

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes (approved 1/19/12)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High

December 15, 2011
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, John Petersen
Members Absent: none
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber (7:10), Steve Mills, Beth Petr

The Acton Public School Committee meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Michael Coppolino.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #201212 dated December 13, 2011 in the amount of \$259,382.60 was signed by the chair and circulated for signatures.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The following minutes were approved: October 20, 2011 APS SC meeting (as amended), November 3, 2011 Joint SC meeting and November 17, 2011 APS SC meeting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Parent John Manning spoke from the audience, advocating for modulars to be installed at the Gates School to address a shortage of instructional space. He described art classes held in the hall and lobby, and music instruction in the cafeteria. He noted that other schools have gained considerable benefit from modulars that were added in past years. He asked the School Committee to consider a motion to add modulars at Gates next year to address this problem or offer an alternative. Mike Coppolino responded that the Superintendent would address this in the budget part of the meeting.

APS SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 Policy Updates

6.1.1 Use of School Facilities Policy (File: KF)

This policy was already approved but the APS SC had not seen the revised procedures and fees (File: KF-R).

6.1.2 Advertising in Schools (File: KHB) – **SECOND READING**

This new policy was approved by ABRSC on 12/1/11. The subcommittee recommended that the Superintendent be responsible for approval and that he report to the School Committees once a year on advertising. A financial limit that would require a proposal to be approved by the School Committees was not felt to be necessary.

It was moved, seconded and

VOTED: to approve the Advertising in Schools Policy, File: KHB as proposed.
(YES: Bruce, Coppolino, McOsker, Murphy, Petersen NO: Kong)

6.2 2012-2013 School Calendar

Dr. Mills stated that the discussion is whether to start school before or after Labor Day, and whether to include days off for religious holidays. People's spiritual beliefs are being respected, however the issue is about the number of staff that would be out for a religious holiday, making it very difficult to appropriately staff the schools. Dr. Mills referred to the survey results from last year. The proposed calendar was approved by the ABRSC on 12/1/11, by a 7-6 vote. Recognizing the difference of opinion,

the Superintendent asked the APS SC to vote it for this year. It was noted that the late start days at the High School this year have been very valuable.

It was moved by John Petersen, seconded by Paul Murphy and

VOTED: to approve the proposed FY13 school calendar

(YES: Coppolino, McOsker, Murphy, Petersen NO: Bruce, Kong)

Xuan Kong felt that the before/after Labor Day start survey question did not really apply as much this year because it is not tied to this year's calendar. Kim McOsker advocated for starting after Labor Day in September 2012. John Petersen appreciated that staff are kept well informed so that families and staff can be sensitive to all religious holidays.

6.3 Update on Health Insurance Plan Design Process

Kim McOsker reported that the new working group's first meeting was very productive. They talked about some collaborative decisions, and felt there may be an opportunity to make changes in a good way and be sensitive to what people need and/or want. The second meeting was yesterday. The group is made up of representatives from all of the town's unions including: police, fire, dispatch, custodial, retirees, School Committee rep, Board of Selectmen rep, Marie Altieri from the schools, Mary Ann Fleckner from the Town of Acton and Town Manager Steve Ledoux. Lauren Rosenzweig is facilitating. The group is tasked with presenting alternatives to match or compare to the Segal Report results. It is hoped that results will be achieved by the February 6th Board of Selectmen meeting.

6.4 Acton Health Insurance Trust Report

John Petersen reported on the 11/22/11 meeting, see packet. The Health Insurance Trust (HIT) is preparing a write up for the Town Report. A special meeting was held on 11/30/11 to discuss the HIT's role in the collaborative working group. The Trust will not be an active participant in the group. John attended the recent Minuteman Nashoba Health Group to listen to their discussion of rates for their new plans. MNHG is about three times the size of Acton's HIT. HIT will meet again on 12/22/11.

6.5 ALG Report

John Petersen reported on the ALG. Disagreement continues about the amount of reserves to use. Segal did another, different, study on Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) and discussion on the topic continues. Consensus at ALG is to put an OPEB placeholder on the spreadsheet but it is too early to include a number. The School Committee wants Fincom to present to them before School Committee decides on a number to set aside for OPEB. A good return on this money is important if money is going to be put aside. A figure of \$500,000 is being discussed for the Town of Acton including APS, to set aside for OPEB, but the Regional School Committee would have to approve its own OPEB trust account. John stated that the sum of those two accounts will be \$500,000 but Don Aicardi disagreed. John advocated for being very precise about this kind of discussion, adding that the use of reserves is another example of confusion in the community. He feels that "net" use of reserves is important. Mike Coppolino said that Jonathan Chinitz did a comprehensive study of cash flow years ago, that may be helpful. Planned replenishment should be discussed, not just variances that create replenishment. Brandy Brandon said that the Fincom is updating Jonathan's study and it will be available soon.

6.6 Acton Finance Committee Report

Xuan Kong reported that Fincom's new Long Range Financial Forecast is impressive. They have institutionalized what the Committee is trying to do and tried to capture the effect of any decisions made. Fincom voted to accept the report and recommend that each entity accept the report as part of their budget planning process. The School Committee asked that the Fincom present their findings and model at the next School Committee meeting. John will ask the Boxborough members if they would like to hear this.

6.7.a FY'13 Budget

Dr. Mills stated that while he has great respect for the Acton Finance Committee, he understands from ALG that the town leaders plan to use \$2 million in reserves for FY13, but the Fincom has changed their opinion from using \$2m to \$1.5m (including \$.5m for OPEB). Dr. Mills is moving ahead with what he

feels is a moderate investment budget, approximately 1% above level service. The Saturday Budget meeting has been moved to January 28th because the state numbers should be out by then.

Dr. Mills addressed Mr. Manning saying that he understands this parent's concern for the Gates school. He referred to JD Head's memo re capital projects. The Douglas modular payments are ending this year, saving \$80,000. While the schools should get some kind of credit for that money for next year, with the FinCom's recommendation to fund OPEB, this may not be possible. Given the larger context of the budget, JD is keeping the capital plan on hold for next year. Dr. Mills said that although it is not ideal that classes are being held in the hallway, given that in a few years student enrollment will drop and several classrooms will open up, it does not make sense to spend money on a modular next year.

Don Aicardi reported on the Review of Reserves FY11 to FY12 slide. Free cash was certified by the Dept of Revenue (DOR) on 12/2/11, the morning after the AB School Committee meeting, resulting in \$500,000 more than his presentation included the night before. The DOR is expected to certify E&D by February 2012.

Right now the FY13 APS level service budget number is a 3.3% change from FY12 (slide 19). The 1/5/12 Joint School Committee meeting will present the preliminary FY13 AB Regional and APS budgets. Nothing is included in these budgets to take into account any of the planned health care design plan changes that may happen. Funding for the classroom assistants is still being reviewed.

Mr. Manning followed up on his question regarding the Gates School, advocating for more classroom space. Marie Altieri explained that enrollment is decreasing by 40 – 60 students per year in recent years. Kindergarten sections could go from 16 to 14 sections in a few years. JD Head said that there is a 1200 square foot difference between the Conant and Gates Schools due to Conant's modular. JD stated that a modular costs \$300,000 - \$400,000 depending on the connector. Xuan Kong noted that Gates was disrupted when art was brought on a cart into different classrooms. A study determined that it did impact learning time. A creative solution was to have art in the lobby, similarly for music class on the stage of the cafeteria. While a modular would be the most straightforward solution, given decreasing enrollment and other financial needs, it may not be the best. JD said that a modular would add \$30,000 annual operational cost.

John Petersen asked for a fleshed out description of adding a modular per JD's information, and the enrollment scenario played out for 3 or 4 years. Assuming these numbers, he asked how the students could be arranged and what costs might be. The Committee discussed doing a study that JD said would cost \$10,000. It was the sense of the Committee that a placeholder should be put on the warrant for this item before the deadline.

6.7.b New FY12 Special Education Preschool Class

Liza Huber reported on a new special education Acton Public Preschool class that is required by law because the children are here with identified needs. This is included in the level service budget. This program began in 1994 and has been extraordinarily successful. The 6 class structure has met our enrollment needs until now. Minuteman Early Intervention in Concord provides services to children from birth to age 3 who are at risk. Referrals come to APS when children are 2.6 years old alerting the district that they will soon be students. The district averages 18 referrals per year for our current early childhood program. From 9/1/10 to 6/30/11, 21 referrals were received. From 6/30/11 to 11/1/11, an additional 11 referrals were received. These children are entitled to services. Immediate changes were required for the remainder of this year for these additional 11 children. Community Ed Director, Erin Bettez was thanked for her flexibility and for giving up some space for next year. Space is being rented from the Acton Children's Center now until the end of this school year. This class is being staffed with a .8 special educator and an Applied Behavior Analysis Trainer. Additional staffing will be needed for next year. These unexpected costs are being offset by circuit breaker funding that has increased and some shifts have been made due to natural attrition in sped assistants. Next year this morning half day program will grow

to a full time model, similar to our current full time ABA program, which has 15 students. There has been a dramatic increase in children with autism spectrum disorders.

Xuan asked if a cost benefit analysis had been done for a program that would serve only those who we are required to accept. Given the space constraints, he asked if it would make sense to change the 50-50 ratio between typically developing children and those requiring special services. Liza Huber said that this had not been done because the program needs to provide peer role modeling. Regular education students (who pay tuition) are needed. It is a very effective model in terms of the most efficient model to have children matriculate into the public schools. Carol Huebner could present the Program to the School Committee. Liza said that other communities have seen a similar increase in students. John Petersen liked Xuan's suggestion of running some numbers. Liza said that our Preschool tuition rate for our typical students is competitive and a sliding scale is available. Some changes may be made. This does generate revenue and we also accept some out of district students who pay tuition. Mike Coppolino stated that the Committee should defer to the professionals as far as the integration piece goes, but the School Committee should look at the numbers. An article about how children are being diagnosed will be distributed to the Committee.

6.8 Capital Budget FY'13

Facilities Director, JD Head requested that the Capital Plan be suspended for the upcoming year. With the exception of 3 roofs, everything else on the plan was completed. John Petersen asked that capital planning include the totality of the buildings including the grounds, parking lots, bike paths, and maximizing pedestrian access on the campus.

6.9 Discussion of Potential Acton Public School Students Tuitioning to Blanchard School

Mike thanked Bruce Sabot for the information that he provided. Dr. Mills said that this is a creative opportunity that is in line with the new Long Range Strategic Plan (student-teacher ratios). There are very small classes in Boxborough's 2nd and 3rd grades while we have large classes in Acton. The Committee agreed that Acton parents should be asked if they would consider this option. It could be mentioned at Kindergarten Night on January 10th. Principals could also ask about it. It is beneficial because Acton students attending Blanchard would already be attending our Regional Junior High and High School. If a student from outside of Acton attends Blanchard, they are permitted to attend our Regional schools for grades 7-12, increasing our class sizes at the region. If a student comes from another town, when they enter the JH or HS, we receive \$5000 from the chapter 70 aid from their town to our town. John Petersen pointed out that the question is whether we are trying to fill empty seats or if it would contribute to overcrowding. He stated that the variable cost is needed to know if this is a good decision or not. Xuan pointed out that the Committee still has the option to add the Choice Program in the future.

6.10 New Ruling by AG: Remote Participation at Open Meetings

- 6.10.1 Email from Assistant Town Manager re Board of Selectmen
- 6.10.2 Amended Open Meeting Law Regulations from the Attorney General, 11/11/11
- 6.10.3 Email from Glenn Koocher, MASC Executive Director
- 6.10.4 Regulations Promulgated by the Attorney General , Relative to Remote Participation at Public Meetings (edited for School Committees), G. Koocher
- 6.10.5 Quick Guide to Remote Participation at School Committee Meetings, Glenn Koocher, 12/9/11

The Acton Board of Selectmen are scheduled to vote on this at their meeting on 12/19/11. John asked Amy Bisiewicz if a demo remote participation could be done at the meeting on 1/5/12. The issues are whether this will be practical and if it can be implemented so all can hear.

6.11 Discussion of Start Time of APS School Committee meetings

After surveying the members, it was the sense of the Committee to start meetings at 7:00 p.m. instead of 7:30. It is expected that the Regional School Committee will continue to start meetings at 7:30.

6.12 Recommendation to Accept Gift to the APS Preschool

It was moved, seconded, and unanimously,
VOTED: to accept this gift of an iPad2 for the APS Preschool with gratitude

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

7.4 Professional Development Day 11/1/11

Deborah Bookis described the staff's Professional Development Day. Some ideas that came out of this event will be shared in the Spring. She said that we know that educators reflect on their work and we ask students to reflect as well, but the staff does not do it collaboratively. This is something they are working on. A group of 30 staff members finished 5 days of protocol training that all will benefit from. The Long Range Strategic Plan dictates that we make decisions based on research and data. This will now be called the "Professional Learning Program". The theme of "It's all about instruction" and "How do we know they're learning?" have kids taking even more ownership of their learning.

7.5 2012-2013 Kindergarten Registration Schedule

Marie Altieri described the upcoming Kindergarten registration process.

7.6 2011-2012 School Systems Profile

Dr. Mills highlighted the many successes found on this profile.

Paul Murphy noted that he recently visited the Conant PTO and they are raising funds for their playground. He urged people to see the Conant PTO website for more information.

NEXT MEETINGS

January 5, 7:30 pm JT SC ABRSC at R.J. Grey Junior High School Library

January 19, 7:30 now at 7:00 pm APSC at R.J. Grey Junior High School Library

REVISED DATE: January 28, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm Joint SC Budget Saturday, RJGJHS Library

Mike wished everyone Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa and happy holidays to all.

The APS School Committee adjourned at 9:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used:
Agenda attached

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High

December 15, 2011
7:00 p.m.

