

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES (approved 3/21/13)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 14, 2013  
7:00 p.m. APS Annual Budget Hearing  
Followed by APS SC meeting

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*Members Present:* Dennis Bruce, Mike Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Kim McOsker, Deanne O'Sullivan  
*Members Absent:* Paul Murphy  
*Others:* Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

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The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Kim McOsker, Chair of the Acton Public School Committee.

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE FY14 OPEN BUDGET HEARING**

Members were asked to bring their 1/26/13 Budget Binder, posted online at <http://ab.mec.edu/about/meetings.shtml>

The Administration proposed an FY14 budget of \$26,961,000 for a 1.5% increase from final FY13. The dollar amount of the increase is \$398,000. Dr. Mills stated that at ALG on 2/14/13, the Acton FinCom accepted the use of \$1.695m in reserves for the proposed operating budget. Don Aicardi presented the details and emphasized that he would be reviewing and refining the numbers as the weeks go by. Included in the increase is the addition of .5 FTE Assistant Principal at Douglas School (\$43k), .6 FTE ELE Teacher (\$32k), 1.0 FTE Psychologist (\$62), and \$47,000 of professional development for a total of \$184,000. Any turnback has not been included in the numbers presented.

Dennis Bruce pointed out that ALG's agreement was before APS SC actually voted. Don and Kim stated that ALG was contingent on APS SC's approval of the proposed budget. It was noted that the APS SC met last week after the ABRSC meeting for this reason.

**Xuan Kong moved that the Acton Public School Committee approve the FY14 APS budget as proposed at \$26,960,725. Mike Coppolino seconded.**

Xuan emphasized Dennis Bruce's point that the Acton Leadership Group (ALG) process is mostly about sharing information between the elected town boards. ALG does not make decisions. Kim pointed out that the Board of Selectmen's schedule does not jibe well with the School Committees', so the BOS may seem to be ahead of School Committee at times.

**The motion was unanimously approved.**

**STATEMENT OF WARRANT** - none

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the 1/17/13 APS SC meeting were unanimously approve as written.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** - none

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**6.1 ALG Update**

6.1.1 Kim reported on the meeting of 2/14/13 (see above). Future assumptions for revenue sources and expenditure increases were also considered. There was consensus that Don and Steve Barrett (Finance Director of Acton) and the Fincom will harmonize their assumptions and numbers so the groups can use

consistent figures. Comments/suggestions should be sent to Xuan for the next ALG. This will be on the 3/7/14 ABRSC meeting agenda.

## **6.2 Board of Selectmen and FinCom Update**

Dennis reported that the Finance Committee had some questions about special education costs and the revenue growth number of 7%. They were comfortable with using \$1.7 M of reserves.

## **6.3 Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Update**

Kim reported that the HIT will meet at the end of the month when they will set rates.

## **6.4 OPEB Task Force Update**

Dennis reported that at the meeting last week potential funding models were discussed. Legislation was filed based on recommendations of the OPEB committee. Next meeting is 2/20/13. He offered to present at the March 7<sup>th</sup> ABRSC meeting.

## **6.5 FY13 Status Report – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter**

Don Aicardi said that there was nothing extraordinary to report for the second quarter of FY13.

## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

Dr. Mills announced today that the Acton Public Schools and ABRSD was the only school district nominated by the DESE to the US Education Green Ribbon School Award Program. He said the work our schools have done, led by Kate Crosby and JD Head, is extraordinary and has had very positive impact on our energy expenses but it is also the right thing to do on many levels. Award recipients will be announced by the US-Ed on April 22.

Dr. Mills announced with regret that Dr. Alixe Callen, principal of our High School, will be leaving at the end of June for an exceptional opportunity at a school in Seattle. He described Dr. Callen as “one of the finest educators I have ever known”. An ad for a new principal has been placed and a search committee is being formed, led by Marie Altieri.

Dr. Mills said that there has been a lot of discussion and change this past month involving the Regional School District Study Committee’s work. Some Boxborough members have proposed some significant changes at the RSDSC meeting last night. Examples are a move from a 65 – 35 split to a newly proposed (to the RSDSC) 80-20 split. The 5% Boxborough discount for future 7-12 building projects is now off the table in this new plan. The recommended 8 member School Committee for a K-12 region, is now proposed to be an 11 member School Committee including 7 from Acton and 4 from Boxborough with a weighted vote. The current 3 year rolling average is changed to a 5 year rolling average (advantageous to Acton). Some people feel like this has changed many people’s opinions about regionalization.

There has been a lot of discussion about Section 5E of the current Regional Agreement. Legal counsel has said as is, it is fine, but if the Regional Agreement is revised and approval from DESE is requested, Section 5E may need to be deleted. This is a significant legal question. It appears that the Special Town Meeting will need to be moved out to June.

Xuan encouraged the Committee to think about a replacement for him on the RSDSC after Town Meeting when he is no longer a School Committee member. Mike asked if it would be appropriate to ask Xuan to continue ex-officio if he is willing. Kim felt that if it were just until June, a few months, it seemed fair.

Dennis asked Marie Altieri about declining enrollment and the number of sections moving forward. Marie replied in the last 2 years APS has reduced a section each year, 15 sections last year, now at 14. Kindergarten and grade 1 are working out beautifully. K is 30% smaller than the current 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades are a concern due to their large size. Third grade has 392 students right now. Sixth grade has 387. Thirty third graders came in this year, which was very unusual. No one knows why this happened. They are watching the grade levels and will get back to the Committee if there is concern. Deanne O’Sullivan reminded everyone about the class size guidelines.

NEXT MEETINGS:

- March 7, 7:30 pm , ABRSC meeting at RJGJHS Library
- March 21, 7:00 pm, APS SC meeting at RJGJHS Library
- March 28, 7:30 pm, JT SC/AB/APS meeting at RJGJHS Library
- April 1, 7:00 pm, Acton Town Meeting begins in ABRHS auditorium

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of documents used: see agenda