

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING  
MINUTES (approved 2/26/15)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

January 22, 2015  
6:00 p.m. Executive Session  
7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

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*Members Present:* Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Kristina Rychlik  
*Members Absent:* Deanne O’Sullivan (arrived at 6:10 p.m.)  
*Others:* Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

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Chairperson Kristina Rychlik called the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee to order at 6:05 p.m.

**1. Executive Session**

At 6:05 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

**VOTED** by roll call: to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel

(YES – Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated that an open meeting might have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Board.

**2. Return to Open Meeting**

At 7:10 p.m., the ABRSC was polled to go out of Executive Session and returned to Open Meeting.

**3. Chairman’s Introduction**

3.1. Welcome ABRHS Drum Majors - Jeremy Thaller, Julian Grabarek, and Gautham Chitturu

3.2. The Committee welcomed Margaret Dennehy, ABRSD Treasurer (part time). Margaret replaces Tess Summers who retired. Margaret worked for 10 years in Boxborough after spending 20 years in Littleton and comes with a wealth of valuable experience.

**4. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**

4.1. Minutes of School Committee Meeting on 1/8/15 will be reviewed at the next meeting.

4.2. Warrant #15-015 dated 1/22/15 in the amount of \$4,632,786.07 was signed by the School Committee members.

**5. Public Participation - none**

**6. FY16 Budget Presentation #3 – Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte**

6.1. Proposed Preliminary Line Item Budget

6.2. Revised Assessment Table 6

Clare Jeannotte explained that the preliminary FY16 budget now represents a 4.89% increase from FY15, compared to the preliminary budget of the meeting on 1/8/15 which showed an increase of 5.25%. This is

the result of completing a thorough review of each of the budget line items and the regional transportation number being refined. The Committee was asked to give the Administration direction on the following: the amount of E&D to use (currently set at \$200,000), Middlesex Retirement assessment number, state funding numbers (including Circuit Breaker and Regional Transportation) and finally, the level of program and service reductions that might be necessary to align needs with the funding capacity of Acton and Boxborough.

Clare Jeannotte explained that the District is contesting the assessment for next year from Middlesex Retirement. We are asking the actuaries to review the data to be sure the right people were in the right organizations and recalculate our FY16 assessment because at 22% combined, it seems extraordinarily high. A few people have been identified in the wrong group.

Brigid Bieber would like to see on Budget Saturday how overall what the District is asking for ties into the Long Range Strategic Plan. She stressed that it is important to show the Plan as guiding the budget requests. If that is not the case, she would like to know why.

Deanne O'Sullivan asked about increases in salaries for substitutes that appear to have gone up significantly, as well as supplies and textbooks. Clare Jeannotte acknowledged that it is complicated and involves the shift in the new chart of accounts. One example is how the accounting of leased equipment is handled. Another factor is that several key retirements are happening this year so overlap for training adds some cost.

The Committee discussed various line items. Dennis Bruce asked if the funding of athletics is accurate, and if the District has what it needs in this budget for this department. Glenn Brand replied that it is level funded. Using round figures, the approximate budget amount is \$500,000 but the budget exceeds a million dollars. The difference is covered by sources such as boosters, gate receipts and revolving funds. We do have to look closely at the fees and revenue. The fee structure was last changed about five years ago. Dennis pointed out that expenses have gone up a lot in the past five years. Glenn will bring this issue up outside of the budget in the spring.

Brigid Bieber suggested that the Regionalization Financial Oversight Subcommittee could report as part of the budget process on their findings.

Mary Brolin advocated for conservative use of E&D. To her the challenge is having a budget that meets the educational needs, while contributing to things like OPEB and Retirement. Kristina Rychlik stated that the FY16 school budget at this time, uses \$200,000 of E and D, Steve Noone said at ALG that it was ok if no E&D was used because it is so far below the \$4 million cap for E and D now. Mary Brolin suggested moving the Capital Study into a warrant article and out of the budget. Marie Altieri explained that the Region cannot have a warrant article at two Towns' Meeting. It would have to be done through the assessment, voted separately with a 2/3 vote.

Clare Jeannotte welcomes comments on the new version of Table 6 and if Committee members find it helpful.

Dennis Bruce asked Clare about Middlesex Retirement Assessment number for the town and the region and the reclassification of 21 employees that were on the town side that could be in the region. This was brought up at ALG. As previously mentioned, Clare is working on this but we have budgeted for what Middlesex is saying the number should be at this time. Nancy Sherburne asked for additional information for Budget Saturday to include how proposed FTE fit with the Long Range Strategic Plan, and how those positions fit in with concerns brought up by SpedPAC, including Grade 4 and 6 special education students who have below state average performance. Nancy stated that for a district of this level, no group

should be performing below the state average for several years. She sees nothing to address this in this proposed FY16 budget and asked for more detailed information on Budget Saturday on this.

7. **FY15 Second Quarter Report** – *(next meeting – 2/5/15)*

8. **Facilities Update** – *JD Head*

8.1. Transportation Bid Update *(brought to meeting)*

8.2. Crumb Rubber Field Surface Update

8.3. Dow Track Scoreboard Donation Application to Middlesex Savings Bank

JD Head described the potential Scoreboard Donation for the Dow Track from Middlesex Savings Bank. It was asked if the Committee voted to accept the previous donations to the other fields. The policy states that it is at the Superintendent's discretion.

Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to move forward with the application for a scoreboard as presented.

JD Head described the testing done on the crumb rubber. There are no standards for this material at this time. It was compared to the most stringent soil standards of MA DEP and it was significantly lower. Referring to page 9 in the packet, Mary Brolin asked why level of arsenic is so low. Paul Murphy stated that this letter is provided by a licensed professional so he would trust it.

JD Head reported that the two largest national carriers came to the initial pre-bid meeting for the Transportation Bid for Contracted Services. Two bids were requested. No bids were submitted for the two tiered alternate proposal. One bid was submitted for the current three tier model. JD felt that the need to have a lot of buses used all at once for a short period of time, created not enough margin for profit and resulted in the lack of responses. Maria Neyland noted that over 5 years the District would spend \$13,000 more than the bid, if we ran it in house. JD agreed using the assumptions made, but numbers could change. A contractor's price would not change due to the contract. JD was thanked for all the time spent on this bid process. Maria concluded that this was an important exercise that showed that the District is doing all they can to save money on transportation.

9. **ABRSD Athletic Director Search Update** – *Marie Altieri*

Over 40 people volunteered to serve on this Search Committee. Application deadline is Monday.

Interviews will be scheduled for second week of February and finalists announced by February vacation.

Mike Coppolino was concerned that staff are being taken out of the classroom to do these interviews.

Glenn said he has always been cautious about this, but a full day approach can make a difference and he has seen this done at other districts.

10. **Recommendation to Approve EDCO Amended Articles of Agreement** – **VOTE**

Glenn Brand described the Agreement and specifically page 12 requesting a change to 2/3 of Board members voting affirmatively to approve some capital assessments.

Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the EDCO Articles of Agreement as amended.

11. **Recommendation to Accept Gift from ExxonMobil to RJG Junior High** – **VOTE**

Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to accept the gift from ExxonMobil to RJGJHS with gratitude

**12. Recommendation to Accept Gift from ExxonMobil to Gates School – VOTE**

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to accept the gift from ExxonMobil to Gates School with gratitude

**13. Recommendation to Accept Gift from ABR PTSO to RJG Junior High – VOTE**

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to accept the gift from the ABR PTSO to RJGJHS with gratitude.

**14. Subcommittee Updates**

**14.1. Budget** – meeting on 1/14/15

Dennis reported that the budget presentation was discussed and focused on plans for Budget Saturday.

**14.2. Policy** – *Maria Neyland*

**14.2.1. Enrollment of Students, File: JC – SECOND READ**

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the Enrollment of Students policy as proposed.

**14.2.2. Assignment of Students from Other School Districts or Homeschooling, File: JCAC – SECOND READ**

Mary Brolin moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the Assignment of Students from Other School Districts or Homeschooling policy as proposed.

**14.2.3. Kindergarten Entrance, File: JEB – SECOND READ**

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the Kindergarten Entrance policy as proposed.

**14.2.4. School Admissions/Residency & Student Enrollment, File: JF – SECOND READ**

**Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,**

**VOTED:** to approve the Residency and Student Enrollment policy as amended.

Note: This policy replaces the “School Admissions” policy and now includes a Proof of Residency Affidavit, file: JF-E.

**15. School Committee Member Reports**

**15.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)**

15.1.1. Materials from 1/15/15 meeting – Kristina Rychlik updated the Committee.

**15.2. Acton Finance Committee – *Mary Brolin reported***

See 15.4

**15.3. Acton-Boxborough SpedPAC – *Paul Murphy***

15.3.1. Update: Population Trends of High Needs Students re: Chapter 70 Funding

15.3.2. Foundation Budget Review Commission Public Hearing: 1/24/15 in Bolton

Paul Murphy shared a proposed letter for discussion that could be signed by the School Committee members so he can take it to the meeting on Saturday. Kristina Rychlik confirmed that it was the sense of the Committee to support this letter. Members signed the letter and Paul will take it to the meeting on Saturday.

**15.4. Joint PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs**

Deanne O’Sullivan reported that they met last week and Rich Dushanek from Community Education attended to discuss custodial fees involved when groups use the school buildings. It was very helpful. Tuesday night’s excellent presentation at Douglas had Dr. Kirsty Kerin speaking about sleep.

**16. Response to 9C Cuts in Regional Transportation – *Kristina Rychlik***

16.1. Response from Local Legislators (1/12/15) to ABRSC Letter to Governor Patrick and Governor-elect Baker requesting Restoration of 9C Cuts in Regional Transportation from ABRSC, 12/29/14

17. **Acton and Boxborough Local Elections** – *Kristina Rychlik*

Brigid Bieber announced that she is planning to run again from Boxborough. Dennis Bruce announced that he will not be running again from Acton. Deanne O’Sullivan is still unsure. Frances Cook is a Merriam parent who has pulled papers from Acton.

18. **Superintendent’s Report** – *Glenn Brand*

Glenn described Dr. Kerin’s informative presentation on the importance of sleep to the Administrative Council this week. She has been speaking to several parent groups. He is still confirming the School Start Time Study group. It was decided to broaden the focus to cover student health and wellness, not just school start time, with a broad base of representation. The Wellness Committee is up and running co-chaired by Diana McNicholas and Diane Spring. The start time of school itself is only one part of this.

19. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

2015-2016 Kindergarten Registration -

Marie Altieri reported that last Tuesday was the annual kindergarten orientation night. This week siblings and walkers registered. We had 140 children registered of a projected approximate 300 total expected in kindergarten in September.

MA Association of Regional Schools (MARS) is moving forward with a request to the Attorney General for an opinion on the 9C cuts based on the 2010 law that states regional school transportation aid shall not be lowered more than other funding sources. There are 80 regional districts in the state. MARS is asking for \$500 from regional school districts to help support this activity. Glenn asked for the Committee to consider contributing \$500 to the legal fund, as suggested. It was the sense of the Committee to donate \$500 to MARS for this activity.

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

**NEXT MEETINGS:**

**Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meetings,**

- 2/5/15 at 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library:
  - FY16 Open Budget Hearing at 7:00, followed by regular School Committee meeting
- 2/26/15 at 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library

**FY16 ABRSD Budget Saturday Presentations, 1/31/15 from 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library**