

JOINT ACTON PUBLIC (APSC) and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL (ABRSC) and
ACTON-BOXBOROUGH TRANSITIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABTSC) MEETING MINUTES (approved 9/10/13)

Library

August 22, 2013

R.J. Grey Junior High School

7:00 p.m. Joint School Committee Executive Session

7:30 p.m. Joint School Committee Meeting

Members Present: Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Paul Murphy, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan (7:03), Kristina Rychlik

Members Absent: Brigid Bieber, Kim McOsker

Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr, approximately 50 students/parents/coaches

The Acton-Boxborough Regional, Acton-Boxborough Transitional and Acton Public School Committees were called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Maria Neyland and Dennis Bruce, respective Chairs.

1. JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:03 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 – Brolin, Bruce, Coppolino, Murphy, 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.

At 7:03 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously

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

(YES – Brolin, Bruce, Coppolino, Murphy, 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.

At 7:03 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, Murphy, 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.

At 7:40 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Joint Executive Session.

JOINT APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC OPEN BUSINESS MEETING

2. Chairmen's Introduction

Maria Neyland and Dr. Mills asked the Regional School District Study Committee members to come forward and thanked them for their dedication and hard work over the past two years. Dr. Mills has been amazed with the unbelievable quantity of volunteer hours that are donated in the

Acton and Boxborough community and even more so, the quality of volunteers' expertise. Members of the RSDSC individually put in hundreds of hours studying if regionalization was worth doing for both communities. Ultimately, this will benefit all of the children. RSDSC Co-Chairs Peter Ashton and Mac Reid thanked the Administration and School Committees for their support during the process. They said it was truly a team effort with many ups and downs leading up to the successful Town Meetings on June 3, 2013. Members of the Regional School District Study Committee included: Vincent Amoroso, Peter Ashton, Mary Brolin, Adria Cohen, Robert Evans, James Ham, Pamela Harting Barrat, Kristin Hilberg, Xuan Kong, Mac Reid and Superintendents Steve Mills and Curt Bates. They received an ABRSD coffee mug and a standing ovation for their extraordinary efforts.

3. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes

AB Warrant #13-028 dated 6/30/13 in the amount of \$484,145.40, #13-029 dated 6/30/13 in the amount of \$11,275.09, #14-001 dated 7/11/13 in the amount of \$765,633.21, #14-002 dated 7/25/13 in the amount of \$1,194,034.51, #14-003 dated 8/8/13 in the amount of \$997,398.65 and 14-004 dated 8/22/13 in the amount of \$803,727.14 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

APS Warrant #201327 dated 6/30/13 in the amount of \$90,834.14, #201402 dated 7/23/13 in the amount of \$112,108.63, #201403 dated 8/6/13 in the amount of \$117,213.94 and #201404 dated 8/20/13 in the amount of \$167,966.90 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

The following Joint APS/ABRSC meeting minutes were approved: 7/9/13, 6/20/13, 6/6/13, 5/2/13, 4/10/13 and 3/7/13.

4. Regionalization

1. Recommendation to Dissolve Regional School District Study Committee

With their work complete, Paul Murphy moved to dissolve the ABRSC's Regional School District Study Committee, Michael Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to dissolve the Regional School District Study Committee.

2. Transitional Administrative Team Weekly Meetings Update

Dr. Mills has been meeting weekly with Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Dr. Bates and Clare Jeannotte. These have been very productive. Other Administrators attend based on the agenda. The FY15 school calendar will be challenging. JD Head will present on one tier bussing. Dr. Mills is charged with creating the Intermunicipal Agreements with Acton and Boxborough. Tess Summers, Peter Ashton and the school attorney will work on it for the Acton side. Another group will do this in Boxborough and then meet with Dr. Mills, followed by School Committee review. Dr. Mills noted the letter of final approval from DESE Commissioner, Mitchell Chester. Dr. Mills will report monthly to the Committees.

3. Financial Oversight Subcommittee Update

The subcommittee will include: Chair, Mike Coppolino, Maria Neyland and Mary Brolin. Janet Adachi will represent the Acton Board of Selectmen. Bob Evans will attend from Acton Finance Committee. Jim Ham will attend from Boxborough Finance Committee. Boxborough School Committee will decide at their September meeting. Mike asked for input. He thought originally this subcommittee was going to be like an audit function. Another idea was that they could start this year and review what the schools are proposing for next year. Mary thought they'd review the models created and consider them before the Committees vote on next year's budgets. Mike stated that he made it clear to the Selectmen and Finance Committees that this is not an advisory committee. Maria thought a main concern at ALG was that the budget

would be a full assessment. Getting Selectmen and Finance Committee input before or while decisions are being made would be valuable, in addition to comparing actual numbers to the savings targets. Mary Ann Ashton asked about how communications would be made to ALG and BLF on this. Mike thought people on this subcommittee would report back to ALG. The subcommittee will meet and decide when and how often to report back. Input is needed before Budget Saturday (1/25/14) and toward the end of the budget process. No meeting is scheduled yet but it will be soon.

4. Transitional Policy Subcommittee Update

Mary Brolin reported that Maria Neyland is joining the subcommittee so someone from the Policy Subcommittee is included. Kristina Rychlik is the other member. First meeting will be September 28. Policies will be compared across the three districts and then passed up to the Policy Subcommittee, and then to the School Committees. Many policies should be fairly minor changes.

5. Transportation Plan Review & Fiscal Year (FY)14 Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (ABRSD) Budget Change

Don Aicardi described this change as a very important accounting procedure that does not change the FY' 14 town assessments.

i. Recommendation to Approve FY14 Transportation Plan

ABRSC VOTE

Mary Brolin moved, Michael Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to adopt the ABRSC FY 14 Transportation Plan as proposed.

ABTSC VOTE

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded, and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to adopt the ABRSC FY 14 Transportation Plan as proposed.

ii. FY14 Budget: Table 6 Revision

ABRSC VOTE

Dennis Bruce moved, Michael Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: *(see next page)*

that the total appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014 be set at \$41,571,901 and that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Agreement and amendments thereto as follows: Acton \$26,459,873, Boxborough \$5,822,527, remainder to be accounted for by the Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$6,638,181, Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$85,208, Transportation Aid, Chapter 71, Section 16C in the amount of \$746,205, a transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$729,678, regular transportation reimbursement from the Acton Public Schools and Boxborough Public Schools in the amount of \$1,089,571, and a transfer from the Junior High School Project Premium on Loan in the amount of \$658.

ABTSC VOTE

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

VOTED:

that the total appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014 be set at \$41,571,901 and that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Agreement and amendments thereto as follows: Acton \$26,459,873, Boxborough \$5,822,527, remainder to be accounted for by the Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$6,638,181, Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$85,208, Transportation Aid, Chapter 71, Section 16C in the amount of \$746,205, a transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$729,678, regular transportation reimbursement from the Acton Public Schools and Boxborough Public Schools in the amount of \$1,089,571, and a transfer from the Junior High School Project Premium on Loan in the amount of \$658.

6. **Final DESE Approval Letter from Mitchell Chester**
7. **PreK-12 Regional Agreement, Page 8, Section 12, "Transition Period"**

5. Update on ABRSD Track Renovation Proposal

1. Presentation slides - *Steve Mills, JD Head*
2. Recommendation to approve Track Renovation Project - **ABRSC VOTE**

JD Head believes that the Project can be managed for \$600,000 or less. This decision has been one of the most difficult decisions Dr. Mills has had to make in his tenure at AB. He takes responsibility because the Administration does not spend money outside of the budget. He brought the issue to the last ALG meeting which was appreciated. They were favorable in large part because 75 cents on the dollar is being donated for a renovation that is needed. Dr. Mills is very reluctant to negatively affect E&D right now given the financial situation, but he is recommending this proposal with his “eyes wide open”. He then read from memo 5.2:

“Given all of the above, I recommend to the School Committee that if this group of private citizens follows through on their commitment to raise \$450,000 or more and JD Head is successful in going out to bid and getting one for less than \$600,000, I recommend that the School Committee commit up to and not to exceed \$150,000 from the FY14 ABRSD budget to complete this project.”

Publicly Dr. Mills has said that his goal is to get the Lower Fields paid for and then address the track. As unorthodox and risky as it is to the overall budget, he is asking that this project move forward and the Committee support it. He corrected a previous statement saying that JD Head’s Budget Saturday slide (1/26/13) was not prioritized. It was also noted that when Leary Field was done, the track was cut out of the project due to costs. In 2005, the track surface was redone to get by until a more complete project could be done. Having the public come forward with such enthusiasm and financial support makes this public/private partnership project possible. Dr. Mills stated that this project needs to be done, the only question is when.

It was a sense of the Committee that the concerns from their last meeting were mainly around cost, but those seem to be answered.

ABRSC VOTE

Paul Murphy moved and Mike Coppolino seconded a motion,

MOTION: that the ABRSD commit up to and not to exceed \$150,000 from the FY14 ABRSD budget for repair of the track.

In Brigid’s absence Maria stated that Brigid is in support of the proposal and she thanked everyone involved. In Kim’s absence, Dennis read a statement that this is an investment and Kim is in support if the Administration can do it without changing the budget. Dennis stated that although this is out of the norm, it does not bother him because it is a safety issue. He expressed some concern that in the last 3 years, the Committee has been asked twice to fund items outside of the budget, including the Lower Fields Project for \$200,000 and now the track. Although by all accounts the Lower Fields have been very successful, he is concerned about the process. Mary Brolin agreed stating that these kinds of situations put everyone under pressure. If items like this came up around budget time, they could be planned for. It was suggested that perhaps JD Head could set up a capital line item to be used in these circumstances. Mike Coppolino disagreed somewhat stating that this is a great opportunity and a sign of a healthy organization with the flexibility to take advantage of such an offer. All agreed that the generosity of the public is very much appreciated. Deanne O’Sullivan said that during Budget Saturday it was not clear that the track was a dire safety issue. She urged that these kinds of capital projects be brought forward to the School Committees. JD stated that he would have fixed these issues this summer, but not in this manner due to cost.

Maria Neyland feels there may be a need for a capital plan. Boxborough has had one for a few years and their Finance Committee does not approve anything that is not on the Capital Plan. Kristina Rychlik expressed gratitude to the large number of students, parents and staff in the audience for their efforts and enthusiasm. They still need to raise \$100,000 and she urged people to get involved.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee VOTED unanimously in favor of the motion.

6. Confirmation of 2013-2014 Subcommittee Members

The revised list of FY' 14 School Committee Subcommittee members was accepted. Kristina Rychlik reported that the Outreach Subcommittee has agreed on their background and objective and will ask Dr. Mills and others for feedback.

7. Policy Subcommittee Update

1. Wellness Policy Revision, File: ADF – SECOND READING

ABRSC VOTE:

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

VOTED: to approve the revision to the Wellness Policy as proposed

ABTSC VOTE:

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

VOTED: to approve the revision to the Wellness Policy as proposed

APSC VOTE:

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

VOTED: to approve the revision to the Wellness Policy as proposed

2. Policies for FY14 Review

The Committees were asked if there were other policies that should be reviewed. Mary Brolin was on the Boxborough class size policy subcommittee and has a lot of good reference material. Dennis referred to the class size guidelines found in the teacher contracts but Marie Altieri said the immediate issue is to merge the APS/ABRSD policies with those in Boxborough. The transitional policy subcommittee will do this full review, refer their proposals to the policy subcommittee, who will then propose revisions to the Transitional School Committee.

8. Annual Leadership Institute with Dr. Yong Zhao

Dr. Mills thanked Deborah Bookis and everyone involved with this "extraordinarily successful" event for our leadership staff and community. Dr. Zhao's presentation is posted on <http://ab.mec.edu/> under "News & Events" and is being broadcast by Acton TV www.actontv.org

9. Safety and Security Task Force Update

Dr. Mills reported that the Task Force will reconvene soon. \$90,000 has been spent in the Acton elementary schools and \$60,000 in the Regional schools on monitoring. All front doorways will be video monitored during school hours. Because the school footprints are all different, each school must consider their needs and make decisions accordingly. Everything should be fully functional by late September. Mike Coppolino asked the Safety Task Force to seriously reconsider locking all front doors as a result of another tragedy this week. This was discussed at length early in the Task Force discussions but when JD Head presented the security equipment that could lock a front door instantly, people were convinced not to lock them all. Locking the door at ABRHS would change the High School culture. Dr. Mills offered to bring the issue back to the Task Force's quarterly meeting, and then report back to School Committee. Deanne O'Sullivan asked for confirmation that some of the small things that the Safety Committee really wanted to change are done, perhaps using a checklist. Dr. Mills said that this could be a

subcommittee of the School Councils that could convene quarterly. The Task Force would still be needed to consolidate the schools' efforts. JD Head emphasized that the schools have a legal obligation to let people know that there is surveillance in operation now.

10. School Committee Member Reports

1. **Acton Leadership Group (ALG)**

i. *Meeting on 8/14/13 and minutes from 6/27/13*

Dennis Bruce reported that ALG members are starting to realize the complicated changes that will result from regionalization.

2. **Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Task Force**

i. Segal Report on ABRSD and Town of Acton as of 12/31/12

Dennis Bruce reported good news that OPEB is significantly smaller than previously estimated. In 2010, the estimated liability was \$100 million compared to an estimate of \$54 million now. This is due to a myriad of things, including the Committees' efforts. The Task Force will start to meet again in a month or two.

3. **OPEB Trust Fund Board of Advisors meeting**

Maria Neyland attended and will report at the October School Committee meeting.

4. **Acton Board of Selectmen**

Dennis Bruce reported that on a proposal to bring all Acton voting to one location, the Town Clerk thinks the only option is the High School. The Intermunicipal Agreement resulting from regionalization needs to be completed. An additional School Committee member will be elected next spring, but Acton's election is before Annual Town Meeting. Attorneys are being consulted for how to handle this.

5. **Boxborough Finance Committee**

Maria Neyland attended to share news about the ABRSD track project.

11. Staffing Update

Marie Altieri updated the Committee. The last several years have been budgeted at M4 level for new professional staff hired. It was lowered to M3 this year and currently it has come in half way between M3 and M4. Everyone is excited about the new staff. Maria Neyland asked if the Committee wants the Form 4 information on each new hire next year because it is time consuming and the summary may be enough. Several members commented on the value of the Form 4s, as well as seeing the number of applicants for a position. The Committee will consider this question in January prior to next year's hiring.

12. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

On Monday, all staff are invited for breakfast followed by the Superintendent's Annual Welcome. School Committee members were encouraged to attend. 5500 students will begin the next day.

Dr. Mills and Attorney Geoffrey Bok will appear as defendants in MA Supreme Judicial Court on September 4, 2013 in an appeal of the Pledge of Allegiance case.

The three School Committees adjourned at 9:51 p.m.

NEXT MEETINGS:

- Tuesday, September 10, 7:30 p.m. Joint ABRSC/ABTSC Meeting, Junior High Library
- September 19, 7:00 p.m. Acton Public School Committee meeting, Junior High Library

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of documents used: see agenda