AGENDA with addendum

- 1.0 CALL TO ORDER
- 2.0 CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION
- 3.0 STATEMENT OF WARRANT
- 4.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - 4.1 APS SC October 20, 2011 (*addendum*)
 - 4.2 JT SC November 3, 2011
 - 4.3 APS SC November 17, 2011
- 5.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- 6.0 APS SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS
 - 6.1 Policy Updates (7:10)
 - 6.1.1 Approved Use of School Facilities Policy (File: KF) with revised procedures and fees (File: KF-R) – *Kim McOsker*
 - 6.1.2 Advertising in Schools (File: KHB) – **SECOND READING** – **VOTE** -*Marie Altieri*
 - 6.1.2.1 Proposed new policy (approved by ABRSD 12/1/11)
 - 6.1.2.2 Proposed procedures (File: KHB-R)
 - 6.2 2012-2013 School Calendar – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills* (7:20)
 - 6.2.1 Proposed calendar (approved by ABRSC 12/1/11)
 - 6.2.2 Calendar Survey Results Memo from last year
 - 6.3 Update on Health Insurance Plan Design Process – *Kim McOsker (oral)* (7:40)
 - 6.4 Acton Health Insurance Trust Report – *John Petersen (addendum)* (7:50)
 - 6.5 ALG Report – *Xuan Kong* (7:55)
 - 6.5.1 12/8/11 meeting materials
 - 6.5.1.1 Draft minutes of 12/8/11 meeting (*added 12/15/11*)
 - 6.6 Acton Finance Committee Report – *Xuan Kong* (8:00)
 - 6.6.1 Long Range Financial Forecast, 12/7/11
 - 6.7.a FY'13 Budget – *Steve Mills, Don Aicardi* (8:10)
 - 6.7.1. Proposed APS FY'13 Budget Schedule
 - 6.7.2 FY'13 Budget Assumptions/Key Decisions
 - 6.7.3 Presentation slides (*revised 12/15/11*)
 - 6.7.b New FY12 Special Education Preschool Class – *Liza Huber (addendum)* (8:40)
 - 6.8 Capital Budget FY'13 – *JD Head (addendum)* (8:50)
 - 6.9 Discussion of Potential Acton Public School Students Tuitioning to Blanchard School-S. *Mills* (8:55)
 - 6.9.1 Blanchard Memorial School, Seats Available 2012-2013
 - 6.9.2 Acton Public Schools, Class Size Projections – *Marie Altieri (addendum)*
 - 6.9.3 Blanchard Brochure
 - 6.10 New Ruling by AG: Remote Participation at Open Meetings – *Mike Coppolino* (9:10)
 - 6.10.1 Email from Assistant Town Manager re Board of Selectmen
 - 6.10.2 Amended Open Meeting Law Regulations from the Attorney General, 11/11/11

- 6.10.3 Email from Glenn Koocher, MASC Executive Director (*addendum*)
- 6.10.4 Regulations Promulgated by the Attorney General , Relative to Remote Participation at Public Meetings (edited for School Committees), G. Koocher (*addendum*)
- 6.10.5 Quick Guide to Remote Participation at School Committee Meetings, Glenn Koocher, 12/9/11 (*addendum*)
- 6.10.6 Acton Board of Selectmen scheduled to vote at their meeting 12/19/11 (*oral*)
- 6.11 Discussion of Start Time of APS School Committee meetings – *Mike Coppolino* (9:25)
- 6.12 Recommendation to Accept Gift to the APS Preschool – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills* (*addendum*)(9:35)

7.0 FOR YOUR INFORMATION (9:40)

- 7.1 ESL Student Enrollment Report – December 1
- 7.2 FY' 12 Monthly APS Financial Reports (*addendum*)
- 7.3 Student Enrollment Numbers/Class Size Info – December 1 (*addendum*)
- 7.4 Professional Development Day 11/1/11
- 7.5 2012-2013 Kindergarten Registration Schedule (*revised 11/4/11 – Conant & Douglas switched evening meeting dates*)
- 7.6 2011-2012 School Systems Profile (*revised 12/15/11*)
- 7.7 Correspondence from the Community
- 7.8 School Newsletters

Conant Crier:	http://conant.ab.mec.edu/pto/newsletter.html
Douglas Digest:	http://douglas.ab.mec.edu/pto/digest.html
Gates Gazette:	http://gatesschoolpto.org/gazette
McCarthy-Towne Bulletin:	http://www.mctptso.org/bulletin/
Merriam Comm News:	http://www.merriampto.org/Merriam
Acton Public School Preschool:	http://ab.mec.edu/Preschool/index.htm

8.0 NEXT MEETINGS

January 5, 7:30 pm ABRSC at R.J. Grey Junior High School Library

January 19, 7:30 pm APSC at R.J. Grey Junior High School Library

REVISED DATE: January 28, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm Joint SC Budget Saturday, RJGJHS Library

ADJOURNMENT (9:50)