

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
MINUTES (approved 2/11/16)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 4, 2016
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin (left at 9:00 p.m.), Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’ Sullivan (7:50 p.m.), Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Marilyn Bisbicos, Deborah Bookis, Clare Jeannotte, Glenn Brand, Beth Petr, Lee Dore and Associates from Dore and Whittier

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairwoman, Kristina Rychlik.
2. **Chairman’s Introduction** – Annual Spring Town Elections
3. The Chair informed the Committee that three people have pulled papers from Acton for the two School Committee seats: Kristina Rychlik, Ms. Frances Cook and Ms. Yi Zhang.
4. **Statement of Warrant & Approval of Minutes**
 - 4.1. The minutes of meetings on 1/23/16 and 1/14/16 were approved by the Committee.
 - 4.2. Warrants #16-015PR dated 1/21/16 in the amount of \$2,378,834.83, #16-016 dated 1/28/16 in the amount of \$3,383,990.22 and #16-016PR dated 2/4/16 in the amount of \$1,949,772.81 were signed by the Committee.
5. **Public Participation** - none
6. **ABRSD Capital Study Report** – Glenn Brand, Lee Dore and Associates from Dore & Whittier
 - 6.1. Phase I: Existing Conditions Study Final Report Slides (*Report to be brought to meeting*)
 - 6.1.1. Executive Summary & Introduction and Background
 - 6.2. District Capital Study Phase II Memo
 - 6.3. School Capital and Space Planning Committee Memo (*from 1/14/16 meeting*)
 - 6.4. <http://www.abschools.org/district/school-capital-and-space-planning>

Lee Dore presented the Master Plan, Phase I: Site and Building Assessments Final Presentation. Over the previous months, he and his team evaluated the physical condition of each building and site. They presented their recommendations with prioritization and cost estimates for repair or replacement. A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is prioritized by “immediate needs” (1-2 years), “short term needs” (3-6 years) and “long term needs” (7+ years). A comprehensive Plan was presented totaling \$120,200,650. Phase I took place from July 2015 – December 2015.

Lee then presented a Phase II Study Overview - Educational Visioning and Master Plan Study, that will run from February – November 2016.

Dr. Brand described Phase II’s two new groups, to be overseen by Dore & Whittier. The “Working Group”’s 12 members will meet every two weeks. They will not make specific long term decisions. The “Visioning Team” will consist of 78 members who will meet for three full day sessions on March 18, April 28 and September 15. They are charged with providing feedback/recommendations that will inform the building, renovation, and repair of the school buildings to provide modern learning spaces for decades to come.

The Committee discussed the MA School Building Authority (MSBA) process. Lee explained that applying to get on the MSBA list for reimbursement consideration is not a commitment, although there must be a focus on level. They want to work with school districts to find the best solution to their school building needs so there is some flexibility on the schools' part after applying.

Dollars in the study have not been adjusted for inflation. They are consistent dollars and every year will have to be refigured. All costs are assumed the District went out to bid, although some of the work could probably be done in house, saving some money.

Regarding triggers that would mean a building would have to be entirely brought up to code, when doing work "piecemeal", a 3 – 5 year time period must be considered to see if a trigger is set off.

Looking at slide #20, "Capital Improvement Plan – Overview", Kristina confirmed that anything in the immediate category, that the district includes in the FY17 budget now is not included in this total. Lee confirmed that these are renovation costs, not replacement costs. The estimates include upgrades to lighting and plumbing as the years go on to get better efficiency as technology changes.

Lee stated that the approximate cost for building a new school is \$400 per square foot, however state reimbursement may bring that down by 50%. The state has certain caps for reimbursement so the details must be very carefully reviewed. The current assessed value of the Douglas School is \$6 million so the trigger will be hit quickly. The same is true for Conant and Gates.

Brigid Bieber asked what the down side of getting in line with the MSBA now could be, when the District has just begun the study. Lee said that he does not see a down side. It is open enrollment to submit a Statement of Interest until April 8. He feels that the District has sufficient need to begin that process to be considered for the funding reimbursement. The process takes years. The MSBA will require that a priority project be chosen, not all 4 schools at once. Gary Kushner (Boxborough Finance Committee) asked if the Blanchard roof and windows are included as high priority because they were going to do that work fairly soon. JD said that Dore & Whittier's full report would be posted soon and he will check that.

Dr. Brand stated that this work will help in developing a district wide Master Plan. This Report tells us what needs to be fixed, but it is not a Master Plan. The Master Plan will link together the Phase I Working Group and Phase II Visioning. Mary Brolin stated that it is great that there are student reps on these committees. Jason Cole (Acton Finance Committee) asked if these two groups replace the Capital Committee. They do not. They are in addition.

In response to Mary Brolin's question of whether the School Committee should consider getting on the MSBA list now, Dr. Brand will respond at the Feb 11 School Committee meeting after talking to Lee Dore.

7. **FY17 Final Budget Recommendation** – Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte

See material posted for meeting on 1/23/16: <http://www.abschools.org/school-committee/meetings-agendas-packets-and-minutes>

7.1. Memo re Release of the Governor's Budget and Expenditure Changes – Clare Jeannotte

6.3.2 MASC Legislative Bulletin from Stephen J. Finnegan, 1/28/16

Clare Jeannotte reviewed the Governor's budget stating that Chapter 70 funding only went up 1.6% which is smallest amount in years. She noted how it is to work with a negative inflation factor when costs like health insurance and others are going up. Most categories are level funded, including transportation and circuit breaker. She will keep the budget assumptions as is. Regarding expenditure changes, CASE tuition is increasing 1.8% instead of 3% so that is favorable. A revised Table 6 is in

the packet. Due to more accurate assessments now compared to Budget Saturday (due to timing), she will submit a new vote motion for the February 11 School Committee meeting.

In response to being asked how the HIT rate could be decreased from and 8% increase to a 4%, Mary Brolin stated that now there is data. The 8% assumed by HIT was being conservative in November (with almost no claims yet for the new school year at that time). Now they have the data for the calculations. Last year was an 11% increase. Town of Acton is also changing their rate to 4% and all are comfortable. Mary agrees with Clare's approach. Mary will check with Peter before the meeting on February 11th to confirm that there are no surprises regarding this.

7.2. Questions, Comments, Input from Budget Saturday Presentations (*oral*)

7.2.1. Financial Community Comparables Study Suggestion – *Michael Coppolino*

Dr. Brand has been working on answers to some of the Finance Committees' questions and will distribution them to School Committee as soon as possible.

Following up to his suggestion at Budget Saturday, Mike Coppolino suggested that the District look at three towns that spend more than ABRSD and three towns that spend less. He asked for assistance from the Finance Committees, and others. He does think it would be appropriate to just rely on Regional Financial Task Force. He hopes to have a report in time for the Summer workshop. He feels it should involve more than just looking at the DESE website. Contacting other School Committees could be a good first step.

Paul Murphy asked if an intern could be used. Kristina Rychlik stated that everyone has a lot on their plates right now, so an intern might be a good idea. Maria Neyland asked if the Committee has the "bandwidth" to do this. She doesn't feel non School Committee and School Administrators should be in this group. She wants to see it start with the summer workshop. She suggested that someone could confirm what Administrators and staff are doing now related to this task, discuss that at the workshop, and then decide how/if it should move forward. Brigid Bieber suggested that a High School senior might like to do it in the spring, although someone would have to manage them.

Mike Coppolino offered to spearhead the activity. He will come back to School Committee with the towns that he proposes to use for their approval. He thinks a finance committee member from each town and a community member from each town could do it. He will provide a report with the data to act on or not at a future School Committee meeting.

Clare Jeannotte stressed the importance of having someone who understands the end of year reports be part of this group, or advise this group, to avoid misinterpretations. Mary Brolin agreed strongly, citing OPEB and Health Insurance as two examples of how things can be very different from District to District. Maria Neyland expressed concern that Clare would have to work with the group on this, and she does not have the time right now to do that. Diane Baum thought that the group would review the DESE website for pupil costs, then look at key things that are different in the communities and then look at best practices. She agrees that the summer timeframe is best.

It was the sense of the Committee that Mike Coppolino would put together a proposal for the Committee for them to consider at a future meeting.

7.3. FY17 ABRSD Budget and Assessments voted on 1/23/16
A revision will be brought to School Committee on February 11.

8. **FY16 Second Quarter Report** – *Clare Jeannotte*

Clare Jeannotte reported that the financial status is good at this point in the school year. The usual areas including special education transportation and tuition are being monitored. Legal resources are

also being watched. She thanked the members of the Acton and Boxborough Finance Committees for attending the meeting.

9. **Recommendation to Revise FY17 School Calendar - Possible No School on Tuesday 10/11/16 and Addition of Early Dismissal Days** – First Reading – *Glenn Brand*

The Administration proposed that the Committee consider making Tuesday 10/11/16 a no school day because the FY17 School Calendar (voted 11/19/15) has no school on 10/10/16 (Columbus Day) and 10/12/16 (Yom Kippur). The assumption is that many families will keep their children out of school on 10/11/16 to take advantage of 5 consecutive days off.

The Administration considered making 10/11/16 a professional development day for staff only, but with a very heavy Election Day expected on 11/8/16 that is a definite professional day and having the other two professional days before school starts has worked very well in the past.

Marie Altieri noted that the early release days are also being proposed and the School Committee is asked to approve them as well.

Amy Krishnamurthy agreed with the proposal. Kathleen Neville disapproved of any additional days off especially for the High School's Advanced Placement classes. It is also hard for working parents to take a day off like this for childcare. This is particularly true if it makes the last day of school a Monday, as this would. Maria Neyland agreed with Kathleen, and expressed frustration about taking another day off and adding it to the end of June, given the three no school days the District has due to religious holidays. Maria is against the proposal unless the date is made a professional day. Mary Brolin asked if the Administration had considered taking a day or two off of the February or April vacation. They had not. She stated that having the last day of school on Monday, June 19th would not be an educational day.

Dr. Brand appreciated the feedback. The Presidential Election Day in November could not be considered for a school day with students because the Jr High and Conant are polling places.

Regarding the early dismissal for parent conferences, Kristina Rychlik has received complaints that these are only scheduled during the day. The teachers' contract says conferences can be formally scheduled for an evening if teachers are paid for an additional day. Most schools are fairly flexible about scheduling conferences now.

When asked how the staff feels about the proposal, Marie Altieri offered to survey them, but they have talked with Principals and Cabinet Members about this already.

10. **MCAS 2016 Testing Changes** – *Deborah Bookis*

Deborah Bookis reviewed the changes as outlined in a memo that she received on 1/8/16. The Spring 2016 MCAS tests in grades 3-8 ELA and mathematics will be augmented by a limited number of PARCC items to help make statewide comparisons easier and offer students and staff a change to experience PARCC items.

Kristina Rychlik mentioned an email that was just sent to the Committee from Scott Smyers (see FYI). He asked for the School Committee to respond to Acton parents (who passed a resolution against more testing) and the MA Teachers Association (MTA)'s strong stance promoting opting out/refusing testing and the action at the State House. Kristina stated that the School Committee has clearly expressed sentiment against over testing. She will craft a response for the Committee to consider at their next meeting.

Paul Murphy is concerned that MCAS 2.0 will start to look like the PARCC tests. Brigid Bieber agreed. She reviewed the link in the email and is very concerned about testing overload. She advocated for the Committee to encourage a love for learning and only measure/test what is necessary. She wants to focus on the Budget and Town Meeting right now, although she appreciated the email and the information in the links. Maria Neyland is not sure the Committee can take a stand on the opting out issue. She appreciated the email and agrees that the Committee has already gone over the issue.

11. Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Search Update – Marie Altieri

11.1. Announcement of Finalists

11.2. Schedule/Community Forum on Monday, Feb 8 at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library

Marie Altieri reported that the Committee was pleased with the candidate pool and three finalists. She encouraged the public to attend the community forum to meet them on February 8th.

12. Kindergarten Registration Update – Marie Altieri

Marie Altieri updated the Committee. An online registration process is being used for the first time in March. The General Information Session was held on January 12 and was very successful.

13. Subcommittee Reports

13.1. Budget – *Maria Neyland reported that at their meeting on 1/27/16, they discussed the FY17 proposed budget, Phase II of the Existing Conditions Study and the Audit Services Contract.*

13.2. Policy –

13.2.1. **Minutes**, File: BEDG – Second Reading – **VOTE** - *Brigid Bieber*

Mary Brolin move, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the Minutes policy as presented.

