

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES (approved 3/25/10)**

**Cafetorium
C.T. Douglas School**

**March 18, 2010
8:00 pm**

Members Present: Jonathan Chinitz, Michael Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Terry Lindgren, Sharon Smith
McManus, John Petersen
Others: Marie Altieri, Susan Horn, Liza Huber, Stephen Mills, Beth Petr

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Xuan Kong at 8:06 pm.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #201018 dated 3/9/10 in the amount of \$120,985.04 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for approval.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Pat Easterly and Christine Phillips gave an update on the West Acton Boardwalk's *Board-a-Palooza* fundraiser on June 12th . See <http://boardwalk.westacton.net> for details.

EDUCATION REPORT – Dr. Chris Whitbeck, Douglas School Principal

Dr. Whitbeck presented on the Elementary Literacy Initiative being used very successfully at Douglas, as well as the other schools. Using data to influence decisionmaking regarding instruction is considered a key to high quality teaching. This method allows a teacher to pinpoint a student's exact weaknesses in reading skills. Similar assessments are given a year apart to look for growth. This is similar to the MCAS Growth Model measurement. This method has helped teachers tremendously because materials are provided to specifically address different weaknesses once they are identified. With larger class sizes, quick and accurate assessments that can be done outside of special education services are very valuable. Dr. Whitbeck emphasized that the five principals work closely together and are sharing how they interpret the data as well as creating templates.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. ALG/Acton Finance Committee Reports

Sharon McManus gave the update of the numbers that she and Xuan Kong brought to 3/5/10 ALG meeting. The result of the voted APS budget on March 4th was a shortfall of \$98,000 in revenue. The BOS generously restored what they felt was critical funding for the schools by covering the shortfall as a one time event. Paulina Knibbe and Peter Berry were thanked for their support of this solution.

The Acton Finance Committee unanimously approved the budgets the next day.

Jonathan Chinitz urged the public to consider the BOS' decision as an act of collaboration with the schools and doing the "right thing", not as a gift. Xuan Kong acknowledged the collaborative spirit from the BOS and the importance of the unanimous endorsement by FinCom and BOS of the schools' budgets.

ALG Spreadsheet for Town Meeting Warrant

Marie Altieri reported on the 3/12/10 ALG spreadsheet, created by Mary Ann Ashton. There was some discussion about why the use of reserves was reduced from \$2.2 million to \$1.7 in FY 12 and 13. Xuan said it was because the baseline amount of CH 70 aid was more than in the original plan so not as much reserves was needed. Some members feel strongly that while this change shows a net balanced position for FY12 and FY13, it has done so with extremely difficult budgets to put together. This could mean that difficulty will not be shown if assumptions hold true in FY12 and 13. The jump in Free Cash from the 3/5/10 ALG minutes was also noticed.

3. FY'11 Budget

Dr. Mills thanked the Committee and his staff for having the budget done in such a timely and organized manner.

Xuan Kong did an update from the Joint Task Force on Cost Savings. There was discussion about whether the new Director of Finance should be a full time position. Consensus was that it is critical for the schools to have a dedicated Director of Finance and that the new person will work with the town to see if any responsibilities could be shared in the future. Terry Lindgren pointed out that the School Committee was "super clear that this was a large enough and important enough position to the schools that it cannot be combined."

4. Health Insurance Trust Report

The Trust met this morning after people had reviewed the calculations. The trustees concluded that at the end of this fiscal year, the trust balance will be unchanged or down just a little and that rates have been set properly. Jonathan Chinitz attended the meeting this morning and thanked John Petersen for his instrumental efforts this year.

5. Conant Principal Search Update

Marie Altieri gave an update. An ad was run on March 7th and 14th. The committee of 12 met today for first time. Parents and staff will get a request for input with a series of questions to inform the search committee. Deadline for applicants is next Thursday. Ten candidates will be selected by March 30 for interviews. The response has been good.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Participation in School Choice, 2010-2011

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the administration's recommendation that the Acton Public Schools will not accept any School Choice students in academic year 2010-2011.

2. Kindergarten Enrollment

Marie Altieri gave an update on FY10-11 Kindergarten Enrollment. At this time, we have 305 kindergarteners. 42% of this class were not born in Acton. Thirty children or so have moved in each year. Douglas and Conant will need lotteries. Marie shared a 10 year look of projections vs actuals. The All Day K is oversubscribed in every school.

Discussion of Early Acceptance Policy for Kindergarten

Dr. Mills noted the hour and said that he would start the conversation by saying that all of our schools' experts recommend sticking to the September 1st birthday cutoff. This would mean a change to the Early Admission policy found in the packet. The discussion will continue at a future meeting.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Dr. Mills congratulated Dianna Woodruff and her many students who are participating in Youth Art Month at the Worcester Art Museum. He noted that this art museum is a "jewel".

The next APS meeting is on May 20th at 7:30pm at the Conant School.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr