

JOINT ACTON PUBLIC and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP Minutes (approved 8/22/13)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

July 9, 2013
6:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m. Joint School Committee Workshop
8:30 p.m. Joint School Committee Executive Session

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Kim McOsker, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Paul Murphy
Others: Don Aicardi, Curt Bates, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

The Acton-Boxborough Regional and Acton Public School Committees were called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Maria Neyland and Dennis Bruce, respective Chairs.

STATEMENT of WARRANT

ABRSD Warrant # 14001A dated 7/1/13 in the amount of \$1,134,373.78 and #13027 dated 6/27/13 in the amount of \$3,673,395.76 were signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

APS warrant #201326 dated 6/26/13 in the amount of \$216,441.07 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

PUBLIC PARICIPATION - none

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

4.1 Minutes will be approved at the next meeting.

4.2 Discussion of Junior High/High School Track Repair

In response to information sent out via the Regional PTSO email “chatter”, Maria Neyland stated that the School Committee has not discussed this issue at a meeting and therefore has no opinion yet. Maria requested that statements involving the School Committee and/or the Superintendent be reviewed by the School Committee Secretary before being distributed.

A parent donor wants to improve the track by about \$600,000. He is offering to raise between \$400,000-\$500,000 if the school district will fund the remainder. Although not part of the funding plan this year, repairing the track has been on the list to address. This was included in JD Head’s presentation on Budget Saturday last January.

When asked what he would remove from the budget if this is funded, Dr. Mills believes there will probably be end of the year money left that could be used. There is nothing he would cut because the staff has worked very hard to make this a lean budget and address the priorities.

JD Head presented saying that when Leary Field was turfed in 2005, the track needed attention at that time. He has 4 questions that he asks himself when someone proposes a new project. With this project, all 4 answers to the questions are yes. One example of the need is that the track material is not adhering any longer to the surface. The cost estimate of \$600,000 should be considered a “not to exceed” number for a satisfactory result:

\$55,000	Design, Bid, Permitting
\$545,000	Construction
\$600,000	Total cost of the project (“not to exceed”)

Don Aicardi presented on the financial implications of the proposed track repair project. He noted that the energy savings from this year could be used for funding, however there are still many unknown expenses for FY14. He is concerned with fund balance replenishment and the complexity and fragility of these numbers, particularly given that it is the transition year for regionalization.

The Committee was grateful to the parent for his generosity and enthusiasm, but had questions.

Dennis Bruce asked about lowering the amount for electricity by \$100,000. Don confirmed that this was already done in the FY14 budget, but based on the final numbers today he believes there is another \$100,000 - \$150,000 available.

JD thinks this repair would only be a two week impact on track or so depending on weather. If money were not an issue, he would do the football field at the same time, but that is not realistic. Some things were done initially to save money and now needs must be addressed. JD said this new track should be a "25 year asset".

Several Committee members expressed concern that they were being asked to spend money nine days into the new school year, on something that was not on the principals' wish list. There are many variables that go into determining how much money will be left at the end of the year and replenishing the fund balance is important.

JD expressed concern about the timeline for the project if it moves forward so it will have the least amount of disruption. He needs to know by September/October if it will be done for the next season. He stated that this is as warranted and as valid a capital project as he has seen in 10 years, a "need", not a "wish", in his opinion. JD said that a "capital outlay" account for surplus funding would be valuable to consider, referencing the gym floor refinishing for \$125,000 a few years ago. The roof of the Admin building needs to be redone, and the overall campus access flow is a large project JD would like to address.

Brigid Bieber stated that Steve Desy has said that if he could do one thing it would be to fix the track. This project is a lot bigger than what was on the Budget Saturday list. She thanked the very generous donor family for their offer. This is a tough discussion for the Committee. She asked, "Can we afford to do this?" and "Can we afford not to do this, when someone is offering such a significant matching gift?" She is concerned about the process because it looks like School Committee is a rubber stamp. The Lower Fields Project was a lengthy and thoughtful process. She stressed the importance of balancing priorities properly. Kim McOsker expressed concern that representatives attended ALG meetings all year defending budget priorities, and now the Committee is about to start a new ALG process for FY14 without any discussion with their colleagues. Kristina Rychlik stressed that this is a \$600,000 asset that will cost the District \$150,000. She is concerned about liability and safety issues regarding the track.

Track coaches Brian Crossman, Ken Feit, Mary Price Maddox and Lisa Owen spoke about the track's poor condition. Brian only allows his team to run on the track once a week, compared to other teams that run 5 times a week. One DCL team refuses to come to AB due to the track's condition. One team forfeited all of their points instead of letting their athletes run on it.

Dr. Mills was asked if there is a risk in waiting for the School Committee to take a position on this. The major benefactor said it will be much more effective if the Committee is all on board now. The Committee prefers to wait for another report in August before making a funding decision. Although they would like to wait for a First Quarter report, that would be September or October. JD stated that waiting means the renovation would not be ready for the spring season. Mike Coppolino suggested that if the donor says the gift is now or never, maybe the Committee

could agree on a number at their August meeting. Brigid suggested that members of ALG, BLF and the Finance Committees should hear about this issue at their next meetings.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE ANNUAL WORKSHOP

1. School Committee Policy, Operations, and Organizations

1.1. Policies

The Policy Subcommittee provided their annual summary. Maria asked for input about any policies that members would like to have considered. The current list will be distributed.

1.2. Operations

1.2.1 Meeting protocol and parliamentary procedure review

A reference page of parliamentary procedures was distributed. The Committee agreed that waiting to vote on important issues at a second meeting provides valuable time for public input, not all issues require this.

1.2.2 Meeting packets

The Committee agreed that it was valuable to post packets on Friday night so members and the public could review them over the weekend. The FYI section will now be posted as a separate pdf so there are two smaller documents to download and search.

1.2.3 Public perception of School Committee

The Committee discussed how they communicate with and are perceived by the public. Outreach done leading up to the regionalization Town Meetings, was eye opening for some members. Some felt there was distrust and a lack of confidence in the School Committee, others felt there was a need for better communication and more attention to be paid to the complicated issues that the Committee deals with.

Kim stressed that people are very busy but can be reached through other groups they are in, such as the PTOs and neighborhood groups. Mike suggested that the monthly article from the Chairs could be restarted, or each school could have a School Committee rep that attends some of their meetings. Dennis Bruce feels the need for a concerted effort to have discussions with the Acton and Boxborough Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees. He also stressed consistent public communication.

Steve Mills considers the group to be a very highly functional School Committee surrounded by all kinds of leadership based on trust. He asked that the year continue with no fingerpointing, and no surprises at meetings. He encouraged members to let him or his staff know if members have questions so they can be better prepared at the meetings. He welcomed SC to ask him or his staff any questions. More complicated ones should go through him first. Brigid requested that staff tell Committee members if a question requires a lot of time to answer.

2. School Operations

2.1. Return to Review of Demographic Survey Results

Mike Coppolino agreed to do this last year. He just emailed a dean at Boston College and she will see if someone is interested in analyzing this data. He will let the Committee know the result. Mike believes that there is still a lot of information that can be mined from it and used when a new survey is done. Mary Brolin's students may be able to analyze the data.

Executive Summary (of selected results presented to SC on Jan 28th, 2010)

<http://www.ab.mec.edu/pdf/files/values-interest/Educational%20Values%20Exec%20Summary.pdf>

Presentation by Staff

<http://www.ab.mec.edu/pdf/files/values-interest/Educational%20Values%20and%20Interest%20Presentation.pdf>

2.2. Public Request: Teacher Evaluation vs Increasing Educational Output

Dr. Mills and many superintendents went to the Statehouse a few weeks ago to speak against the overload on teachers. Dr. Mills will speak with the parent who sent the email.