13.2.2. **Physical Restraint of Students**, File: JKAA - *Bonnie Bisbicos*

This will be taken up at the 3/3/16 School Committee meeting.

13.3. School Liaison Updates (*oral*)

Maria Neyland reported that Blanchard is having an auction on May 14.

14. CONSENT AGENDA: Glenn Brand

14.1. Recommendation to Accept Exxon Mobil Educational Alliance Math & Science Grant of \$500 from the West Acton Mobil Mart to the Gates School – **VOTE**

14.2. Recommendation to Accept Alliance Energy LLC Grant of \$500 from the East Acton Mobil to the R.J. Grey Junior High School - **VOTE**

14.3. Recommendation to Accept Gift from Target Field Trips/Scholarship America of \$700 to the Conant School – **VOTE**

14.4. Recommendation to Accept Acton Boxborough Cultural Council Grant of \$500 and the MA Cultural Council STARS Residency Grant of \$2,500 to the Gates School – **VOTE**

14.5. Recommendation to Accept Gift from the Patterson Family Foundation/Scholastic Reading Club of \$3,000 to the Blanchard School - **VOTE**

Kristina Rychlik moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the Consent Agenda as proposed.

15. School Committee Member Reports

15.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Kristina Rychlik*

15.1.1. Minutes of meeting on 1/7/16 (revised 1/25/16)

15.1.2. Materials from meeting on 1/28/16

15.1.2.1. Charge of the Town of Acton Capital Improvement Planning Committee

Kristina reported that the Town asked if the schools would participate and she said they would. They will bring the results of the School District's study from Dore and Whittier.

15.2. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– *Mary Brolin*

- 15.2.1. Independent Auditor's Final Report: Financial Statements & Management's Discussion and Analysis for Years ended 6/30/15 and 6/30/14 (replaces Draft in Binder Tab 20)
- 15.3. Acton Finance Committee – Kristina attended on Jan 26. MMT and the Acton Community Senior Center were on the agenda. The Schools will be presenting next Tuesday night.
- 15.4. Acton Board of Selectmen – Mike Coppolino
- 15.5. Boxborough Finance Committee- Mary Brolin will meet with the FinCom soon.
- 15.6. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – Maria Neyland reported that Boxborough 2030 presented to BOS and Planning Board and their Plan was accepted and is on their website. She thanked Town Planner Adam Duchesneau.
- 15.7. Minuteman Technical Vocational School (MMT) Update – Diane Baum reported that the New Agreement was passed decidedly at the Acton Special Town Meeting February 2.
 - 15.7.1. Boxborough Special Town Meeting – February 24
Informational Meeting: Tues, **Feb 9 at 7 p.m.** in Sargent Library, Boxborough
Questions may come up depending on whether Boxborough votes to withdraw or not, and it might need to be discussed with the School Committee. It is unclear at this time.

16. Superintendent's Report/Updates – Glenn Brand

- 16.1. Interschool Council
The first meeting is on March 1, followed by May 2. Dr. Brand proposes to use this group for two way communication, to seek newsworthy items from each of their schools. He hopes to meet 4 times next year.
- 16.2. Superintendent's Wellness Committee (*oral*)
This group is focused on student wellbeing and health specifically related to sleep. They are also subdivided into committees and will bring recommendations re school start times in the middle of April.
- 16.3. Superintendent's Safety Task Force (*oral*)
This Task Force has representation from all schools and our police. It is large but divided into 3 subcommittees. The alternative lockdown committee, including Officer Keith Campbell and Jr High Assistant Principal, Jim Marcotte recommended to Dr. Brand that the district pursue the ALICE program for the safety of our students and staff. He supports this recommendation without reservation and it will be implemented over the next couple of months. Community Forums will take place as well as training for staff and students. The program will be rolled out in the fall. Mike Coppolino participated in this training a few years ago at his school district and he supports it. This will allow us to align our whole district with one program. Blanchard has used it for a number of years. Maria Neyland is on this subcommittee and encouraged people to attend the forums.

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda