

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING  
Minutes (approved 9/3/15)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

June 25, 2015  
6:30 p.m. Executive Session  
7:00 p.m. Open Business Meeting

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*Members Present:* Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber (6:35 p.m.), Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan (left at 10:55 p.m.), Kristina Rychlik

*Members Absent:* none

*Others:* Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr, many members of the public

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Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik called the ABRSC to order at 6:30 p.m.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 6:31 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

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

(YES – Baum, Brolin, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, O'Sullivan, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board.

At 6:32 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

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

(YES – Baum, Brolin, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, O'Sullivan, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Board and that the Committee would return to Open Meeting at approximately 7:00 p.m.

At 7:25 p.m. the ABRSC returned to Open Meeting.

**OPEN BUSINESS MEETING**

**1. Chairwoman's Introduction**

Kristina Rychlik welcomed Pam Nourse, Minuteman Technical High School Representative from Acton. There are many important issues coming up this year and Pam looks forward to being part of the process.

**2. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**

Warrant #15-026 dated 6/25/15 in the amount of \$7,189,297.42 and #15-026A dated 6/25/15 in the amount of \$157,713.06 were signed by the Committee members. The minutes of 6/11/15 were approved as amended, minutes of 5/21/15 were approved as written and minutes of 4/30/15 will be reviewed at the next meeting.

**3. Public Participation - none**

#### 4. School Improvement Plans Presentation

1. Acton-Boxborough Regional High School – *JoAnn Campbell*
2. Blanchard School – *Dana Labb*
3. Conant School – *Damian Sugrue and Abigail Dressler*

The Principals presented their plans and answered questions from the Committee. Dr. Brand thanked them and their school councils for all of their efforts.

#### 5. Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SpedPAC) Presentation

Co-Chair Amanda Bailey reported that she and Bill Guthlein have been reelected as the FY16 SpEd PAC co-chairs. She described the progress made on their goals and accomplishments this year, focusing on “celebrating the positives”, per the team plan from the Federation for Children with Special Needs APPLE Institute. See attached summary. Amanda was thanked for a terrific report and for all of her and the SpEd PAC’s efforts this year.

#### 6. Elementary Bus Passes – *Glenn Brand, JD Head*

1. Memo from the Superintendent to ABRSD Families
2. Proposed Revised policy, File: EEAAA Second Reading –**POSSIBLE VOTE**
3. Current Policy, File: EEAAA and revised procedures with Sample Bus Pass
4. Summary of public comments – *Kristina Rychlik (oral)*

Dr. Brand explained the Elementary bus pass system and why changes need to be made. See slides. An increasing number of families are requesting bus passes leading to an increasing number of requests for new bus stops to be created. This is resulting in a growing concern about liability and student safety. Consequently, there are a number of procedural changes that will be effective next year, regardless of what happens with the policy that is being discussed and possibly revised.

Maria Neyland read a statement from the Policy Subcommittee found in the memo dated 6/24/15. Maria thanked the policy subcommittee members who have worked very hard on this difficult compromise. She noted that there is consensus that 1<sup>st</sup> grade is too young to be bus passing and this change is supported by the principals. This change is captured in the proposed policy revision.

Kristina Rychlik shared a summary of community correspondence. Most people who spoke up were opposed to any change to the policy, but supported making it safer for the children. A number of people offered to help with the solution as well.

#### SCHOOL COMMITTEE COMMENTS:

Brigid Bieber fully appreciates the comments from all of the families who have two working parents trying to raise a family. When she heard about passing, she couldn’t believe that the district offered it for free and felt we should only be bussing between school and home. The policy subcommittee understands the pressure any change would put on families. She feels that the school has enough of a burden educating children and getting them from home to school and back. The proposal is a reasonable compromise. She prefers that the solution be a private one and not fall on the district. She suggested that there may be an entrepreneur who could create a solution for families that need the service.

Deanne O’Sullivan stated that all of the School Committee members have or had children in the community and understand how these decisions impact families. She firmly believes that removing the permanent bus passes will cause havoc for families and some businesses but she also firmly believes that the school district cannot handle this burden with the current resources. Bus routes are carefully developed and it takes a great deal of time and effort to create them, particularly given the school choice option that we enjoy.

Mary Brolin has thought about this issue a lot since the last meeting and was opposed to the policy subcommittee's proposal at that time. Since then she understands the concerns about liability and that an accident could drain significant resources, in addition to being a tragedy. She noted that the District budget is not even level funded for next year. She agrees that the school is not in the transportation business. She appreciates the compromise of putting the policy change off a year.

Mike Coppelino expressed shock that we have changed bus routes for some of these requests in the past and stated that it should now be off the table. He agrees with the proposed procedural changes. He thinks there is room to make this system a lot tighter, despite costs involved. Businesses may be able to help the schools with the solution. By default, right or wrong, he stated that the system has been run this way. He wants to see metrics about the increase and advocated for holding off on accepting this new policy. He stated that the Superintendent said that the district's liability ends when the child steps off the bus. JD Head pointed out that this in the context of everyone doing the right thing. The problem is when someone makes a mistake, children forget things, adults make mistakes, and then the district could be liable. Kristina Rychlik commented that delaying a change to this policy implies that the district wants to be in the business of transporting children to destinations other than their homes.

Maya Minkin is sympathetic to the challenges a change poses for families. She feels the 14 months is a decent compromise to be able to think more about changing the policy. She has tried to come up with creative ways of getting children from one activity to the next, like walking or biking. She is sympathetic to businesses and families and feels this is a good compromise.

Kristina Rychlik stated that she will not apologize for being concerned about student safety. She agrees that time must be given for families and businesses to figure out how to deal with the change. The 14 months in the proposed is sufficient for her.

Maria Neyland truly believes that this is a liability issue that the district cannot afford to ignore. She stated that, "It's a great district not because of bus passing, but because of the teachers, students and community support." Both towns have serious concerns about financial resources going forward. Every dollar spent on this transportation issue takes away from educational needs. She could not deal with it if a child got hurt on her watch.

Diane Baum expressed having trouble supporting the proposed changes. She would also be devastated if a child got hurt, but she would also be upset if a child went home to an empty house, or couldn't do enrichment, or left a class riding on a bike and got hurt. She knows other districts don't do this, but this is a service that adds to our uniqueness.

Many members of the public wanted to share their thoughts. The Chairperson was strict about the 2 minute minimum, given the time and number of speakers. Most described relying on bus passing to get their children to after school activities because they are not home to drive them. One parent said that she could not believe that parents would support anything that takes money away from education and adds liability. Some parents expressed concern that the public did not know this discussion was taking place. A Boxborough parent pointed out that Blanchard students never had bus passing, and this is a service the families should pay for. Someone stated that this valuable service is one reason real estate costs stay high here. Another person suggested that the question be voted on at Town Meeting. Another asked that a survey be done.

Mike Coppelino stated that money and safety are two raw nerves for everyone. He advocated for more practical information on what bus passing is actually costing the district. He is confident that the release of liability would limit or absolve the district if done properly.

**Michael Coppolino moved, “to accept the recommended procedures, assess the effectiveness of these procedures and then consider revising the policy next April.”**

Maria Neyland called for a point of order stating that the School Committee does not vote on procedures. The motion was withdrawn.

**Michael Coppolino moved, “to delay voting on the recommended policy until April when the Committee would have more data to review.”**

Diane Baum seconded the motion and the Committee discussed it.

Paul Murphy feels more information needs to be analyzed. This has been one of the hardest votes the he has had to consider, and he would like to delay the effective date. Paul offered to work with those who have offered to help with a solution.

Amy Krishnamurthy stressed that as a public school system with responsibilities to 5,800 children, she is not in favor of putting this decision off. Kristina Rychlik and Brigid Bieber agreed

**ABRSC VOTE**

The Committee **VOTED** on the motion. (YES: Baum, Coppolino, Murphy NO: Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Neville, Neyland, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)

**The motion failed.**

**ABRSC VOTE**

Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was,

**VOTED:** to approve the elementary bus passing policy EEAAA dated 6-25-15 found in the School Committee packet to be effective for the 2016-2017 school year. (YES: Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, O’Sullivan, Rychlik NO: Baum, Copplino)

**The motion passed.**

Mike can’t remember when a policy has been voted on to be in effect in 14 months, and he was disappointed in the SC that they voted like this. It takes all the creative solutions.

*The Committee took a 5 minute recess.*

**7. Annual Superintendent’s Summative Evaluation– VOTE - Kristina Rychlik**

1. Memo from the Chairwoman
2. Summative Evaluation Report
3. Presentation slides

Kristina Rychlik reviewed the Superintendent’s evaluation.

Mary Brolin moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to accept the Annual Superintendent’s Summative Evaluation as presented.

4. FY16 Superintendent’s Salary as outlined in contract dated 7/1/14 – **VOTE**

Mary Brolin moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the FY16 Superintendent’s salary as outlined in the contract, in the amount of \$185,400.

**8. ABRSD FY15/16 Budget Updates– Clare Jeannotte**

1. FY15 End of Year Update
  - i. Financial Update  
Clare Jeannotte updated the Committee on the status as of 6/23/15 and said that the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter report will still take some time to finalize. Because not all departments spent all of the FY15 allocation, the Administration has supported some additional targeted spending, including technology. Prespending on anything for next year has not been done. *(Deanne O’Sullivan left at 10:55 p.m.)*
  - ii. Clare reviewed a Revision to FY15 Audit Engagement, including an increased fee for Auditing service which she feels is reasonable.
  - iii. Several Special Revenue Fund Accounts will be closed out to E&D. This is a result of regionalization reorganization.
2. FY16 Budget Update
3. OPEB Update  
The biannual report is coming from Segal soon. To determine the account rate, they need to know how much the district plans to fund OPEB in the future. Clare reviewed the ALG plans and OPEB working group and the administration comments for this information. See memo. Clare asked the School Committee to support her reporting that \$900,000 will be funded for OPEB in FY17 and beyond (see last line on memo). Maria Neyland said it is too late for her to consider agreeing to this. Clare offered to ask for a few weeks for internal discussion on this, but it would delay the report. Marie Altieri said that School Committee could agree to Clare’s suggestion, so the report will be provided, then the Committee can decide how much to fund if they want to change it. Mary Brolin wants to be more conservative. Kristina Rychlik said there was consensus to go ahead with the number suggested. Kristina Rychlik will find out if the OPEB Working Group is still in exists.

**9. Leadership Update – Glenn Brand**

1. The Interim Director of Pupil Services, Marilyn “Bonnie” Bisbicos will begin on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**10. Recommendation to Authorize the Superintendent to enter into contract negotiations with Dore & Whittier for the purpose of retaining them to perform the ABRSD Existing Conditions Study – VOTE – JD Head – taken out of order**

JD Head reported that all proposals received were excellent. The Administration will have the option of negotiating with Dore & Whittier for Round 2, if we are happy with what they do in Round 1.

Mike Coppolino moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to authorize the Superintendent to enter into contract negotiations with Dore & Whittier for the purpose of retaining them to perform the ABRSD Existing Conditions Study.

**11. Subcommittee Updates**

1. **Policy Update –**
  - i. **Naming School Facilities**, File: FF – Second Reading – **VOTE** -*Brigid Bieber*  
The only comment received was about deleting the waiting policy. Paul Murphy asked if it could be a shorter period. Brigid Bieber explained that it could be beneficial to wait. Maria Neyland moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,  
**VOTED:** to approve the revision to policy FF as proposed.
  - ii. **Consent Agenda** from 6/11/15 meeting: **Remote Participation**, File: BEDJA, **Executive Sessions**, File: BEC, **Voting Method**, File: BEDF – **Second Reading**  
Maria Neyland moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,  
**VOTED:** to approve the revisions to these policies as proposed.

## **12. Superintendent's Wellness Committee End of Year Report**

This state mandated Committee reports to the Superintendent and met 4 times this year.

## **13. Recommendation to Accept Additional Donation to the ABRHS – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

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

**VOTED:** to accept the donation to the ABRHS Science team as proposed.

## **14. School Committee Member Reports**

1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) - Kristina Rychlik
2. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– Mary Brolin reported that HIT met this morning. Bob Evans will continue as chair.
3. Acton Board of Selectmen - Paul Murphy reported that there was no quorum last Monday.

## **15. Superintendent's Report – Glenn Brand**

1. PARCC Forums – Dr. Grand reported on the Forum held on June 22.
2. *Conditions and Considerations for a New Generation of Student Assessment in MA*, MA Association of School Superintendents (M.A.S.S.), Position Paper and Executive Summary

## **16. FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

1. RJGJHS Memo re Athletic Teams – This information was noted by Dr. Brand.
2. FY15 Financial Status Reports as of 5/31/15
3. FY14 Final Auditors' Report – APS End of Year Report
4. Senators' Letter to Ways & Means Chair re FY16 Regional Transportation Budget
5. ABRSD Food Services: High School Cafeteria is open for breakfast/lunch from 9 – 11:30 until August 7th (students who receive free/reduced lunch are eligible for this same discount through the summer hours)
6. "School's Open" Flyer and "Open House Nights" for Fall 2015
7. FY16 ABRSC Meeting Calendar
8. Request to Waive Acton Board of Selectmen Fees for ABRSD Food Services
9. Superintendent's Letter to Families re Release of final draft of new Science, Technology and Engineering Frameworks, 6/22/15

Dr. Brand concluded the meeting by thanking Mary Emmons for her dedicated efforts all year in support of the Department of Pupil Services.

The ABRSC was adjourned at 11:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, Special Education Parent Advisor Committee (SpEd PAC) Report from Amanda Bailey 6/25/15

## **NEXT MEETINGS:**

- ABRSC Workshop, July 22 (Wednesday) at 6:00 p.m. in the JH library
- ABRSC Regular Business Meeting, August 10 (Monday) at 7:00 p.m. in the JH Library