

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 1/14/16)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

December 17, 2015
7:00 p.m. Executive Session
7:30 p.m. Open Meeting

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Michael Coppolino, Maya Minkin (7:55 p.m.), Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Mary Brolin, Amy Krishnamurthy, Deanne O’Sullivan
Others: Marie Altieri, Marilyn Bisbicos (7:30 p.m.), Deborah Bookis (7:30 p.m.), Clare Jeannotte (7:30 p.m.), Glenn Brand, Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik.

2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 7:02 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session pursuant to MGL c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) to comply with any general or special law requirements (i.e., c. 30A, § 22(f) and(g)) for the approval and possible release of executive session minutes for 10/9/14.

(YES – Baum, Bieber, Coppolino, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, Rychlik)

At 7:03 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session for strategy with respect to litigation (i.e. Decision dated 12/4/15).

(YES – Baum, Bieber, Coppolino, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board and that the Committee would return to Open Meeting at approximately 7:30 p.m.

At 7:30 p.m. the Executive Session was adjourned and the ABRSC returned to Open Meeting.

3. **OPEN MEETING (7:30)**

4. **Chairman’s Introduction** – Annual Spring Town Elections

Michael Coppolino and Kristina Rychlik are undecided about whether to run again in Acton. Mary Brolin will run again in Boxborough.

5. **Statement of Warrant**

Warrant #16-012PR dated 12/10/15 in the amount of \$1,898,164.35 and warrant #16-013 dated 12/17/15 in the amount of \$850,579.79 were signed by the School Committee members.

6. **Approval of Minutes**

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the minutes of 12/3/15 as written.

The meetings of 11/19/15 and 11/5/15 will be reviewed at the next meeting.

7. **Public Participation** - none

8. **FY17 Budget Pres. #2- “Superintendent’s Preliminary Budget Request”** – Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Marie Altieri

- 8.1. Presentation Slides
- 8.2. Back up Information
- 8.3. Memo from Dana Labb re multi-age classroom
- 8.4. Memo from Mark Hickey re strings program proposal (and community petition)

Dr. Brand introduced the FY17 proposed Preliminary Budget which represents an increase of 4.1% or \$3,279,295 in overall expenses from the current budget. Clare Jeannotte reviewed the numbers. Priorities were outlined at the 12/3/15 meeting. Marie Altieri explained that although enrollment is gradually decreasing, the number of high needs students is increasing. We are entering the smallest group starting Kindergarten now. The largest group that entered Kindergarten graduated from the High School two years ago. The Junior High is increasing 40 students in the next two years, but then that enrollment begins decreasing. Marie explained the plans for elementary classroom sections for next year. Tier 1 and Tier 2 personnel additions (highest and second highest priority) have been included in the proposed budget (slides 31 and 32).

Questions and Answers from the Committee:

Brigid Bieber appreciated the discussion about class size accommodations in the grades. She remembers talking about the mixed grade classroom at Blanchard a number of years ago and how the School Committee at that time struggled to use an educational philosophy to solve a numbers problem. She asked the Committee and Administration to be aware of this issue and keep in mind, “Is this option, from an educational view, the best way to address this issue?”

Kristina Rychlik said that Deanne O’Sullivan (who was absent) asked her to say that she is very concerned about the progression of having only two kindergartens at each school, and how it could happen next at the Douglas School. Marie Altieri agreed that it is very hard when section numbers change in a school, and teachers have to move. She agreed that much thoughtful planning needs to take place. With School Choice, balance is important and there are many things to keep in mind. This is a little different from 4 – 5 years ago when the Administration began to consider this because the numbers are doing down faster than expected. Marie and Dr. Brand met with the staff of several schools to explain these developments, and it is difficult. The Douglas faculty was told that for the next 3 years, Douglas will only need 2 kindergartens. Five years ago, we said it would only be for 2 years, but that has changed. Every school is committed to being a thriving educational environment.

Mike Coppelino questioned the value of some long term forecasting/predictions of going out 10 to 12 years. Clare stated that the Administration tries to present information that explains changes in as consistent a manner as possible. Slide 8, for example, is from the DESE website. Mike asked about slide 10 and whether there is a clearer way to present that information (Expenditures for FY17, compared to FY16 and FY15 Budgeted and Actual). He asked what the FY16 increase was exactly for. He also asked, how good are we at predicting what the budget will be and then what it actually was, for expenditures.

Mike asked about debt service at the last meeting and why it was going up. This will be included in the budget binder. Slide 15 about Utilities shows the new rate of 13%, but not the increase. Regarding slide 16 (FY17 Preliminary Assessment), Mike asked if the Administration could limit the 5% assessment increase. On slide 25, showing the increasing class sizes at Blanchard, Marie stated that the district is doing what they can to not place Acton students at Blanchard. The Regional Agreement’s “home town” priority rule makes it difficult to fully balance class size at the elementary schools. The Committee agreed that the increase in the number of students requiring ELL support is concerning.

Dr. Brand pointed out that there will be more meetings with time for questions on this budget as the process unfolds, including All Day Budget Saturday on January 23.

9. **Existing Conditions Study – Phase II Timeline and Recommendation** – First Read – *Glenn Brand*
Dr. Brand asked the Committee to allow the Administration to move forward with the second phase of this study so the final report can be available in the fall. He stressed the importance of this critical information that is budget related. He is pleased with Dore and Whittier’s work and their contract is structured such that they can continue if the Committee agrees. He proposed a 60 - 40 split. If 60% of the phase II funds could be found in FY16, and 40% in FY17, then their work could continue uninterrupted. He hopes for a decision by the Committee on January 14. Clare Jeannotte stated that there is money in the fringe benefit account that could cover this cost. Kristina Rychlik agreed that it would be important to do this work sooner rather than later, and that the School Committee had reluctantly split the study into two parts last year, solely due to cost.

10. **Recommendation to Approve Solar Net Metering Agreement – VOTE** – *JD Head*

10.1. 12/11/15 Memo

10.2. Backup material from last meeting

Dr. Brand proposed to hold on this item until the next meeting due to the complexity of the information. He would like JD Head to offer a meeting in early January for anyone who would like more information before voting. Kristina thanked Paul Murphy for his analysis and good questions about this project. Paul and Maya Minkin will attend the meeting in January.

11. **Curriculum and Assessment Update** – *Glenn Brand, Deborah Bookis*

11.1. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization

11.2. Acton-Boxborough Accountability, 2015

11.3. Leadership Assessment Decision, Spring 2016

Dr. Brand stated that the decision had been made to use MCAS instead of PARCC testing and while the School Committee could vote on that decision, but they did not need to.

11.4. Spring 2015 MCAS Update

Deborah Bookis reviewed the material. Diane Baum asked about a 1% cap on students who can take the alternative assessment. Bonnie Bisbicos said that this is not new. There has always been a guideline. Paul Murphy stated that in the public hearings and discussions a common theme was “teaching to the tests” and how this can narrow curriculum.

12. **Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Search Update** – *Marie Altieri*

12.1. Search Committee & Timeline

Marie Altieri reported that the position was posted last week. She reviewed the time line. The Search Committee met this week. There are two parents and six of the staff members are also parents. Several people wear multiple hats in the group.

13. **Senior Leadership Administrative Restructuring Proposal Update – VOTE** - *Glenn Brand*
(Marie Altieri and Deborah Bookis left the room at 9:20 p.m. for this discussion.)

Dr. Brand explained that the School Committee is the appointing authority for Assistant Superintendents. His original proposal included 3 Assistant Superintendents. This restructure would provide a number of benefits to the District without adding personnel. There was a suggestion of having one Deputy Superintendent so there would be a clear second in command. Because this proposal was slightly different, he asked for more time to gather input on it, which he did. He said that people provided feedback and a number of things became clear. Overwhelmingly staff members said this designation would be helpful to support the leadership of the district.

Comments from School Committee members:

Michael Coppolino spoke to Dr. Brand and appreciated the complete list of comparable community data. He stated that from a pure Director/Assistant Superintendent view, our Central Office numbers are highest. We have seven directors, soon to be four when three become Assistant Superintendents

(including a deputy). He stated that the district with the next highest number has 5 then 2 or 3 and Mike struggled with this. He cannot accept that we need that level of Central Office superintendencies. Regardless of who is in the role, he believes that because we have school choice, there is not as much decisionmaking for the Curriculum and Instruction department, so he feels an Assistant Superintendent would not be needed in that area. He is not sure the Assistant Superintendent position for Student Services will attract more candidates for our search.

Mike feels there will be budget ramifications of this decision, despite Dr. Brand's memo stating that there would not be. Dr. Brand believes regardless of the title, there will be a range of salaries for our administrators that are on individual contracts, taking into account other districts, and that range affects attracting and retaining those staff members. He has asked members of the budget subcommittee to assist him in looking at these ranges, and to establish fair and reasonable salary ranges for similar positions. He believes our district is all over the place compared to other districts.

Brigid Bieber also spoke with Glenn. Although she appreciated Mike's comments, she urged the Committee to step back and look at the jobs, and consider the high expectations that our staff work under. She supports the revised structure proposed by the Superintendent. She stated that the level of performance that our community demands may make it look like the District has a lot of leadership, but that is what it takes to support the district for our students and families.

Paul Murphy liked moving technology under the supervision of the Curriculum office and Community Education under Student Services.

Paul Murphy moved, Kathleen Neville seconded and it was

VOTED: to approve the Senior Leadership Administrative Restructuring Proposal.

(YES: Baum, Bieber, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, Rychlik

NO: Coppolino)

14. **Recommendation to Accept Gift of Dictionaries from the Rotary Club to ABRSD Third Graders – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

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

VOTED: to accept this gift with gratitude.

15. **Recommendation to Approve Grant Funding from the RPTSO to RJGJHS and ABRHS – VOTE- Glenn Brand**

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

VOTED: to accept this gift with gratitude.

16. **Recommendation to Accept Gift to ABRSD Track Program – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept this gift with gratitude.

17. **Subcommittee Reports**

17.1. Budget –

Maria Neyland reported that they met last week. JD Head and Erin Bettez are looking at facilities rental fees again. The subcommittee is also reviewing how the School Committee reports to the Towns' Finance Committees. Mike Coppolino asked if there is a way to pay deference to those non-profits that benefit our kids, when considering rental fees. He asked that costs be as low as possible for these organizations, if possible.

17.2. Policy –

17.2.1. **Minutes**, File: BEDG – First Reading –

Brigid Bieber asked that this item be skipped over because the draft was not correct.

17.2.2. **Physical Restraint of Students**, File: JKAA – First Reading – *Bonnie Bisbicos*

17.2.2.1. Procedures (*next meeting*)

Bonnie Bisbicos explained what restraints are and the new guidelines that go into effect in January. She stressed that restraints would only be used in emergencies and when other options would not work.

17.3. Demographic Study Update

Mike Coppolino reported that they met on December 7 and created a list of topics to be considered for the survey. Academic achievement, testing, mental health/stress were some areas. Additional comments may be sent to Mike. Mary Brolin was the note taker for that meeting.

17.4. Legislative –

Paul Murphy decided against writing a letter about circuitbreaker funding after meeting with Rep. Jennifer Benson in the fall. She said that they know all districts need more money and additional letters on that topic are not helpful. The Sped PAC may write a letter on that topic.

18. School Committee Member Reports

18.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) - Meeting on 12/10/15

Kristina proposed a 5 Board meeting and asked both towns' Finance Committees to come to the School Committee meeting when the quarterly reports are presented, instead of School Committee going to their meetings.

18.2. Acton Finance Committee – Kristina Rychlik attended the meeting on 12/8/15.

18.2.1. Point of View (*received 12/9/15*)

18.3. Acton Board of Selectmen – Mike Coppolino reported that Minuteman Tech was discussed and Acton Board of Selectmen will probably call a February Special Town Meeting.

18.4. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – Maria Neyland reported that their meetings are now broadcast on cable.

18.5. Minuteman Tech (MMT) Update – Diane Baum reported that the MMT representatives met that night in Weston to discuss the proposed Regional Agreement. They want to lower the minimum from 5 students to 1 in the new Agreement. They hope this will be attractive to some of the smaller towns considering leaving. Boxborough Selectmen voted on 12/7/15 to give notice to Minuteman School Committee that Boxborough will call a Special Town Meeting in February to vote on the amendment to the MMT Agreement, and vote on whether Boxborough would withdraw from the MMT District. Brigid is part of the working group in Boxborough looking at vocational education. There is a deadline of June 30 for the MSBA building funding.

19. Superintendent's Report – Glenn Brand

The Future School Needs Committee has not met yet. Dr. Brand is looking for Acton volunteers. The Annual Kindergarten registration meeting will take place next month. The School Cancellation memo is now posted. Procedures have not changed from last year.

20. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The ABRSC was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS:

Jan 6 (Wed)	Final Governance Workshop	7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library
Jan 14	ABRSC Meeting	7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library
Jan 23	FY17 Budget Saturday Meeting	9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library