

**ACTON PUBLIC AND ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MEETING Minutes (approved 8/22/13)**

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

**March 7, 2013  
7:00 p.m. Acton Public School Comm Meeting  
7:30 p.m. Joint School Committee  
followed by AB Regional School Committee Meeting**

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*Members Present:* Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Paul Murphy, Kim McOsker, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’ Sullivan (7:04)  
*Members Absent:* none  
*Others:* Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

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The Acton Public School Committee was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Kim McOsker.

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**1.1 Final Review of Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Financial Model**

Don reviewed the ALG financial plan for the School Committee. There is no change in the FY14 numbers from the last time the Committee looked at it. Don urged the Committee to look at the FY14 and FY15 numbers not thinking what will happen, but what would happen if these conditions existed. The handout assumes full use of tax levy every year, not expansive aid year to year, some growth in local receipts, about 4.5% for AB over the next couple of years, long term liability of OPEB with \$300,000 put into reserve fund for it every year. Regarding reserve use, the last couple of years use has gone down. This year it is slightly under \$1.7 million as outlined on the handout. This presentation will go into Acton’s Warrant for Town Meeting. Members of ALG want to be sure everyone sees the final product.

Xuan said that as part of going forward to Town Meeting, at the last ALG meeting members were tasked to make sure their boards are comfortable with all assumptions being made in the model because it will be the “blueprint for future years”. One of the main purposes of the School Committee’s discussion was to confirm if there are any concerns from their members so they can be brought back to the ALG meeting.

Dennis asked if any one on Fincom has looked at past numbers that were brought to Town Meeting to see how close they came to actual numbers. Mary Ann Ashton said that the numbers are close to where they thought they would be at this time last year. The Committee discussed the numbers. Mary Ann said that the Finance Committee tried to put together 3 scenarios, as explained in the warrant message. She said that the point is not to say this is the budget that will happen a year from now, but to say “if we assume this, this, and this, this is where we believe we will end up.”

It was the sense of the Committee that they are comfortable with the model’s assumptions.

**1.2 Principal Update**

Dr. Mills informed the Committee that Edward Kaufman, Principal of Merriam School has accepted a new position in Wellesley. He and Marie Altieri are beginning a traditional principal search for both principals now. Ed told Dr. Mills that the principal positions are extremely labor intensive and full time assistant principals are really needed. The ½ time Assistant Principal for Douglas was just below the funding line and just below that were the full time Assistant Principals at each of the elementary schools.

**ABRSC CALL TO ORDER – JOINT SC MEETING BEGINS**

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by Chairman Xuan Kong to begin the Joint School Committee meeting.

## **CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION**

Recognition of Mae Shoemaker as NFHCA 2012 Coach of the Year was postponed due to very bad weather.

## **APPROVAL of MINUTES and STATEMENT of WARRANT**

The minutes of the 2/7/13 Joint/AB/APS School Committee meeting were unanimously approved as written by the ABRSC and APSC.

AB Warrant #13-018 dated 2/21/13 in the amount of \$1,954,535.63 and #13-019 dated 3/7/13 in the amount of \$1,424,138.41 were signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures. APS Warrant #201317 dated 2/19/13 in the amount of \$112,470.93 and #201318 dated 3/5/13 in the amount of \$193,497.73 were signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** - none

## **EDUCATION REPORT**

Andrew Shen, Principal of the R.J. Grey Junior High School presented his report. The 2012 – 2013 school year includes 935 students, 460 in grade 7 and 475 in grade 8. The average 7<sup>th</sup> grade team has 115 students and the average 8<sup>th</sup> grade team has 119 students. There are 4 teams in each grade. 1.5 FTEs have been converted into a second Academic Support Center. This year's transitions include: leadership changes, a new educator evaluation pilot, new common core standards, and new programs and services.

## **JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

### **7.1 Security Measures in Place in our Schools**

7.1.1 Superintendent's Safety Task Force Public Forums *(to report at 3/28/13 meeting)*

7.1.2 Letter from School Committee Chairs to Elected Officials re Gun Safety

Dr. Mills described the fire drills, lock down drills and an evacuation procedures practiced each year in the buildings. He will ask for panic buttons for all schools. Public Forums are scheduled for community input. The Task Force has decided not to lock the High School front doors, but doors on the other schools are being discussed. He thanked everyone for their efforts on this important issue. A letter calling for rational gun safety legislation has been sent by the School Committees to our federal and state elected officials. This will also be sent to MASC and CASE members. Mike Coppolino advocated for sending it to other School Committees and inviting them to share it with their communities as well.

### **7.2 Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC) Update**

7.2.1 Memo from RSDSC Chairs

7.2.2 Slides from 2/13/13 RSDSC meeting

7.2.3 Summary of Financial Analyses of Revised Regionalization Proposal, *P. Ashton*

Mac Reid began with the Mark Twain quote, "Reports of our death have been greatly exaggerated." He and Peter Ashton said that the RSDSC unanimously believes regionalization is good for all of our kids. The RSDSC met last night to see if they could agree on how to move forward. The Boxborough contingent met and put together a new proposal for RSDSC consideration. Five changes include:

1. Instead of sharing financial benefits 65% Acton and 35% Boxborough, the new proposal is 80% Acton and 20% Boxborough over 5 years, plus an additional \$450,000 to Acton spread over years 6 and 7 to ease transition
2. Instead of a Boxborough discount of 5% on new construction now there would be no discount on future construction, 5% discount would remain on finance costs of existing RSD construction
3. Regarding School Committee composition, the new recommendation is an 11 member School Committee, one more member from each town, with 2.5 votes for each Acton member
4. Hometown School Guarantee would now continue indefinitely with Regional School Committee override, instead of ending in 5 years
5. Assessment formula is based on a 5 year rolling enrollment average, at Acton's option, instead of a 3 year average

Peter Ashton reported that consensus was reached on all points except the 3 vs 5 year average. That issue may be discussed at a future meeting. The RSDSC feels strongly that the April 29 Special Town Meetings should be postponed to **Monday, June 3, 2013**. He said the final proposed agreement could be provided at next School Committee meeting and after agreeing on its support, outreach to the community regarding the changes made could be communicated. Tweaks are still being done on the financial analysis. Peter stressed that the School Committee needs to take ownership of the Agreement and communicate their support to both Towns. The educational benefits are particularly important for all to agree on and hear.

Mike Coppolino asked if there has been any further legal opinion on the assessment formula discussion. Mac reported that he spoke to Attorneys Lennox and Maddeus and they feel confident that section 5E will stand and we should move forward.

The Committee discussed the importance of getting voters to attend the Town Meetings and what information they need. Mary Brolin noted the importance of telling Boxborough voters what could happen if regionalization did not pass in their town. Brigid thanked the Boxborough members who put forward the revised proposal for everyone. She reminded the Committee that the state requires an educational benefit to be articulated. Peter stated that the long range plan needs to be finished.

John Petersen spoke from the public about the difficulties of using projections and assumptions. He advocated for expanding the size of the School Committee because there is a lot of work to be done. He hopes the Committee will establish more smaller subgroups to focus on some of their work.

Xuan Kong summarized that it has been a long process and everyone sees promise that regionalization would bring to both towns as well as some financial benefit. He is hopeful that the revised proposal will bring a more balanced benefit to both towns.

**ABRSC VOTE:**

Kim McOsker moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to request that the Special Town Meetings scheduled for April 29, 2013 in Acton and Boxborough be rescheduled to June 3, 2013.

**7.3 Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Report**

Xuan reported that the Acton Finance Committee approved both budgets. ALG also made a projection for FY15 without considering regionalization. Xuan discussed the assumptions made that result in a budget number using \$2 million of reserves each year.

**7.4 Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) Report**

The last meeting was postponed to next week.

**7.5 Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Report**

Kim McOsker reported that costs have to be managed and throughout the year, they have said the increase would be 8% - 10%. Don said the 8% increase that was just voted creates a \$40,000 hole in both of the budgets but it will be managed. Kim said last year was an anomaly.

**7.6 OPEB Task Force Update**

Dennis Bruce reported that a few issues are starting to converge now with OPEB situation. He used Steve Noone's presentation to the BOS on 2/25/13. OPEB is a moving target and no matter what, it is a big number that is a liability. Next steps are to continue to fund the Trust and they will recommend a funding strategy for all of the Boards after evaluating all sources of funds. Dennis as the School Committee for input to take back to the OPEB Task Force so he can communicate what School Committee is and is not comfortable with.

Paul Murphy asked if some of the regionalization savings could be used for OPEB, if it passes. Dennis thinks that it could, but stated that there will be many demands for that money.

### **7.7 Acton FinCom Report**

Dennis reported that the Committee unanimously endorsed the APS budget and AB assessment at the last meeting.

### **7.8 Acton BOS Report**

Paul reported that an OPEB presentation was done.

### **7.9 Policy Subcommittee Update**

#### **7.9.1 Mission and Vision/Values (File: AD-E) – SECOND READING**

There were no comments since the First Reading.

#### **ABRSC VOTE:**

Mike Coppolino moved, Kim McOsker seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the revision to the Mission and Vision policy.

#### **APSC VOTE:**

Mike Coppolino moved, Dennis Bruce seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the revision to the Mission and Vision policy..

#### **7.9.2 Prohibition of Harassment (File: ACAB, combining ACAB, JBA, GBA) – SECOND READING**

#### **ABRSC VOTE:**

Kim McOsker moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the revision to the Prohibition of Harassment policy

#### **APSC VOTE:**

Paul Murphy moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the revision to the Prohibition of Harassment policy.

### **7.10 Public comment to School Committee members via email**

The Committees reviewed their decision a few years ago to remove authors' names and email addresses when including them in the posted School Committee packet, unless they have given permission for that information to be included. The Committee now feels that unless an author specifically requests not to include it, that information should be included. This change should be clearly stated on the School Committee website page so the public understands that their name and town of residence will be on the public document.

The town School Committees' email "shell" addresses have now been replaced with abschools addresses.

### **7.11 Presentation on Kelley's Corner**

This item was taken out of order at 9:00 p.m. due to audience members. Acton BOS member John Sonner presented on this Acton Town Meeting warrant article. A few thousand students are within walking distance of Kelley's Corner so this is pertinent to the School Committees. This will be a multi year process and the article is asking for \$277,000 to leverage a MassWorks grant. Some engineering work is required to be done first. John stated that a planned area like this will benefit students and teachers.

*The APSC adjourned at 9:36 p.m. The ABRSC continued.*

### **ABRSC BUSINESS**

#### **8.1 Recommendation to Approve Amended Conditions for the Loring Memorial Fund**

#### **ABRSC VOTE:**

Maria Neyland moved, Mike Coopolino seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the amended conditions for the Loring Memorial Fund as requested by RJGJHS Principal Andrew Shen.

**8.2 Recommendation to Approve Field Trip to Spain, April 2014**

Mike Copplino asked that staff be sensitive to parents' financial needs when comparing the two trips. He wondered if some of the regionalization savings could be put in a scholarship fund.

**ABRSC VOTE:**

Mike Coppolino moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the Field Trip to Spain in April 2014

**8.3 Recommendation to Approve Field Trip to Italy, February 2014**

**ABRSC VOTE:**

Mike Coppolino moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the Field Trip to Italy in February 2014

**8.4 Recommendation to Approve Gift to ABRHS AV department**

**ABRSC VOTE:**

Mike Coppolino moved, Deanne O'Sullivan seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to accept the gift to the ABRHS AV department with gratitude

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

See agenda

**NEXT MEETINGS**

- March 21, 7:00 pm, APSC Meeting at RJGJHS Library (Education Report – E. Kaufman)
- March 28, 7:00 pm, Joint SC Meeting at RJGJHS Library
- April 1, 7:00 pm, Acton Town Meeting begins in ABRHS Auditorium
- May 13, 7:00 pm, Boxborough Town Meeting begins

The Committees discussed whether to hold the meeting on March 28 because it was Holy Thursday and several members could not attend. It was agreed that if an important decision needed to be made a new date would be scheduled. (The meeting was cancelled.)

A pre Annual Town Meeting School Committee meeting will be posted as usual.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda