

**ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
APS/AB JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES (approved 1/7/10)**

**Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School**

**December 3, 2009
7:00 pm Joint Executive Session
7:30 pm Open Meeting**

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Jonathan Chinitz, Mike Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Terry Lindgren, Sharon Smith McManus, Maria Neyland, John Petersen, Bruce Sabot
Members Absent: None
Others: Marie Altieri, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr, Tess Summers

The Joint meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Sharon McManus and Xuan Kong.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Joint minutes of 10/1/09 were approved as amended.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:08 p.m., the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee was polled and voted unanimously to go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) according to Chapter 39 Section 23A Paragraph 3, "To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the governmental body."

At 7:09 p.m., the Acton Public School Committee was polled and voted unanimously to go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) according to Chapter 39 Section 23A Paragraph 3, "To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the governmental body."

At 7:47 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Joint Executive Session.

AB REGIONAL OPEN MEETING BEGINS

At 7:47 p.m., the Acton Public School Committee meeting was suspended and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting began.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Superintendent Steve Mills gave an update on the impressions that he has developed from the many community interviews he has held as outlined in his Entry Plan. He has found our community's priorities to include:

1. Pride in our school district and passion to continue its high level of excellence
2. Concern about the budget crisis and our large class sizes in K-12
3. Concern about kids in the middle - strong perception that we serve very high performing students very well as well as those that need pupil services, but the ones in the middle sometimes can get lost in the cracks.

4. Bullying at all grade levels
 5. Stress, particularly among our High School students
 6. Children learning to make good decisions in their private lives (mostly secondary students)
 7. Change in our demographics and how we as a community can work together on this
- Dr Mills said that he will continue to listen to the community and has enjoyed these sessions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of October 1, 2009 were approved as written. Mike Coppolino abstained because he was absent for that meeting. Minutes of November 5, 2009 were approved as amended. Bruce Sabot abstained because he was absent for that meeting.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #10-011 in the amount of \$2,043,776.67 and Warrant #10-012 in the amount of \$1,588,563.90 were signed by the chairperson and circulated to the Committee for approval.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Bruce Sabot read a statement regarding an incident on 11/27/09 at Temple Beth Eloheim where swastikas were painted outside the temple. He said, "We should be appalled at the use of this symbol of hatred." This was read as an individual, not as a Committee member.

EDUCATION REPORT

Athletic Director Steve Desy presented his budget details. He has been asked to reduce the athletic budget by 15%, or \$150,000 for next year. This is very difficult. A corporate sponsorship program is being discussed. ABSAF is considering what role they can play.

The Committee discussed if a standard format could be developed for this type of financial presentation. Using precise, consistent language and terminology would help make these complicated and important discussions more clear. Comparisons need to be apples to apples. The Committee asked the Administration to develop a standard way of presenting this type of financial material. They asked Dr. Mills to present it to them and they will decide if the format is advantageous.

The key question when considering individual budget cuts is, "What will the change be?" The Committee has to understand what each cut will mean.

Several Committee members said that the budget cuts, alternatives and options need to be clearer very quickly, including details and expectations of the corporate sponsorship program being discussed. The urgency to confirm revenue sources like this is understood, but there is a concern about creating a new School Committee policy in time for next year's budget. ABSAF is expected to vote on their role next month.

The Committee agreed that they had told Dr. Mills to pursue this idea and that their policy subcommittee could draft a policy when he has more information. The subcommittee could start prior to the next meeting. Community input would definitely be included. Dr. Mills was encouraged to continue his discussions about furthering this new funding initiative.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. ALG Report
Sharon McManus gave an update on the November ALG meeting.
2. BLF Report
BLF will meet next Tuesday night at 7:30 in Boxborough Library.

JOINT MEETING RESUMES

At 8:55 p.m. Xuan Kong called the Acton Public School Committee to order to resume the Joint Meeting.

3. Negotiations Subcommittee Report
Terry Lindgren reported that they are moving forward and talking with the unions.
4. FY'10 Budget Update
Dr. Mills thanked his Administration team for realizing how serious the budget cuts may need to be. Packet page VI.4 outlined FY'10 Budget Reductions of \$494,400 that were made October 1, 2009 and potential additional January cuts (9C) for this year of \$312,042, for a cumulative total of \$806,442 that could potentially be cut from the current year's FY'10 school budgets.
5. FY'11 Budget
Dr. Mills began by stating that these are preliminary draft budgets. Numbers most certainly will change. The state numbers will be changing all the way through June until their budget is approved. We are beginning to bake the cake – it takes 45 minutes and we are only 5 minutes into it right now.

On slide #3 of the Powerpoint presentation (VI.5.k), Terry asked for dates for when Key Decisions #6 might be made. Terry Lindgren asked Dr. Mills to clarify which cuts were for one year only, and which repeat for FY12 and FY13. Xuan Kong asked JD Head to share information about potential revenue that could result from bus fees at the January meeting. Mike Coppolino asked Dr. Mills to pursue any obvious cost savings no matter what, regardless of the economic times.

Boxborough Finance Committee member, Bill Burke expressed concern about losing services in the schools. He does not want to see teachers cut. He would like to see the Committee push back on the budgets and ask the Towns for more money. Terry Lindgren said that the money is just not there.

Sharon McManus asked if the next step was to ask Dr. Mills to implement all of the level 3 and level 4 cuts, and then post that information for the Committee to review. Jonathan Chinitz thinks the discussion that the Committee should be having with the other boards in both towns is that assuming that they are successful in making all of these cuts, at that point, it's incumbent on the Committee to weigh possibly hedging the use of more revenue to offset some or all of these cuts that would occur in

significant personnel cuts. He disagrees with cutting 35 teachers with multiple millions in the bank account, just to say they are holding the budget at 0 %.

John Petersen wants to see cuts through level 4 implemented, and level 5 considered by using certain amount of reserve and a combination of cuts. The Committee agreed that the Administration should implement all of the level 3 and 4 cuts. Updated budgets will be distributed to the Committee.

6. FY'11 Superintendent's Salary

Acton-Boxborough School Committee:

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To set the salary compensation for Superintendent Stephen Mills at \$170,000 for FY2011 (July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011).

The School Committees emphasize that setting the salary level exactly the same as that of FY2010 is not an indication of Superintendent Mills' performance, but a reflection of his character as the leader of the APS and AB School Districts in this difficult economic time.

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Dr. Mills was thanked for his strong leadership and the positive example that he was providing by accepting this salary decision.

At 10:20 p.m. the Acton Public School Committee Meeting was suspended.

AB OPEN MEETING CONTINUES

6. Health Trust Report

John Petersen gave an update and explained that the Trust is self-insured so many of the suggestions that people make will not change the Trust's expenses.

7. Anti-Bullying Task Force

Liza Huber said that The Task Force met yesterday for the second time. 4 subcommittees are doing exciting work. We are ahead of the curve by having an anti-bullying policy.

8. Solar Panel Update

JD Head said that the first construction meeting was today. 8% of the High School's daily electrical usage will be produced in a clean and renewable fashion by MLK Day

(1/18/10). Installation on the RJGJHS roof will be very soon. Douglas would be in July. We got in just before the state rebate program ended due to extensive demand.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Recommendation to Approve ABRSD Non-Resident Tuition Rate for FY10

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the per pupil expenditure cost for FY10 of \$14,871.

NEW BUSINESS - CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Recommendation to Approve 2009-10 SPED Program Tuition Rates

This vote was postponed for future consideration.

2. Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Trip to Italy, June 2010
3. Recommendation to Accept Artwork Gift from Mr. David Chamberlain, with gratitude
4. Recommendation to Accept Gift from the Acton-Boxborough Swimming Boosters Club, with gratitude
5. Recommendation to Accept ABRHS Gift from Qin Wang and Hua Yang, with gratitude

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the Consent Calendar as amended.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

3. Spring 2009 MCAS Scores – An Instructional Plan

It was asked how this plan differs from last year's and how will it be more effective.

Liza Huber responded that last year's plan focused on regular education more. This plan expands that to the special educator and special education assistant.

11. H1N1 Clinic

Two clinics will be run on December 10th and December 17th. A letter to parents will go out tomorrow. Elementary students and siblings will be the priority. They hope to have five nursing teams administering the vaccines. Boxborough residents had a clinic last week.

ISSUES FOR THE COMMITTEE

1. Under-funded and Un-funded Mandates

The Committee felt having dollar amounts on the letter's items would make it more meaningful. It was agreed that it could be sent to Representative Cory Atkins.

NEXT MEETING: January 7 - 7:30 pm, at RJ Grey JH Library

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting adjourned at 10:53 p.m.

APS OPEN SESSION RESUMES

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

APS Warrant #2010 - 11 in the amount of \$126,191.75 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the Committee for approval.

NEW BUSINESS

1. School Committee Position on Use of Reserves
 - a. Budget Views Email to Fincom from Bob Evans

A discussion was held about the School Committee’s position regarding the use of reserves and what they would like to tell ALG. Statements ranged from “We can’t have that much in reserves and make those cuts, given Dr. Mills’ presentation. We need to be more aggressive on the revenue side, than a plan that would leave us with \$4 million in reserves after one year.” to “It’s too early for us to make a decision on this, just to have a nice number to work with. We need to work with the electorate and other boards to get them informed about what is happening. It’s a call for us to look at more aggressive revenue.” to sentiments that reserves should be not be used as freely.

A motion was made by Terry Lindgren, “That we adopt a policy that our planning will reflect the current ALG model and ask that the schools go into the ALG process and advocate that we assume more risk and measure aggressiveness in the use of reserves of more than \$2 million per year.”

John Petersen and Mike Coppolino said they would vote against the motion because of the second clause.

Xuan Kong felt that the School Committee and ALG have two roles - to manage the process but also to take another view of our financial reserves. He asked if we are being fair to the students now compared to the future, and if we would have a minimum amount of reserves to counter our unplanned expenses.

Terry Lindgren withdrew his motion.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To have the School Committee plan be consistent with the ALG model, whatever that is.

At 11:37 p.m., the Acton Public School Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr