

**JOINT ACTON PUBLIC (APSC) and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL (ABRSC)
and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH TRANSITIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABTSC)
MEETING Minutes (approved 12/12/13)**

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 3, 2013
7:30 p.m. Joint APSC/ABRSC/ABTSC Meeting
7:45 p.m. ABTSC Meeting

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino (7:35),
Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan,
Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: none
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills,
Beth Petr

The Acton Public, Acton-Boxborough Regional and Acton-Boxborough Transitional School Committees were called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairpersons Dennis Bruce and Maria Neyland.

1. Chairmen’s Introduction

The Committees welcomed the FY14 Acton-Boxborough High School Representatives: Caroline (Coco) DeFrancesco, Jennie He, Josh Reinstrom and Raymond Yu.

2. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes

APS Warrant #201407 dated 10/1/13 in the amount of \$439,659.41 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.
AB Warrant #14-006 dated 9/19/13 in the amount of \$1,871,904.07 and warrant #14-007 dated 10/3/13 in the amount of \$1,663,008.75 were signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

The ABRSC, ABRSC and APSC approved the minutes of the 9/10/13 meeting. The ABTSC and APSC approved the minutes of the 9/19/13 meeting.

3. Public Participation - none

4. ABRSD Track Renovation Update

JD Head gave an update on the Dow Track Project timeline and the anticipated impact on other users. The project is set to begin on November 18 and conclude on June 30, minimizing the impact to regular spring activities. JD stated that under no circumstances will there be any disruption to ABRHS Graduation on June 6, 2014.

5. Superintendent’s Security Task Force Update

Dr. Mills reported on the recent meeting of the Security Task Force.

6. Policy Update

1. Mission, Values and Goals (File: AD) revision and deletion of School District Goals and Objectives (File: ADA)– **FIRST READING**
Brigid Bieber reported that these policies were redundant.

7. School Committee Member Reports

1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)
Dennis Bruce distributed the current and several proposed new spreadsheets that ALG is considering using this year.

2. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)
Kim McOsker reported that the HIT's next meeting is Oct 17.
3. Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Task Force
Dennis Bruce will miss the next meeting on Wednesday but Don will attend.
4. Acton Finance Committee
Steve Mills presented at FinCom last week including showing the members how the regionalization savings will be achieved.

The ABRSC and APSC adjourned at 7:47 p.m. and the ABTSC continued.

8. ABRSD Superintendent Search Update

1. Proposed slate for Search Committee – **VOTE**
2. Search Firms and Interview Schedule
3. Proposed Search Timeline, 10-3-13

Maria Neyland stated that most of the packet material is for the next meeting. She reviewed the proposed slate for the Search Committee and thanked all who volunteered.

ABTSC VOTE:

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the slate for the Superintendent Search Committee as proposed.

9. Blanchard School Principal Search Update

Marie Altieri updated the Committee briefly.

10. 2014-2015 School Calendar

1. Parent/Staff Survey Memo and Results
2. Possible Calendars for next year (*to be voted at 11/7/13 meeting*)
3. Letter from Congregation Beth Elohim Religious School Committee, 9-30-13

Steve Mills reviewed the survey results regarding the FY15 School Calendar and Thursday afternoons. He felt it was important to survey again this year because the Blanchard School is now included and their calendar is different. More than 2100 parents/guardians and about 550 staff members completed the survey. Due to the lateness of Labor Day in 2014 and the survey results, Dr. Mills recommends starting after Labor Day next year. Dr. Mills presented two calendars for consideration, one with school on Good Friday and Rosh Hashanah, and one without school on these two religious holidays.

Boxborough has held school on these two holidays for the past 4 years. Maria Neyland asked Dr. Bates to put together some information on this for the next meeting. The Committee discussed the other religious holidays mentioned by people in the survey, including Diwali (77 respondents), Chinese New Year (38 respondents), Eid holidays (15 respondents) and Passover (10 respondents), and a handful of other holidays mentioned by one or two respondents. The Committee reminded the public that they are required to vote on the School Calendar every year and that is why the discussion keeps coming up. The reason why the Tuesday in November is no school for students and professional development for staff is because it is Election Day and the Junior High and Conant are polling places.

The many members of the public in the audience were invited to comment briefly. Many people said that children do not like to miss school because of the workload, or because it makes them feel different. Most speakers said they value highly that the Acton elementary and the Regional schools do not have school on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (when on a school day). Several, including Rabbi Lewis Mintz, described how the primary way of observing the Jewish High Holidays is to be at the temple during the day. The only way to observe these days is to go to the services. This is compared to some other religious holidays that are more easily celebrated with a meal, or as a festival, or at a non-school time service.

The importance of all staff knowing, understanding and complying with the School Committee policy regarding observing religious holidays was emphasized. The ABTSC will vote on the FY15 School Calendar next month.

In response to the survey, parents/guardians responded almost 3 to 1 in favor of the current Boxborough practice of having one early release day a month for professional development.

11. 2014-2015 Regional School Transportation Report

JD Head presented a proposed plan for getting to one tier busing and having all 6 elementary schools on one schedule. While there are many pros, as well as cons, there are many variables that will not be known until more time goes by. He welcomes feedback and input from people. He noted that 83 passenger busses work well for small children, but they are not as comfortable when full with older students. The current use of bus passes is another issue that complicates a one tier system. A motivating factor for considering this change is the increased reimbursement from the state due full Regionalization next year.

In addition to the cost of additional buses and staff, the Committee briefly discussed switching the two schedules of the Elementary and Regional Schools (early and late). This has been considered in the past and some other communities have done it successfully. It was decided that this would be a topic for the Summer Workshop, but not something to consider for next year.

Everyone agreed that having the elementary schools switch from early to late schedule every year is very inconvenient. JD said that the carbon footprint would be greatly improved with a one tier system, but a big disadvantage is that the bus drivers would be working less hours and this is concerning everyone. JD asked for direction from the Committee as all of this affects the budget for next year. The School Committee asked JD to continue working on this possibility and return to a future meeting with more details and a recommendation.

Several members of the public spoke about a one tier system for the elementary students. A parent thought more families would drop off and pick up their children, possibly creating unsafe situations due to the layout of most of the school entrances. Another stated that, "Bus passes give Acton a connectivity that is essential." A parent added that bus passes make up for not having neighborhood schools. Safety issues about having very full busses and many children walking to school is a concern. The public may email the School Committee at abrsc@abschools.org if they have comments to share.

12. PreK – 12 Regionalization

1. Transitional Administrative Team Weekly Meetings Update
 - i. Letter from Boxborough Teachers, 9/13/13
 - ii. DRAFT Response, 9/27/13

Dr. Mills, Marie Altieri, AEA President Marc Lewis and Dr. Bates are meeting with the Blanchard staff tomorrow to begin to address the understandable concerns and answer questions for the staff. He asked the School Committee to review the draft response letter in the packet.

- iii. Regionalization Savings

See memo in packet. Dr. Mills is working with counsel to draft the intermunicipal agreement, with help from Don Aicardi and Tess Summers. John Fallon said that the Boxborough Committee would be ready to meet with Dr. Mills about their Agreement by November. John said that they do not need to be voted on at Town Meeting, only by the School Committees and Boards of Selectmen.

Because of the timing of the Superintendent Search, Maria Neyland asked that Budget Saturday be moved from January 25th to Saturday, February 1, 2014. This would allow January 25th to be a full day of the final Superintendent interviews. The School Committee agreed.

Maria thanked Amy Bisiewicz and her staff for their excellent efforts to help Blanchard get connected to abschools.

2. Transitional Policy Subcommittee Update

Maria Neyland reported that the subcommittee continues to make progress on combining the policies.

13. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

JD Head gave a brief update on the Hayward Road construction. The Town of Acton is installing new water pipes. It is unfortunate that the timing is the same as the start of school.

The Committee adjourned at 9:52 p.m.

NEXT MEETINGS:

- October 9, 7:00 p.m. ABTSC Meeting - Search Firm Interviews, Junior High Library
- October 10, 7:30 p.m. Boxborough School Committee meeting, Blanchard Library
- October 17, 7:00 p.m. Acton Public School Committee meeting, Junior High Library
- November 7, 7:00 p.m. Joint ABRSC/ABTSC/APSC Meeting, Junior High Library

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda