

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
MINUTES (approved 3/17/16)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

March 3, 2016
7:00 p.m.
Followed by Executive Session

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brodin, Michael Coppolino, Maya Minkin, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Amy Krishnamurthy, Paul Murphy
Others: Marie Altieri, Bonnie Bisbicos, Deborah Bookis, Clare Jeannotte, Glenn Brand, Beth Petr

Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. Chairman’s Introduction

2. Statement of Warrant & Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the ABRSC Meetings of 2/11/16 and 11/5/15 were approved as amended. Warrant #16-017PR dated 2/18/16 in the amount of \$2,333,670.47, warrant #16-018 dated 2/25/16 in the amount of \$1,701,753.52 and warrant #16-018PR dated 3/3/16 in the amount of \$1,771,766.17 were signed by the Committee.

3. Public Participation - none

4. Kelley’s Corner Improvement Plan Presentation – Andrew Brockway, Chair, Acton 2020 and Kelley’s Corner Improvement Steering Committee

Mr. Brockway presented the proposed plan, emphasizing that given its proximity to the school campus, the School Committee should stay informed. Acton Town Meeting in April will ask voters to support funding for design work. Two goals are to improve traffic flow, and provide safe and social connections for walkers and bikers. Analysis of the Kmart quadrant site at full allowable residential build-out suggests a one-time increase of 20-70 students. Direct construction costs are estimated at \$9-12 million with funding possible from the state and federal government. Total design costs are \$756,000, with 25% MA DOT funding of \$318,000 anticipated, leaving final design completion of \$438,000. This is what the Town of Acton will be asked to vote on. The School Committee appreciated the presentation.

5. Change to 2016 ABRSD Summer School Course Preview Practice – Deborah Bookis

Deborah Bookis described the increase in the number of students who are taking a course before they take it at the High School (“previewing”). The Administrators reviewed what was happening, including the mathematics classes in particular. In support of ABRSD’s commitment to the emotional well-being of all students and staff, previewing AB Summer School classes will no longer be permitted. Ms. Bookis also said that the math placement test given at the end of 6th grade will no longer be administered. She stressed that these teachers know their students and have a lot of data on each one so they are confident about placing them for future classes without this test at the end of 6th grade. The Administrators reviewed how this change to summer school would affect the program’s revenue and consider it a “negligible” loss. There may be some pushback from parents who want their children to take the summer school classes, but the Administration will stress what is best for kids.

6. **Minuteman Technical High School (MMT) Update** – *Glenn Brand*

Dr. Brand reviewed the results of Boxborough’s Special Town Meeting on 2/24/16, where the Town chose to withdraw from the Minuteman Technical Regional School District. The ABRSD intends to continue the current Minuteman Tech classes offered at the Jr High as they are very popular. The Administration will do whatever is needed to provide our Boxborough students with information about their High School options.

7. **Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Search Decision**

7.1. Recommendation to Appoint Dr. Dawn G. Bentley, Ed.D. as Assistant Superintendent of Student Services – **VOTE** – *Glenn Brand*

Dr. Brand reviewed the process that led up to his recommendation of Dr. Bentley for this position. He thanked Marie Altieri for handling the job search so well. After reviewing comparative data, he feels a salary of \$138,000 is a fair starting point.

Michael Coppolino suggested that for future reference, the years of service that a candidate has been in a position would be another important data point to consider regarding salary levels. Brigid Bieber asked where AB falls in the comparative data. Dr. Brand answered that because the data is from FY14 (the most recent data on the DESE website), and that is prior to AB’s K-12 regionalization, our data is not included. It was suggested that the data be sorted by salary in the table.

Mary Brolin moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the hiring of Dr. Dawn Bentley as Assistant Superintendent for Student Services at a salary of \$138,000 effective July 1, 2016.

7.2. Director of Special Education Update

Mary Emmons has accepted a new position so the District is moving forward with a search to replace her. There is a very thin pool for this type of position.

8. **ABRSD Capital Study Update** – *Glenn Brand*

8.1. Link to posted materials: <http://www.abschools.org/district/school-capital-and-space-planning>

8.2. Memo and 2016 Existing Conditions Study Capital Improvement Plan

8.3. Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Statement of Interest – **First Read**

Brigid Bieber noted that at Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF), they discussed the study briefly and it was unanimous that the BLF members wanted the District to apply and get on the state’s funding list. Mary Brolin is confident that the District should submit the statement of interest now. Kristina Rychlik emphasized that the District needs to communicate clearly and often with our Towns’ Boards and residents to build awareness and understanding of the issues.

8.4. Request for School Committee members for the Visioning Team Workshops

8.5. Invitation for Non-School Community members to Join Visioning Team Workshops

Dr. Brand described the Working Group and Visioning Team again. Brigid Bieber is the Boxborough School Committee member on the Working Group (joining Amy Krishnamurthy and Maya Minkin). Kathleen Neville is the Boxborough member on the Visioning Team along with Maya Minkin. One more Acton Committee member is needed. The first of the three Visioning Team workshops will be on March 18.

9. **Comparative Communities Study Proposal** – *Michael Coppolino*

Kristina Rychlik began by stating that after discussions at several meetings, the Committee needs to decide if Michael’s proposal is something that the Committee agrees to. Maria Neyland noted that the

people who have agreed to work with Mike on this are very capable, and she thinks the group could accomplish quite a bit but she is not convinced it is the right time to commit to it. She advocated for waiting until the summer. She looked at the Committee's current goals and stated that they are working on most of them, but the demographic study has a lot of work left to do. She does not want to start something new, particularly given that it would require some assistance from the Administration. She said that when the Committee has a big project, unless it is an emergency, it usually is added to the July workshop. She asked if this could be a School Committee subcommittee if no School Committee member is on it, given that Michael's term ends on April 5th. She emphasized that the activity is not just gathering information, there has to be a clear goal or target. Kristina Rychlik agreed with Maria and is also concerned about progress on the demographic study.

Mike Coppolino expressed frustration that he has a group of people ready to start working and the Committee wants them to wait. He stated that he would probably not want to do this after his term ended.

Kristina gave the example of the class size subcommittee that she was a member of before being on School Committee and there were concerns. She would want this new group to be structured to make good use of people's time. Brigid Bieber questioned how much progress could be made before Mike retires. She suggested that there may be a few data points that could be looked at, but the group may not be able to do all of the deep dives that they'd like. She suggested focusing on the regional schools for a better comparison.

Kristina prefers to postpone the activity until the July workshop and asked the Committee for their comments. Mary Brolin agreed with Brigid stating that it is fine if they collect data, but there is no commitment from School Committee on what to do with it. Kristina expressed concern about how much staff time it might take, so it may need a better charge and structure. Mike acknowledged that the volunteers are all "fairly savvy" people who have volunteered extensively and know how to do deep data dives. He would follow the protocol and go through Beth Petr to ask Clare Jeannotte if her assistance is needed. He is not talking about a line by line review, but is looking for a way to possibly improve the District's budgeting by comparing other towns' data.

Regarding the demographic survey project, Mike stated that the Boston College professors are taking the lead now. More meetings will be scheduled, but there is not a lot of heavy lifting to do for a while.

Diane Baum stated that doing this comparison work now will give the District more data to make a decision with in the summer. Deanne O'Sullivan agreed. Dr. Brand agreed that the ability for us to look at data from other districts can lead to good insights, depending on the timeline. He has some concern for what Clare Jeannotte and her department might be asked to do, timewise, because they have been working on so many projects, especially with closing out the budget.

Clare Jeannotte has no issues about data gathering, but the conclusions that could be drawn from the data without being careful are what concern her. She would want to see the data and how it had been gathered. She might have some insight about the District's own numbers that Mike and this group would need to know. She does not know the particulars about other communities' numbers.

The Committee discussed whether or not this should be a new subcommittee of the School Committee. Mike felt the results would have more credibility if they were a subcommittee. Kristina asked if anyone on the School Committee wanted to serve on this subcommittee, but there were no volunteers. It was the sense of the Committee that the subcommittee would move forward and a School Committee member would be found after Mike's term is up. Beth Petr reminded the Committee that the Open Meeting Law requirements must be met if they are a subcommittee.

10. **Response to Citizen’s Request for School Committee Position re Testing – Kristina Rychlik**

- 10.1. Memo from K Rychlik re Committee’s Possible Response, 2/26/16
- 10.2. ABRSC Statement Read at Acton Special Town Meeting on 11/10/15
- 10.3. Comments from ABRSC Chairwoman at Acton Special Town Meeting on 11/10/15
- 10.4. Excerpt from 11/19/15 ABRSC Meeting Draft Minutes
- 10.5. Email Regarding MCAS Participation for Spring 2016, *Deborah Bookis*, 2/12/16
- 10.6. ABRSD Administrative Statement on Standardized Testing, *September 2015*
- 10.7. Emails from Citizen re “Non-binding Resolution Official Response”, 2/4/16

Kristina summarized that the Committee has made their position clear as documented above. Kristina asked the Committee if they are in support, as she is, of Deborah Bookis’ email to the Principals on 2/12/16 (#10.5) regarding MCAS participation in Spring 2016. The Committee agreed that an official statement does not seem to make sense regarding the state actions. When asked if this could be the Committee’s official response, there was no comment which was understood to be agreement.

11. **Subcommittee Reports**

11.1. Budget – *Maria Neyland*

At the meeting on 3/2/16, they continued reviewing the FY17 budget. Next meeting is 3/16.

11.2. Regional Financial Oversight (RFOC) – *Mary Brolin*

At the meeting on 3/3/16, they reviewed Clare Jeannotte’s per pupil cost calculations and it will be on agenda for the 3/17/16 School Committee meeting. The tracking sheet of savings for FY15,16 and17 shows about a million savings a year, with all favorable trends. They drafted a statement for Town Meeting, to be read by Mike Coppolino, that will be in School Committee packet for the next meeting. An Acton member will be needed for this group to replace Mike.

11.3. Policy –

11.3.1. **Physical Restraint of Students**, File: JKAA – Second Read - **VOTE** – *Brigid Bieber*

11.3.1.1. Procedures and Current Policy

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

VOTED: to accept the revisions to the Physical Restraint of Students policy, File: JKAA as proposed.

11.3.2. **Public’s Right to Know**, File: KDB – First Reading – *Brigid Bieber*

11.3.3. **School Committee Legal Status**, File: BB – First Reading – *Brigid Bieber*

Comments on either of these policies should be sent to Brigid or Beth.

11.4. Outreach – *Kathleen Neville*

Kathleen has FY17 Budget handouts for members going to PTO meetings and she will get them to Beth for copies to be made.

11.5. Legislative – *Kathleen Neville*

11.5.1. Discussion of Suburban Coalition’s Resolution dated 2/1/16

11.5.1.1. Updated Resolution and List of Communities in Support (3/1/16) **First Read**

Kathleen Neville described the Resolution, it includes Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees as well as School Committees which makes it stronger. Mary Brolin and Diane Baum think this is a great idea. A vote will be taken at the next School Committee meeting.

11.5.2. Proposed Letter Rep. Jennifer Benson re Governor’s Budget

Kathleen Neville asked if the Committee liked Paul Murphy’s draft. Comments should be sent to Paul. It will be included in the next meeting’s packet.

12. **School Committee Member Reports**

12.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Kristina Rychlik, Paul Murphy*

12.1.1. Minutes of meeting on 2/9/16

12.1.2. Materials from meeting on 2/25/16

The Boards are being asked to consider the Acton Finance Committee's compromise plan. Kristina feels it is too early to consider making changes per this plan.

12.1.3. Charge of the Town of Acton Capital Improvement Planning Committee, 1/28/16

Kristina asked who will represent the School Committee on this new Committee. The School Committee is also permitted to designate an at-large community member for this committee. This will be on the next meeting agenda.

12.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)

Mary Brolin reported that BLF met last night. As soon as they receive the updated sheet for the budget and warrant articles, Mary will send it. They approved the ABRSD budget.

12.3. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)

Mary Brolin reported that HIT met last Friday and voted a 4% increase in rates.

12.4. Acton Finance Committee

Kristina Rychlik reported that they met 2/23/16 and discussed the compromise plan again.

12.5. Acton Board of Selectmen

The ABRSD FY17 budget will be voted on at the meeting next Monday night.

12.6. Boxborough Finance Committee

Mary Brolin reported that they met on Monday. Clare and Glenn joined them for the budget discussion. They approved the FY17 school budget.

12.7. PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs– *next meeting is March 31.*

13. Superintendent's Report/Updates –

Dr. Brand highlighted several of the FYI items. Dr. Brand held the second of his two Community Meetings recently in the Acton Memorial Library. The Interschool Council met on 3/1/16. There will be one more meeting this year. The School Capital and Space Planning group met last week. Katherine Contini (aka Kate McMillan) has been nominated as a semifinalist for the MA Teacher of the Year Award from Blanchard.

Kristina Rychlik noted how special the Annual Chair Ceremony Honoring Staff with 20 Years of Service to the District is. The Committee is invited to attend on 3/30/16.

14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 9:00 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 collective bargaining with the Office Support Association (OSA), American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA).

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

Kristina Rychlik stated that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session solely to adjourn.

The ABRSC returned to Open Session at 9:47 p.m. and adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda