



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720

978-264-4700

www.abschools.org

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting

March 2, 2023

Executive Session at 6:15 p.m. / Open Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Annual Budget Hearing at 7:05 p.m.

Return to Business Meeting at 7:20 p.m. (approximately)

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

Approved Minutes

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah (6:40 p.m.), Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook, Liz Fowlks (6:18 p.m.), Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (6:58 p.m.), Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Andrew Schwartz (6:18 p.m.), Yebin Wang (7:00 p.m.), Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent: none

Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis (7:00 p.m.), Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino (7:00 p.m.)

1. **CALL TO ORDER (6:15)**

The Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee was called to order at 6:15 p.m. by Chairperson Kyra Cook. She stated that the Open Meeting (not the executive session) would be recorded by Acton TV.

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 Committee expected to return to open session at approximately 7:00.

Adam Klein moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was anonymously,

VOTED by roll call: 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. (YES: Bloomenthal, Cook, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Wilson)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RETURN TO OPEN MEETING (7:00)

2. CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME - *Kyra Cook*

Members of the public who wished to watch the meeting online were invited to use Acton tv's youtube channel (found at the top of the agenda). Kyra stated that the meeting was also being recorded and would be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.

FY24 BUDGET HEARING (7:05)

1. **Call to Order**

The FY24 Budget Hearing was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairperson Kyra Cook.

2. **Chairperson's Introduction** - Kyra Cook

Please see detailed budget material posted with the February 16, 2023 School Committee meeting materials on the abschools.org website.

<https://sites.google.com/abschools.org/fy2024recommendedbudget/home>

3. **ABRSC FY24 Budget Overview** - Peter Light

Mr. Light presented an overview including a recap on slide 14 of the \$105.8M Budget:

Continued increase in volume & complexity of student needs

- Post-pandemic learning
- Multilingual students
- Students with IEPs

2-Year NET Reduction of 36.0 FTE

- 20.6 FTE FY23 (mostly non-certified)
- 15.4 FTE FY24 (mostly certified)

Reductions to the District budget over the last two years will continue to strain the system and its ability to provide high-quality programs and services to students

4. **Budget Feedback and Public Participation**

There were no comments or questions from the Committee or the public. As noted on the agenda, the FY24 Final Budget and Assessments vote will be taken at the next School Committee meeting on 3/16/23.

5. **Budget Hearing is Adjourned (approx 7:20)**

Glnny Kremer moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to adjourn the Budget Hearing at 7:20 p.m.

BUSINESS MEETING (approximately 7:20)

3. Discussion of the ABRSD FY24 Preliminary Budget - *Dave Verdolino*

Dave reviewed slides 16 and 17 re AB's Chapter 70 calculation change from FY23 - FY24.

DESE said it was a fairly common mistake that we made based on the number of full time students we used. The blue numbers are Dave's estimates. In response to a question, Dave said if our enrollment goes up we would get out of hold harmless more quickly. He is starting to

look at All Day Kindergarten data and how it could affect the budget, but at this time, it's preliminary and there's a long state budget process that still has to happen. Decisions should not be made based on this preliminary information.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME (7:30) - *Kyra Cook*

a. Public Participation

John Petersen spoke regarding ABPIP (Parent Involvement Project). He met with Principal Joanie Dean to discuss creating a new vision for PIP Stem. People can express interest or send questions to actonpip@gmail.com.

b. Superintendent's Update - *Peter Light*

Mr. Light gave a shout out to all of the grounds people and custodians for their efforts, especially on Tuesday after the snow when school stayed open. He also mentioned: Congratulations! AB's Regeneron Science Talent Search Scholar, Budget Update, Out of Darkness Walk for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Upcoming Cartwheel Care Webinars - Positive Relationships with Screen-Based Technology, and upcoming Community Coffees. Lastly, he invited any School Committee candidates to meet with him to answer any questions.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Recommend to appoint Melissa Andrew as District Treasurer - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*
Dave Verdolino thanked Margaret Dennehy for all of her hard work as our District Treasurer. She is retiring after seven years working for the district. Margaret oversaw one of the most favorable bond issues ever for the District and will be missed.

Melissa Andrew has worked for the District for 18 years. She is currently the full time Assistant Treasurer but would like to go part time as the Treasurer. Mr. Light stated that he is very pleased to recommend Melissa for this position. He asked the Committee to vote this now instead of in June so they can post the Assistant Treasurer position.

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to appoint Melissa Andrew as the District Treasurer effective 7/1/23 with gratitude.

b. Negotiations Update – Amy Krishnamurthy and Marie Altieri

- i. Recommendation to Approve the Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) Contract – **VOTE**

The proposed contract and MOA was recently ratified by the ABEA and was brought forward to the School Committee for their approval. A copy was handed out and will be posted to the website. Marie explained the very collaborative process that was used. This began last Spring. Several Executive Sessions were held with Amy Krishnamurthy chairing the Negotiations Subcommittee. Per the Regional Agreement, the Acton Town Manager (or Boxborough Town

Administrator) has a vote in this decision. John Magiaratti was in attendance. Marie reviewed the proposed changes to the contract. Increased paid parental leave for non birth parents was a change giving parity for parents. Mr. Light noted that per slide 10, our educators are keenly aware of maintaining our services for kids and the balance of responding to inflation and the kids. He was grateful to our educators for this.

Committee members thanked all involved for their hard work and many meetings. Amy stated that this was her third round of negotiations with the ABEA and she appreciated their unique relationship with a very collaborative group that wants to do what's best for kids. It was confirmed that the budget presented at the last meeting covers the costs for this new contract. An assessment that is at the levy limit is possible with this agreement.

Tessa McKinley moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED:** To approve the proposed Acton Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) Contract for the period from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026, as set forth in the Memorandum of Agreement between the bargaining committees for the ABEA and the School Committee.

ABEA President Mike Balulescu spoke about the union leaders across the state currently in the news. When they strike it is because their negotiations failed. He really appreciates working so collaboratively with the School Committee.

c. Discussion of School Committee Temporary Reorganization after Acton & Boxborough Town Meetings - *Kyra Cook*

Mr. Light reviewed his memo regarding School Committee reorganization subsequent to Town Meetings. With five School Committee members retiring, including the Chair and both Vice Chairs, the Committee is in a unique position. The last meeting for the three Acton members is April 13th and the first for the new members will be May 4th. The last meeting for the two Boxborough members will be May 4th and the first for the new members will be May 18th. Annual organization of the Committee is governed by policy BDA and procedures BDA-R. While the current policy was created to allow a current chair to stay in that position until August 1st, Mr. Light recommended that the original version of the policy might be beneficial in this case. The reorganization meeting was held at the first meeting after both Town Meetings were held and all new members were in place. This would mean that Tessa McKinley (as Vice Chair) would chair the meeting on May 4th (in current Chair, Kyra's, absence). At the next meeting (May 18), all of the new members would be in place and the reorganization could take place. The Committee would have to vote to waive the current policy to do this.

Members discussed the pros and cons. Comments included:

- With many new members, this could be an opportunity for a new person to try chairing temporarily before having to commit to a full year.
- The previous way can be hard for a new member. Chairing is a lot of work and the behind the scenes work can be stressful. People have to be managed. Adam and Ginny will be the most senior members.
- Other members respectfully disagreed and wanted to keep the process on the 18th. Mentors could be set up. Someone stepping in for two temporary weeks and then voting on someone could be awkward.
- The public also needs to be managed. The real work is behind the scenes and being able to articulate the message. Look for someone with the time to communicate the district strategy.
- Members should try this out. This big turnover is an opportunity and relationships with our community can be established.
- New members were asked what they think. A comment was made that with all of the most senior members leaving, this is the year to mentor new ones. It would be exciting to step up.
- There is something to be said for stability. A two week stint doesn't cut it. This is not the time to do it so briefly.
- The real work of the chair happens throughout the summer and beyond, not so much in May. There will have to be a collaboration because the summer session must be planned.
- It is only three meetings or a month and a half. It does include the superintendent's evaluation.

Members agreed to put this on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

6. ONGOING BUSINESS

a. Subcommittee and Members' Reports

- i. Budget Subcommittee - *Adam Klein (2/13/23)*
The budget dominated the discussions. The Administration was commended for their hard work. Planning is starting for the Town Meeting presentations. All members should plan to attend both Meetings.
- ii. Capital Subcommittee - *Ben Bloomenthal (2/13/23)*
Hypothetical Restructuring Plans for FY23 - FY31 are being looked at regarding additional borrowing for capital needs.
- iii. Policy Subcommittee - *Ginny Kremer (2/14/23)*
Discussion of the Facilities Use policy and the fees being charged is starting to wrap up. It is complicated for various reasons. A First Read will be done soon. They are starting to look at the reporting to families of assessments/testing policy (in conjunction with Amand Bailey from the SEPAC).
- iv. Community Engagement - *Andrew Schwartz*
They have not met since the last meeting. Preparing for Town Meeting is on the next agenda.
- V. School Resource Officer subcommittee - *Rebecca Wilson (2/28/23)*

Good cross section of people on the subcommittee. Next steps include further data gathering. They will meet again on March 21.

- b. Consent Agenda/Action Items - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*
- i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 2/02/23, 2/13/23 (open), and 2/16/23
 - ii. Recommendation to approve Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program Parent Teacher Association Budget
 - iii. Recommendation to approve McCarthy-Towne PTSO donations to Art Display Shelving (\$3536) and fifth grade field trip (\$1000)
 - iv. Recommendation to approve Conant Garden Grant (\$3000)
Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the consent agenda with gratitude.
- c. Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*
Liz Fowlks moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the warrants as presented. See memo for language.

FYI

- Student Enrollment - 2/1/23
- Boxborough Bill Celebration - 3/10/23
- Community Coffee 3/22/23 (virtual)
- Acton and Boxborough Town Election Calendars

4. ADJOURN

Tessa McKinley moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to adjourn the ABRSC at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: agenda, agenda item summary sheets, FY24 Budget Hearing slides and files, ABEA Memorandum of Agreement slides and draft 2023-2026, resume from M. Andrew, School Committee Reorganization Meeting subsequent to Town Elections memo from P. Light 2/24/23, Draft minutes of ABRSC meeting on 2/2/23, 2/13/23 and 2/16/23 from B. Petr, Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program PTA FY23 Budget, Request for Approval of Donations over \$1,000 from C. Nealon McT Principal 2/3/23, Conant Garden Grant check 3/2/23, Warrant memo from D. Verdolino 2/17/23, Monthly Student Enrollment 2/1/23, Boxborough Bill Flyer, Acton and Boxborough Election Calendars

NEXT MEETINGS: March 16 & ~~March 30~~ at ABRSC at 7:00 p.m. in the Admin. Building Auditorium