.



ONLINE Training Dates and Times:

Wednesday, December 9, 2020.....	7:00pm-9:00pm
Tuesday, January 5, 2021.....	7:00pm-9:00pm
Wednesday, February 24, 2021.....	1:00pm-3:00pm
Thursday, March 25, 2021.....	7:00pm-9:00pm
Monday, April 26, 2021.....	10:00am-12:00pm
Wednesday, June 2, 2021.....	7:00pm-9:00pm

AB CARES IS A COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATIVE EFFORT THAT SEEKS TO PREVENT
SUICIDE ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN AND SUPPORT ALL WHO ARE IMPACTED BY SUICIDE.