2.3. Dr. Zhao Community Forum – July 23

2.3.1. Cultural diversity & Standardized testing concerns

Members were urged to attend Dr. Zhao's presentation for a discussion at their August meeting. Deanne stated that Paul's concern was also that some elementary schools do not represent the community and is there anything that can/should be done about that.

2.4. More Attention to “middle ground” kids - skipped

3. FY15 Budget Process and Priorities

This will be considered by the Transitional School Committee, including at Budget Saturday. Maria emphasized the need to make sure members are talking to the respective boards – ALG/BLF/Finance Committees about School Committee priorities, and start early enough to communicate appropriately to all involved.

4. Regionalization

Referring to Mac Reid's handout, Maria stated that the School Committee's role is primarily oversight. A subcommittee of the Policy subcommittee will look at how to blend all of the policies. Wednesday afternoon meetings have begun with Steve Mills, Curt Bates, Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri and Clare Jeannotte. Appropriate people will be invited as needed. Decisions will be made by consensus. Choices will be brought to the School Committee for decisions as needed. Steve Mills said that the group is cognizant of all of the questions that will come up for Committee members and the public. He offered to report monthly as an agenda item.

The Committee discussed future meetings. The Regional School Committee (RSC) meetings will now be joint RSC and Transitional School Committee meetings. Agendas will need to be clearly labeled so it is transparent to the public. The Committee agreed to see how meetings go before deciding what to do for the entire year. It was suggested that posting transitional meetings for all 3 School Committee meetings (APS, BPS, ABRSC) each month could be considered.

4.1 Financial Oversight Subcommittee, reps from ALG, BLF, Fincoms, School Comm

The 3 chairs of the Acton Public, Boxborough Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committees will be members. Dennis Bruce agreed to have Michael Coppolino represent him. Maria Neyland will attend for ABRSC. Boxborough SC will decide at their next meeting. Mary Brodin was recommended because as a member of the Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC), she knows the model very well and would be a valuable resource. The chairs will ask the Acton and Boxborough Selectmen and Finance Committees to send representatives.

Don Aicardi was asked about the paragraph on page 10, #5 regarding the Regional School Committee assuming responsibility for transporting regular education students in FY14. Steve Mills will call Christine Lynch to see how this is done in other districts. The Regional School Committee must handle the transportation this year so reimbursement comes in, per the new Agreement.

The Committee will need to be prepared for filling the additional School Committee seats next Spring.

4.2 Future of the Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC)

Mary Brolin stated that the Committee itself is done with their work. The Educational Plan and Intermunicipal Agreement are not done. Maria will check on these with the RSDSC. The Intermunicipal Agreement needs to be negotiated with both towns. The Superintendent negotiates the Intermunicipal Agreement and then it comes to the School Committee to vote.

5. Approval of 2013-2014 Subcommittee Members – VOTE

The Committees discussed assignments for the new school year. See attachment.

APS VOTE:

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

VOTED: to approve the new Committee assignments as proposed.

ABRSC VOTE:

Mary Brolin moved, Dennis Bruce seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the new Committee assignments as proposed.

A letter must be sent to CASE stating that the Acton Public Schools district is dissolving on June 30, 2014. This must be sent one year in advance.

The Committee asked about corporate sponsorship of the Lower Fields and where the funds are going. They requested a quarterly report with a profit/loss balance sheet.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION: “Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining”

At 9:42 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED by role call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

(YES – Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, Coppolino, McOsker, Neyland, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)

Maria Neyland declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session for the sole purpose of adjourning.

At 9:43 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED by role call: that the **Acton Public School Committee** go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

(YES - Bruce, Coppolino, McOsker, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)

Dennis Bruce declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session for the sole purpose of adjourning.

At 10:30 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Joint Executive Session.

The Committees were adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda, List of FY14 Subcommittee Assignments

Next Meeting: Joint School Committee, August 22, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library