

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Minutes** (approved 6/20/13)

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

**May 16, 2013**  
**7:00 p.m.**

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*Members Present:* Dennis Bruce, Mike Coppolino, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, Deanne O’Sullivan (7:05), Kristina Rychlik  
*Members Absent:* none  
*Others:* Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

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The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Dennis Bruce at 7:02 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES and STATEMENT OF WARRANT**

APS warrant #201323 dated 5/14/13 in the amount of \$256,567.35 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

The meeting minutes of 3/21/13 were approved as amended. Dennis Bruce and Kristina Rychlik abstained because they were not at that meeting.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Alex Horowitz requested that a librarian be considered for each school immediately since funds are being turned back. He stated that this position was lost a long time ago and it was promised that it would eventually come back. Paul Murphy agreed.

**EDUCATION REPORT**

Damian Sugrue, Principal of the Conant School presented on his school’s year long writing alignment project. This teacher driven initiative developed to fulfill three needs identified by staff. With help from Deborah Bookis and an outside consultant, the Conant staff and administration developed narrative writing rubrics for grades K-6 that are aligned to the Common Core Curriculum Frameworks.

Students’ writing samples are passed along year to year, just like the test scores. This will build as years go by. In response to being asked whether student portfolios are electronic or hard copy, Deborah Bookis said that the state has asked schools not to invest in data storage yet, but she is keeping an eye on it. Electronic makes it much easier to pass the material along to the next teachers. This project just started with the Douglas school. Time s needed to work through the standards to make sure they are prompts connected to work that is already being done.

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**6.1 School Committee Member Reports**

6.1.2 Board of Selectmen and FinCom Update

Paul Murphy reported that the BOS voted 3-2 to support the Regionalization article.

6.1.4 OPEB Task Force Update

Dennis Bruce reported no meeting last month, but they are waiting for other reports to come out before discussing a new OPEB number.

**6.2 APS Food Services**

Food Service Director, Kirsten Nelson, outlined this year’s accomplishments including: success with the new Point of Sale/Parent on Line program, award of \$.06 performance based funding for all schools, Healthier US School Challenge Award received for all five elementary schools, and continued success of the Farm to School Program. She noted that only 5% of schools in the country received the Healthier US Challenge cash award. Referring to financials, previously lunch prepayments could not be tracked and would create a false balance on the revenue/expenses slide. Fund balances have dropped sharply.

A new lunch price law requires that the paid lunch revenue, at a minimum be equal to the Free Lunch Reimbursement. This means we have to charge at least \$2.65 and we currently charge \$2.50. The average Elementary Lunch costs \$2.79 within the 28 districts in TEC.

Kirsten explained the many benefits of our current payment system and the complicated requirements that school cafeterias must operate under. While she does not like to raise prices, sometimes healthier food, like fresh fruit and whole grains are more expensive. Kirsten and her staff were thanked by a member of the public and several Committee members for doing an excellent job.

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

**VOTED**: to increase the APS school lunch A price to \$2.75 effective July 1, 2013.

### **6.3 Douglas School Assistant Principal Update**

Dr. Mills introduced Jenna Larrenaga, the new Douglas School Assistant Principal.

### **6.4 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter FY13 Budget Report**

The current FY13 year end estimate is \$324,000. This is 1.22% of the \$26.5m budget.

\$90,000 of year end money has been committed to security equipment per the Safety Task Force recommendations on 4/10/13. The Administration would like to spend an additional \$282,000 and return about \$42,000 at year end. This is still under consideration. Dr. Mills acknowledged that he would love to add a librarian, but using year end funds for that is not appropriate at this time. If regionalization passes, the Blanchard librarian's services may be accessible to APS. Mike Coppolino would like to see the Gates and Douglas Schools' needs, as opposed to anything that is "a nice to have". Paul Murphy agreed. They want to get the asbestos out of the Gates building, after a slow process over the past few years. Deanne O'Sullivan asked that "asbestos removal" be added back to the Gates slide as it was before, not just the description about carpet.

### **6.5 Regionalization Update**

Dennis Bruce referred to materials posted at <http://ab.mec.edu> He reported that at the Joint BOS and FinCom meeting last week his presentation was well received. Peter Ashton and Dennis presented at the Acton BOS this week and the Board voted 3-2 to support Regionalization. The Finance Committee will meet on Tuesday. Huge thanks were given to Kim McOsker and Xuan Kong who presented at the League of Women Voters Forum, as well as Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, JD Head and Steve Mills who assisted. Kristina Rychlik reviewed the outreach plan. The broad based outreach will conclude tomorrow. Seven forums were completed in Acton and Boxborough and 5 remain. The Acton Chinese Language School will host a presentation on Sunday.

Alex Horowitz spoke from the public and asked if we fully regionalize how money that may be left over at year end will be allocated. Kim replied that it will probably be handled the same way it is now as Excess and Deficiency (E&D). Mike agreed that E&D would replace "free cash". The Committee could decide to lower the assessment if there are excess funds. Regarding Acton Leadership Group (ALG) going forward if there is full regionalization, Mike stated that there is still a dire need for Selectmen and Finance Committees from both towns. He suggested that there maybe there would be a regional representative on both ALG and Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF). Kim stated that having separate ALG and BLF groups is important to keep each town's perspectives on things like police, fire and other community concerns. Steve Mills stated that the current structures, such as ALG and BLF, will stay in place for now.

John Petersen commented on the mechanics of exceeding E & D. He noted that when it happened before, the amount over was used to reduce the assessment and that is how it is appropriated. Dennis noted that because we are just expanding our school district from 7 – 12 to Pre K-12, we already know how we deal with these issues if they come up. Mike commented that part of what is being asked about is Chapter 70 money. Now the Region and the Towns get the funding, but with full Regionalization it will not go to the towns and if the Committee bumps up against the E & D cap, the assessments would have to go down.

## **6.6 Kindergarten Registration Update**

Marie Altieri reported that they plan to continue having only 2 kindergartens at Gates and 3 at the other schools. 2/3 of families requested all day Kindergarten for September, an all time high. Two all day Kindergartens will be offered at McT and Douglas next year. Community Education has been very helpful and willing to partner with our schools, Conant in particular right now. (Slide 6 has a mistake to be fixed on it.) Per slide 7, the current projection for K was 270, we now have 268. A range of 19 – 23 is expected for these students from K – 6. This is very good. The current 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is a very large class. This appears to be a blip. While we're reducing class size we have also been reducing sections. It has been one at a time so it may not be evident. We don't have a single empty classroom in our school buildings.

The modulars are not permanent space and will need to be removed eventually. An important goal will be to move what is in them to classrooms. Currently there are 10 – 14 classrooms in modulars. Marie was asked if the increased All Day Kindergartens would provide more revenue. She replied that this brings more expense and more revenue, but when Kindergarten classes went from 23 and 24 students, to 20 or less, the All Day K revenue went down significantly so we are barely covering costs. Blanchard has All Day Kindergarten for all students and they pay. Full regionalization would mean All Day Kindergarten will be available to more Acton families.

Mike Coppelino said that going out 5 years, it appears that about 9 sections are being dropped at about \$650,000 by the time we reach that year. He asked if that is reflected in the "base case" and if our expense model was adjusted for this. Marie stated that we did to some extent, and she spoke to a Finance Committee member today about it.

Alex referred to slide 10 noting the general downward trend but he suggested showing where the Kind class started and where they went. (Go from 01 to 07) Marie did look at it and there was not much change. Under 07, add what the number was in 01 (6 year differential or a stacked bar showing what happened to that class year by year). Adding this would make the graph much more valuable, for some people. Alex also suggested the need to look at how much buildable land there is in both towns to see where things could go in the future. Marie replied that the 1999 enrollment projection showed the peak at the High School exactly when it did. Land is taken into account in the projections.

## **6.8 Process for Naming Acton Public Preschool Program**

- 6.8.1 Naming of Facilities Policy, File: FF
- 6.8.2 Proposed Process for Naming our Program
- 6.8.3 Previous memo dated 3/15/13

Since the School Committee discussion on 3/21/13, Liza Huber has followed the policy and procedures for naming. She asked the School Committee to approve the screening committee as outlined. Mike noted that this was a program not a faculty which is a bit of a twist. The Committee agreed to Liza's request.

Kim McOsker reminded the Committee that their Superintendent's evaluations are due back to her. A combined evaluation, compiled by Kim and Maria Neyland, is needed by next Friday for review.

## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

7.3 It was announced that Ed Kaufman will stay as Merriam Principal.

7.4 All-Staff Retirement Party – June 13, 3:00-5:00, Wedgewood Pines Country Club, Stow

With 28 retirees, including 16 teachers and 3 busdrivers, this is the highest number we have ever had.

Marie thinks this is demographic. ERI was in the budget because this number was expected.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda