

**JOINT ACTON PUBLIC (APSC) and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL (ABRSC)
and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH TRANSITIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABTSC)
MEETINGS Minutes (approved 9/4/14)**

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

June 24, 2014
7:00 p.m. Joint ABTSC/ABRSC/APSC Meeting

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maria Neyland, Paul Murphy, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Michael Coppolino
Others: Marie Altieri, Deb Bookis, Glenn Brand, Steve Mills, Maya Minkin, Katie Neville, Beth Petr, Officer Chris Prehl

Chairperson Kristina Rychlik called the ABTSC and ABRSC to order and Chairperson Dennis Bruce called the APSC to order at 7:03 p.m.

JOINT APS/ABRSC/ABTSC MEETING:

1. Chairmen’s Introduction

Kristina Rychlik thanked Dr. Mills for his 36 years of service in public education including the past five years he has spent at APS/ABRSD. She noted the impressive 707 School Committee meetings that he has attended during that time and the major projects that have been successfully undertaken during his tenure, including the Lower Fields Project, Richard Dow Track Resurfacing Project and PreK-12 Regionalization. The Committee thanked Dr. Mills for his “Open Letter to the People of Acton and Boxborough”.

2. Approval of Minutes and Statement of Warrants

The ABTSC/ABRSC and APSC minutes of 5/1/14, 5/14/14, 5/22/14 and 6/5/14 were approved by the three School Committees.

3. Public Participation - none

4. Discussion of PARCC vs. MCAS testing in FY15 decision

Dr. Mills introduced Deborah Bookis as our expert in this area. He and Mr. Brand have discussed this issue at length and agree to recommend continuing with MCAS for next year for the six reasons on slides 5 and 6.

The Committee questioned Deborah, Amy Bisiewicz and Dr. Mills about the options. Mary Brolin noted the absurdity that the PARCC pilot was done but there is no data provided to help make this decision. She agrees with Steve’s recommendation. Dennis Bruce asked if our network could handle the increased traffic if PARCC were used. Amy said capacity is being increased and resources would have to be scheduled appropriately. Amy noted that younger students would have to know certain technical skills to be successful taking PARCC. There might be more content on the screen outside of view and children must use the scroll bar to view it. For example, students need to know this before starting the test. Paul Murphy asked if the online testing would give results faster so teachers could intervene sooner if there is a need for a particular student. Deborah was not sure. A statement from Michael Coppolino (absent) was read advocating for continuing with MCAS.

Glenn Brand shared his perspective. He agrees with Dr. Mills that MCAS will fade away and another assessment will unfold but the manner in which PARCC is being introduced is troubling to him.

ABTSC VOTE:

Maria Neyland moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve MCAS administration for 2014-2015 school year for Grades 3-8 and Grade 10

5. Common Core Parent Forum Update

Deanne O’Sullivan summarized the parent sponsored forum recently held. The consensus appeared to be that PARCC was not ready to be fully administered. Paul is concerned by the number of business representatives involved in this endeavor, as opposed to educational experts. Noting her teaching background, Amy Krishnamurthy feels that students lack a higher understanding of math and how to be discerning readers. These are skills they need and what the Common Core will address, in her opinion. The Committee agreed there is some confusion around PARCC and the Common Core. Maureen Flynn spoke from the public and is concerned about all the strings tied to Common Core. Deb Bookis said this is really about the “District Determined Measures”.

Kristina summed up that while PARCC is new, the Common Core is not. In the FYI section she referred to the excellent material from Deb Bookis including a timeline about what information has been provided over time. She stated that, “Having an involved and interested parent community is very valuable to our school district.”

6. ABTSC: Recommendation to approve changes to Acton-Boxborough Regional High School Handbook for FY15

(Handbook is found at <http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/pdf/files/handbook.pdf>)

JoAnn Campbell described the majority of the changes to the High School handbook as “mundane”, with the exception of three sections:

1. Pg 2 - The Student Support Team (SST) replaces the Student Assistance Team. This program supports students prior to being referred for possible evaluation by special education staff.
2. Pg 3 - Medical Exemptions – This addition helps with students who have concussions, mental health issues, etc. so there is a clear way to handle these important special medical exemptions.
3. Pg 6 - Academic Integrity – This changes the route for appeals. Next year will be a pilot for how to collect this confidential information, to be held with the Dean. Often these incidences are a result of kids who are very stressed, and next year they hope to have a very proactive stance on these issues.

Dennis Bruce disagrees that only two years of math are required for graduation (page 2). It was pointed out that some students struggle to meet this math requirement.

The Committee decided to delay their acceptance vote until their meeting on July 24 to give them more time to consider the changes. It was suggested that tracked changes be used to make the document easier to follow. Some concern was expressed by how late this would make the final version for the High School to process.

7. Lower Fields Project Financial Report

The Committee reviewed the report from Erin Bettez. She noted that the Superintendent chairs the Lower Fields Committee and the next annual meeting will be in early fall. An eagle scout will install the fundraiser bricks soon. Spring was not good weather-wise for this work.

When asked what the best strategic move for the surplus of funds being created might be, JD Head stated that FOLF could be asked to pay off their debt faster, or the rainy day fund might be left as is. The Committee would like to see some of the walkways, goal pockets, and lighting issues be addressed. Lighting was noted as a safety issue. Paul Murphy noted bank loan payoffs of approximately \$11,000 monthly and asked why it jumped to \$66,000 in February.

8. APS and ABRSD End of Year Financial Updates

Dr. Mills reviewed the updates for both budgets, emphasizing the diminishing opportunity to replenish E&D. The vacancy factor technique has been helpful but has also reduced year end surpluses to some degree. Legal costs increased significantly this year with planning for regionalization, teacher contracts and the Pledge case. The athletics budget is in the red.

Dennis Bruce said that the Finance Committee and Acton Board of Selectmen were meeting the same night (6/24/14). He said the two groups were told the only year end spending would be for a few safety items. Dr. Mills said this would be some sidewalk work and internal cameras for safety reasons. JD stated that this was not really year end spending, but capital items that JoAnn Campbell had planned for at the High School. The items were included in JoAnn's line items as a capital request outside of the budget, (under the line but on the list) on Budget Saturday.

Several Committee members questioned why this would not be considered year end spending. Dennis Bruce advocated for letting the Finance Committee know about this, as opposed to calling the expenditures safety issues. Dr. Mills noted that they should have been mentioned in the Third Quarter Financial Report.

Mary Brolin summarized the essential need for clear disclosure on expenditures like this, stating that the School Committee is in a major transition with regionalization and the Committee needs to improve their relationship with our Finance Committees, Selectmen and ALG/BLF going forward. The Committee agreed.

9. ABTSC: Recommendation to Approve Changes to Non-union Employees' Benefit Manual for FY15

Marie Altieri explained that language related to personal days was updated and references to APS were deleted.

ABTSC VOTE:

Mary Brolin moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the changes to the non-union employees' benefit manual for FY15 as presented.

10. APSC: Recommendation to Accept All Day Kindergarten Surplus Donation from ABRSD to APS

Maria Neyland asked how this salary line was budgeted on Budget Saturday. Marie Altieri explained that this is a fee based program. Tuition is set based on projected salaries based on current students. The decision is made at the end of the year in case someone went on unpaid leave or there was another fluctuation in expenses/revenue. This is a revolving account managed by ABRSD Community Education that involves an APS program. This donation supports kindergarten staff salaries for the 2013-2014 school year.

APSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Kristina Rychlik seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the All Day Kindergarten surplus donation from ABRSD to APS.

11. ABTSC: Recommendation to accept gift to fund Smartboards in McCarthy-Towne Kindergarten classrooms

ABTSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept this gift to fund Smartboards in McCarthy-Towne kindergarten classrooms with gratitude.

12. ABTSC: Recommendation to Accept Donation from Intel to ABRSD

ABTSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept donation from Intel to ABRSD with gratitude.

13. ABTSC: Recommendation to accept gift from IBM to ABRSD

ABTSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the gift from IBM to ABRSD with gratitude.

14. Regionalization Update

Dr. Mills reported that title insurance is separate from the property insurance that the School District has. He spoke with Chuck Winn of MIAA and Mr. Winn advised that title insurance is not needed on the assets being transferred from the two Towns to the ABRSD because they are coming from municipalities that we know. The cost for coverage of Acton's assets would be \$41,000. This also applies to the land that Boxborough is contributing to the Region.

15. Policy Subcommittee Update

ABTSC/ABRSC/APSC Policies (*incorporating Blanchard policies*)

1. Consent Agenda #6 – **SECOND READING**

ABTSC VOTE:

Brigid Bieber moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the Consent Agenda #6 as proposed with minor edits.

2. Tobacco Use on School Property, File: ADC, GBED, JICG – **SECOND READING**

ABTSC VOTE:

Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the Tobacco Use on School Property policy as amended.

16. Wellness Committee Year End Report

Liza Huber reported and thanked Julie Towell for heading up this Committee this year. Next year the Committee wants to consider whether serving breakfast should be added at all of our elementary schools. Homelessness is a new issue in our community that we are seeing. Deanne O'Sullivan is the School Committee representative on this Committee.

17. School Committee Member Reports

1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)

Dennis reported that the Board of Selectmen have noted how many new members there will be at ALG. Next meeting will be end of August.

2. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)

Mary Brolin reported that on June 19, HIT looked at cash flow and expect positive \$200,000 flow. Cook and Company were approved.

3. Acton Board of Selectmen

Paul Murphy reported that the State Reps attended the last meeting to get to know people. Paul spoke with Nancy regarding a letter of support for new state aid for special ed funding. Dennis Bruce presented at the last Selectmen's meeting.

4. Boxborough Board of Selectmen

Maria Neyland reported on last night's meeting. Selectmen are trying to decide whether Boxborough will leave Minuteman Tech or not.

18. Annual Superintendent’s Evaluation

Maria Neyland read Dr. Mills’ final evaluation into the record and apologized for the delay. Kristina Rychlik asked the APSC and ABRSC if this was an accurate evaluation and the Committees agreed that it was.

19. FY15 School Committee Meetings

1. Recommendation to Approve FY15 ABRSC Meeting Calendar

Agreeing that they should try to avoid known conflicts, the Committee agreed to reconsider their FY15 meetings. It was suggested that the School Committee not meet the night before graduation so the June meetings were moved a week later.

ABTSC VOTE

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY15 School Committee meeting calendar as amended.

20. APSC: Recommendation to authorize ABRSC to approve previous APSC minutes

Dr. Mills explained that school counsel D. Moschos advised that it is acceptable for the Acton Public School Committee to give the authority to approve APSC’s previous meeting minutes to the new body, the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee, given the new Regional Agreement.

APSC VOTE:

Paul Murphy moved, Deanne O’Sullivan seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to authorize the ABRSC to approve previous Acton Public School Committee meeting minutes.

21. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

1. An Open Letter to the People of Acton and Boxborough from Dr. Stephen Mills
Dr. Mills was thanked for his very nice letter to our community and all of his accomplishments while serving as our Superintendent.
2. ABRSD Food Services: The High School Cafeteria is open for breakfast/lunch from 9:00 – 11:30 until August 1st. Students who receive free/reduced lunch are eligible for this discount through the summer hours.
3. Dr. Mills thanked the Special Education Parents Advisory Council Chairperson, Nancy Sherburne, who is stepping down after many years of advocacy on behalf of our families. Nancy received an enthusiastic round of applause from all.

The three School Committees were adjourned at 9:32 p.m. It was noted that this concluded the last meeting of the Acton Public School Committee as the new Region commences in one week.

NEXT MEETINGS:

- Thursday, July 24, Annual School Committee Workshop, 7:00 p.m. RJGJHS Library
- Monday, August 4, ABRSD School Committee Meeting, 7:00 p.m. RJGJHS Library
- Thursday, September 4, ABRSD School Committee Meeting, 7:30 p.m. RJGJHS Library

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents used: see agenda