

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 2/26/15)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 16, 2014
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Dennis Bruce
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Kristina Rychlik.

1. **Chairman's Introduction**

Senior Class of 2015 Leaders Varan Culanathan, Nina Euele and Albert Kong were introduced by the Superintendent. Albert spoke about how the class officers work to build school spirit and raise funds for activities. Mr. Brand noted that having student leaders share their efforts with the Committee, does not replace the School Committee student representatives from the High School.

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

Minutes of Committee Meetings on 9/4/14, 9/18/14 and 10/9/14 will be done at the next meeting. APS warrant #201507 dated 9/30/14 in the amount of \$4,269.56 was signed by the Committee members. ABRSD warrant #15-007 dated 10/2/14 in the amount of \$4,081,642.08 and #15-008 dated 10/16/14 in the amount of \$3,718,082.88 were signed by the Committee members.

3. **Public Participation - none**

4. **Discussion of Naming of Elm Street Basketball Courts – VOTE**

Maria Neyland described the process used by the screening committee per the "Naming School Facilities" policy and procedures, File: FF. Two nominations were received but only one satisfied the criteria. Mr. Paul Cartwright's name was the only one being put forth for School Committee consideration.

Mike Coppolino moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the nomination of Mr. Paul Cartwright to name the Elm Street Basketball Courts after.

Former AB student Connor Brandon's name was the other nomination, but the policy makes it difficult for a young adult to satisfy all of the requirements for naming. JD Head and Glenn Brand will decide how to move forward with the specifics of this naming. Maria noted that at the August School Committee meeting, Mr. Levine and his friends offered to help financially with this naming. Kristina thanked all involved in the process as well as the volunteers.

5. **Educational Technology Update**

Director of Educational Technology (EdTech) Amy Bisiewicz presented on her Long Range Strategic Plan Outcomes and 2015-2016 Projected Outcomes. At the conclusion, Michael Coppolino stated that he was "blown away" by the excellent presentation. He appreciated her attitude of asking "Who is going to use these devices"? Committee members are excited about all of the possibilities of technology in education. Amy stressed that both iPads and chromebooks as well as paper and pen are

important because they give the flexibility that is needed to address different students' styles. Learning styles and teachers' preferences must be taken into account. Flexibility is key. Mary Brolin was enthusiastic about how students are using google docs to share information and collaborate. "This is an unprecedented time for amazing learning."

Katie Neville asked if it is possible to plan 5 years out for all of this technology. Amy stated that it is tricky but you have to be financially responsible and plan. This requires a lot of conversation with parents, staff, teachers and others. Deborah Bookis stated that the curriculum office staff spend a lot of time discussing the use of technology and it has really changed the delivery of the educational material. The Innovative Learning Program was described. Amy stated that there are a lot of expectations of teachers over the year to use these devices. She described it as a commitment to using the technology with the students based on the learning goals and what success is expected.

6. Special Education Parent Council (SpEd PAC) Presentation

Amanda Bailey and Bill Guthlein presented the SpEd PAC's Population Trends Report dated 9/22/14. They spoke about the group's goals for the year which included: surveying parents/guardians, forming a parent support group, updating their handbook, performing 2014 MCAS analysis, and sharing the Special Education Population Trends Report.

The number of students with disabilities is increasing as overall students enrollment is decreasing. The disabilities also involve more significant learning needs, requiring more resources, than in the past. The autism spectrum group has grown significantly. Two new growing groups are the low income students and the English Language Learner (ELL) groups. Students in these high needs groups cost significantly more to educate than typical students, which will increase per pupil expenditures.

The Committee thanked Amanda and Bill for such a comprehensive report.

7. Follow-Up and Proposal Regarding School Start Times

Glenn Brand has asked some administrators to start serious consideration of this issue. While the Administration is in support philosophically of considering this change, it must be done in a thoughtful and thorough manner. A number of communities are currently discussing this topic.

Deanne O'Sullivan emphasized the increase in mental health issues, concussions, in home hospital care and more that were presented at Budget Saturday. She feels that data shows that having a later start time might significantly decrease some of these issues. Acknowledging a significant impact to transportation, she asked if it could be considered along with one tier busing.

Maria Neyland asked what the specific benefits would be and what the Committee would be trying to accomplish. She noted the large population of our students that have lots of after school activities that would be affected by a change in start time. She likes the timeline outlined in the memo. Changing the time won't change the stress and expectations we have of our students. Lots of buy in would be essential if this is done, including from students. Mary Brolin stated that an hour change would not solve the mental health problems. She asked if the question should be broadened to include the homework policy and similar topics. Time is needed to engage the community. It was a sense of the Committee that this is a topic worth considering, but it will take a long time because there are so many aspects to consider. Kristina Rychlik asked, "What really is our problem, and what is the best solution to it?" She suggested that it could be considered in phases.

A few emails were received from the public in support of this idea. Several people spoke from the audience. One mother asked, "Can we talk about the pressure and how children learn and what they

need?” She appreciated that the discussion was turning to the pressure on the kids. Blanchard parent, Kirsty Kerrin offered her expertise as a presenter to several Fortune 500 companies advising them on the importance of sleep and how it impacts all areas – health, budget, special education needs.

Glenn Brand concluded that his exploratory group would only be administration/staff at this time, then inside and outside groups later in the process. The School Committee tried to decide what to name the working committee but struggled because the problem/goals were not clear. Glenn will take this idea back to the staff and then decide on some next steps.

8. **Finance Department Update** – *Clare Jeannotte*

8.1. Recommendation to Accept Additional Grant Funds from the Town of Acton - **VOTE** – *Clare Jeannotte*

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

VOTED: that pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, Sec. 53A in accordance with the Intermunicipal Agreement signed 3/17/14, to accept the following grants and gift funds from the Town of Acton as outlined in item 9.1 in the 10/16/14 packet totaling \$8,499.25, to be held as separate accounts and spent by the District for the same purposes as the prior Town of Acton fund, grant or gift.

8.2. Recommendation to Accept Gifts from the Acton Elementary Parent Teacher Organizations – **VOTE** – *Clare Jeannotte*

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

VOTED: to accept the gifts from the five Acton Elementary Schools as presented.

Mike Coppolino noted a clear discrepancy between the amounts of the schools and that Blanchard was not included. He stressed that parents are paying for public school staff, and in his opinion, this needs to be considered and resolved, as he has consistently stated for many years.

8.3. Fiscal Year (FY)14 and FY15 Status Update (*oral*)

Clare Jeannotte reported that FY14 is now closed. The auditor is finishing field work on it. She expects to present in December to the Committee. Financial reporting will happen at the next meeting.

8.4. FY16 Budget Process

Glenn Brand reviewed the assumptions and timeline in the packet. He highlighted the Key Decisions. He explained the idea of a Capital Planning Committee that JD and Amy are involved in, stating the need to think more holistically about the District’s capital needs.

8.5. Five-Year Financial Forecast – *Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte*

Clare Jeannotte presented a five year forecast anticipating cost increases from Fy16 – Fy20. She called it “an early outlook... to begin conversation”, and that it contains significant unavoidable uncertainties. She noted that the forecast does not include program improvements or enhancements to those which currently exist within today’s level of services. She is not sure how the Committee would like to handle OPEB contributions going out in the forecast.

Mary Brolin noted that when early budget discussions begin, it is important that people see the \$966,000 (slide 6) NOT as a budget increase, but the impact of not fully including OPEB and Middlesex Retirement for expansion of the Region. This is 1.27% which would make the FY16 increase 3.47% without it.

Vacancy factor appears to be an issue this year, and that we will not make the \$425,000 number at this time. Clare said that the District may end up with a negative balance in salaries for this year.

Kristina Rychlik asked how realistic it is to plan for no programmatic changes in the next five years. Continuing to do more with less will continue to be an issue. Brigid Bieber noted that the OPEB number needs careful attention. Segel is doing a new report in December but it won't be out in time for the next decision to be made. Clare was thanked for an excellent presentation. This information will be shared at the Acton 3 Board meeting (School Committee, Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee) on Oct 28.

9. **Recommendation to Accept Gift from Littleton Electric Light and Water to Blanchard School – VOTE** – Glenn Brand

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept this gift with gratitude

10. **Enrollment Report**, 10/1/14

This information will be given to the Ashtons for their annual Enrollment Projection Presentation at the meeting on 11/6/14. Marie Altieri reported that the District is down about 100 students K-12 since last year. She highlighted the increase in low income families. Two reasons are an actual growth in the number, as well as increased ability to identify them. Breakfast is now offered at the Junior High and High Schools in response to this shift. Paul Murphy asked if the Ashtons take into account any of the future special education student needs per Bill Guthlein's presentation. Marie will check on this. It was requested that any one school not be identified in the chart on the first page.

11. **FY15 Goal Setting/Evaluation Process** – Glenn Brand, Marie Altieri

11.1. Superintendent Evaluation Process

A midyear review of the Superintendent and his goals (see his Entry Plan) will be done in February. Previous years' goals have been district goals, but this process is different. Goals will now include an individual professional practice goal, a student learning goal and district goals. Kristina looked at the Evaluation Guide and emphasized that there is a lot to consider.

12. **Subcommittee Updates**

12.1. **Outreach** – Kristina Rychlik

Katie Neville is working on a draft School Committee mission statement and review of the School Committee section of the website. Members should send a bio and picture to Kristina for posting.

12.2. **Policy** – Brigid Bieber

The subcommittee has met twice and will be bringing policies to the next meeting.

12.3. **Establishing New School Committee Budget Subcommittee - VOTE**

The Committee discussed establishing a new budget subcommittee.
Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to establish an ABRSC Budget Subcommittee.

The Committee will vote on members of this new subcommittee at the next meeting.
They hope to meet every other week.

13. **School Committee Member Reports**

13.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)

13.1.1. Material for 10/9/14 meeting

Kristina reported that ALG decided to redo their spreadsheet to reflect the fully regionalized ABRSD.

13.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)

Brigid reported BLF talked about the budget process and how regionalization was going.

13.3. Boxborough Board of Selectmen

Brigid reported a request for an ABRSC Representative for the Boxborough Master Plan Committee as an Associate member, not a voting member. Maria Neyland volunteered to do this.

14. **Superintendent's Report** – *Glenn Brand*

Glenn has started visiting all of the schools for 90 minutes each. McCarthy Towne School has been designated a Columbia University Reading and Writing School. He extended kudos to Dianna Woodruff, Director of Visual Arts, who will travel to Finland on a research trip.

15. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

The Superintendent highlighted Deborah Bookis' Professional Learning Release Day Memo describing the first elementary Thursday early release for professional learning.

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda