

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Approved Minutes

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 16, 2017
6:30 p.m. Executive Session
7:00 p.m. Annual Budget Hearing
7:30 p.m. (approx.) Business Meeting

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin (6:45 p.m.), Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan (6:40 p.m.), Kristina Rychlik (left at 6:45 and returned at 7:15 p.m.), Eileen Zhang (7:20 p.m.)
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley (7:00 p.m.), Deborah Bookis (7:00 p.m.), Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 6:33 pm by Chairperson Mary Brolin.

2. **Enter EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 6:35 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA).

(YES – Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, Rychlik)

Mary Brolin stated that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board.

3. **The ABRSC returned to OPEN MEETING at 7:00 p.m.**

4. **The FY18 BUDGET HEARING was called to order** at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson *Mary Brolin* (see separate agenda)

Dr. Brand presented the FY18 proposed budget. He said that much of the material is a restatement of information that has been presented in previous meetings, particularly at Budget Saturday. The budget binder is also posted and will be updated.

1. **ABRSC FY18 Budget**– *Glenn Brand and Clare Jeannotte*

1. FY18 Final Budget Presentation
2. FY18 ABRSD Budget and Assessments voted 2/2/17
3. Character Code Rollup (revoted 2/2/17)
4. ABRSD Budget Summary - Table 6 as of 2/2/17

As of this morning (2/16/17), the decision was made to use \$425,000 of E&D (for Leary Field resurfacing) instead of the originally proposed \$200,000. As usual, the biggest part of the budget is salaries as explained by Marie Altieri. Dr. Brand explained the budget drivers for the FY18 increase of 3.63%.

2. **Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Update** – *Amy Krishnamurthy*

1. ALG Spreadsheet

Amy Krishnamurthy reported the ALG update. The group met this morning (2/16/17). She said that two meetings ago, there was a \$1.6 M deficit and the Acton Finance Committee suggested using E&D to bring that down. The ALG deficit as of this morning was \$358,000. Amy told the group that the schools could not cut anywhere, and that reserves or a move to the untaxed levy had to be considered. It was agreed to use an extra \$250,000 from E&D because the school budget was so tight and Leary Field had to be addressed. ALG agreed to this and the Town would cover the remaining deficit.

Katie Neville asked if the Committee was “putting a bandaid over a bullet hole”? She does not want to set a precedent with ALG for future years. Amy said they were very clear that this was a one time expense for us. Maria Neyland agreed with Katie, stating that the Committee was in this position a few years ago and decreased it and got to a comfortable point of using \$200,000. By using \$250,000 this year, will it keep increasing and bring the Committee back to the unsustainable point where they used to be. The deficit will not go away and we need to watch it, and ensure that the funds will be replenished. Paul Murphy agreed but when he looked at E&D history, for the past 2 years the Schools have put in \$800,000 and to him instead of increasing E&D, they are now tapering off the replenishing. He doesn’t view it as unsustainable, but part of managing that number. He is comfortable doing it now because the effort has been made to push E&D up. Brigid Bieber also understands this year’s rationale, but the reason it could be replenished for a few years, was due to unanticipated revenue and CASE funds. She agrees with Maria re sustainability, and that Leary Field needs to be paid for and it is big. It is a safety issue affecting students and the public. She pointed out that the District also has a 3 year program for the learning centers and they are trying to complete it by adjusting resources to make that happen. A commitment was made to students and teachers and now they may not be able to do it. There simply are not enough resources, and on top of everything a huge capital project is coming up. Brigid is very concerned although she understands why things are being done as they are. She wants the public to understand all of this and the pressure that the School Committee is under making these decisions.

Kristina Rychlik noted that the District is still trying to get E&D up to the 5% mark, and although the proposal is not an ideal solution, it is the best they can do right now. She asked if the Town will cover the remainder and if any cuts were made in the town budget. Amy stated that they did not cut. She thought the Town would cover it with more reserves but at ALG they were told they would tax into the untaxed levy. The Town did make cuts before this, but no new ones. Kristina thought Acton was going to use funds for the capital part of the budget. Amy responded that at ALG, initially \$1.6 M would be used, but then it became complicated.

As far as replenishing E&D, Clare Jeannotte stated that she expects to see favorability in Chapter 70 and regional transportation. Although this is a good probability, it is never a guarantee. Then there are a few non budgeted funding sources that could lead to favorability for FY17. They will not be in place for replenishing for FY18. Maria cautioned that as more and more nonbudgeted sources are used, they are now becoming budgeted. As a result, E&D levels must be watched more closely.

Amy concluded saying that the ALG process this year has been a very collaborative one with a lot of compromise. Relationships are really important right now with the difficulties that lay ahead.

Mary Brolin noted that the Committee appeared to have consensus with caution for this change, and a vote would take place in the open meeting.

The FY18 Budget Hearing was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

5. The ABRSC returned to OPEN BUSINESS MEETING at 8:00 p.m

6. Chairman’s Introduction – Mary Brolin

6.1. Annual Spring Town Elections

- Acton Election is March 28

- Boxborough deadline to submit papers is March 28 for Election on May 16

7. **Statement of Warrant & Approval of Minutes**

7.1. ABRSC Meeting of 2/2/17 and Budget Saturday on 1/21/17 (*both at next meeting*)

8. **Public Participation - none**

9. **ABRSD FY18 Budget – Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte**

9.1. **Possible Recommendation to Approve Further Revisions to the FY18 ABRSD Budget and Assessments – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

There was no further discussion. (See Budget Hearing)

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

VOTED: : that the total appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 be set at \$86,090,491 and that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Regional Agreement and amendments thereto as follows: Acton \$57,730,056, Boxborough \$11,593,781 remainder to be accounted for by the Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$14,804,931 Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$25,350, Anticipated Regional Bonus Aid in the amount of \$49,000, Anticipated Miscellaneous Receipts of \$30,000, Anticipated Federal Medicaid Reimbursement of \$100,000, Anticipated Chapter 71, Section 16C Transportation Aid, in the amount of \$1,307,373 and a transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$450,000.

10. **Challenge Success and School Schedules / Start Times**

- 10.1. Deb Bookis updated the Committee on the Challenge Success plans and introduced JoAnn
 10.2. ABRHS Scheduling: Process, Survey Summary & Timeline – *JoAnn Campbell, Larry Dorey*

There is no plan yet for a new schedule because they are just starting the process of researching and discussing this idea. The Administration wants to decide in the Fall 2017 and implement it in 2018 to give staff enough time to prepare. They will consider models that look at class balance, not necessarily class size, but same idea. Lunch period is important for many reasons in all schedules to make them work. A question was asked about the common planning time and what it is. JoAnn is not sure yet, but there are some models that have this for staff and some for students. No decisions have been made yet.

11. **Aligning Mathematics Teaching and Learning – Deborah Bookis, Heather Haines, Bill Noeth, Phil Stameris**

Deborah Bookis and her team explained that the reason for wanting to eliminate the test to place out of 7th grade mathematics is because it more closely aligns our structures and processes with our district stated values and outcomes for student learning. Brigid Bieber “loves where this is all going”. She has a very different perspective now than she had with her kids 10 years ago. In her opinion, a love of learning is much more important now. Many of the Committee members agreed.

Eileen Zhang said that she has a different voice. She doesn’t see the test as an issue because it has been voluntarily for many years. She feels that it is for the parents to decide if it is too stressful for their child to take. It should be their choice. For the community, many students have the higher math grades and they love it and are very interested in the subject. She suggested that instead of having the younger students go to the High School for their math classes (disrupting their Junior High schedule), perhaps the group could be made larger and give them more choice in their Junior High classes instead. She wanted to speak up for those students who want the higher math option. She feels that the students at both ends of education deserve this, especially since she considers AB a

“math science school”. Eileen thanked the teachers for working so hard on this issue. Paul Murphy mentioned about trusting the teachers when they advise the students regarding their course levels.

12. **ABRSD Master Plan Update – Glenn Brand**

12.1. MSBA Board Meeting on 2/15/17

Dr. Brand reported that 90 schools submitted MSBA Statement of Interest applications and we are one of 17 that were invited to participate. He thanked JD Head for submitting the three Statements of Interest and the School Committee for their strong support. The decision also confirmed that Douglas School certainly has significant needs to address.

12.2. MSBA Training Seminar - “The Story of a Building” on 2/6/17 – Glenn, Marie, JD, Clare, Amy and Katie attended.

12.3. District Master Plan Review Committee (DMPRC) Update –*Mary Brolin*

12.3.1. Meeting minutes of 1/25/17 and 2/8/17

The plan is to bring a recommendation to the Committee at their 6/8/17 meeting, with a vote at the next meeting. A press release will come out soon.

13. **Superintendent’s Mid Cycle Goal Review – Glenn Brand**

13.1. DESE Evaluation Process for Superintendents

13.2. Superintendent’s Memo with supportive documents attached

Diane Baum asked if there will be an attempt to align start times with the block time change at the High School. Dr. Brand said not necessarily, although it is happening in parallel. Larry Doery is part of both committees.

Kristina Rychlik noted that regarding the elementary school funding goal, many schools get different gifts and grants and as long as we are going down that path, they should be tracked.

Mary Brolin emphasized to the Committee that Evaluating the Superintendent is one of the Committee’s 3 key responsibilities. It is important that members understand this process and ask questions if they have them. She stated that it is critically important to be thinking of examples to support members’ comments.

14. **Suicide Prevention Next Steps – Glenn Brand, Dawn Bentley**

14.1. Letter to Staff and Families

14.2. Recommendation to Approve Late Start for JH/HS on 3/10/17 and **Early Release 3/30/17** for Elementary Students – **VOTE** – *Glenn Brand*

Our Administrators understand that we have an increased vulnerability for increased suicides now based on the experts’ advice. We expect to screen “in” 20% of the students that they want to talk to someone, based on the experts. Those conversations with students who request them will happen that same day, with the assistance of the Riverside staff. Parents will have a chance to preview the video in March. Staff training is important and Riverside will do the Gatekeeper Training for all School Personnel.

Resources and recommendations from experts are the reasons for the grades we are screening, plus they are transition times for students. Members wanted to know if all grades would eventually be screened.

Dawn stated that we don’t want to do it too much per the experts or kids may not take it seriously.

All full time and part time staff are expected to do the training, which is why the schedule changes to the two school days are being proposed.

Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the schedule changes as proposed for this year.

15. **Recommendation to Approve JH/HS Early Dismissal Days on FY18 School Calendar for Oct 12, Feb 8 and Mar 29 – First Read – Glenn Brand**

Eileen Zhang thanked Dr. Brand for letting parents know about these changes. Maria Neyland asked why there are early dismissals for High School students when they seemed to prefer late starts. Marie Altieri explained that the students now say they prefer early dismissals. Late starts also complicate the lunch schedules.

16. Recommendation to Approve Gift of Instruments to ABRSD Performing Arts Department – VOTE – Glenn Brand

Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the gift of instruments to the Performing Arts Department with gratitude.

17. Subcommittee Reports

17.1. Budget – 2/8/17 meeting – Maria Neyland reported that the subcommittee discussed the Budgets, capital needs, and the Regional Financial Oversight Committee’s per pupil expense figures.

17.2. Policy

17.2.1. Consent Agenda – Second Read – **VOTE** – *Brigid Bieber*

17.2.1.1. English Language Learners, File: IHBEA – *Dawn Bentley*

17.2.1.2. Health Education, File: IHAM (and new procedures) – *Deborah Bookis*

17.2.1.3. Health and Sex Education Parent Notification, File: IHAMA (revised proced) *Deb Bookis*

Maria Neyland moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the 3 policy revisions as proposed.

17.2.2. Studying Controversial/Sensitive Issues, File: IMB - Second Read - *Next Meeting - Brigid Bieber*

17.2.3. School Volunteers, File: IJOC – First Read – *Brigid Bieber*

17.2.4. Essentials of Education, File: IA – Recommendation to Delete – **VOTE** – Brigid Bieber
(not required now, similar to ABRSD Vision, Values, Mission policy AD)

Katie Neville moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to delete this policy as proposed.

17.3. Outreach (including PTO Co-chairs) – January 2017 Update - *Kristina Rychlik*
Next update is almost finished.

18. School Committee Member Reports

18.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Amy Krishnamurthy, Paul Murphy*

18.1.1. Materials for 2/16/17 meeting (rescheduled from 2/9/17)

18.1.2. Minutes from 1/26/17 meeting

Doug Tindal gave kudos to the Administration and School Committee for the way they went about the Master Plan Process and how they were accepted into the MSBA process for Douglas. Regarding how much is the right amount of reserves to use, Doug wants to establish a committee and look into the next 5 years regarding this question. Kristina noted that the Acton Finance Committee spent a lot of time on this. Marie Altieri explained that Doug was asking for a group to study what kinds of things reserves could be spent on. It was agreed that this might be considered after Town Meeting.

18.2. Acton Board of Selectmen

Paul Murphy reported that Feb 6 they talked about making Acton a Sanctuary Community. Senator Eldridge was there. It was unclear how the School District might be involved and/or affected.

18.3. Boxborough Board of Selectmen

Maria Neyland reported that Boxborough was considering becoming a Sanctuary Town. She asked how could this impact school district funding.

19. ABRSC Statement of Purpose Update – Second Read – VOTE - Mary Brolin

The Committee discussed the options on the purple sheet. Brigid liked the second one because it focused on the vision and that is more of the School Committee's scope, a more long term approach. In her opinion, the mission is more of a day to day approach. Paul: agreed.

Katie Neville moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was,

VOTED: to change the School Committee's Statement of Purpose to read:

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee strives to support the district in its vision to provide high-quality educational opportunities that inspire a community of learners by:

- *setting and adapting policy*
- *hiring and overseeing the superintendent, and*
- *developing a thoughtful budget considering the needs of our students and the fiscal realities of the communities of Acton and Boxborough.*

Eileen Zhang abstained, all others voted yes.

20. **Superintendent's Report/Updates – Glenn Brand**

- 20.1. Dr. Brand reported on the Coordinated Program Review visit this week and it appeared to be very positive. He thanked Dawn Bentley and Pam Smith for coordinating and planning for this extensive undertaking.
- 20.2. Director of Finance Search Update – see memo regarding two finalists

21. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

- 21.1. Discipline Reports: RJGJHS and ABRHS, January 2017
- 21.2. Monthly Student Enrollment, 2/1/17 (*next meeting*)
- 21.3. ABRSD Annual Education Report
- 21.4. Water Quality Testing Letter to Gates School Staff and Families
- 21.5. ABRSC 2017-2018 Meeting Schedule
- 21.6. **Family Learning Series Presentations:**
 - 21.6.1. February 13, 2017, 7:00 PM with Chris Herren – cancelled due to weather
- 21.7. Emergent Bilingual Student Population by School, 2/1/17
- 21.8. ABRSD Financial Reports as of 1/31/17
 - 21.8.1 Revenue vs Budget
 - 21.8.2 Expenses vs Budget
 - 21.8.3 Special Revenue
 - 21.8.4 Grants

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of documents used: see agenda and list of warrants

NEXT MEETINGS:

- March 2 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (material posted Mon, February 27)
- March 16 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (material posted March 10)
- Acton Town Meeting begins on Monday, April 3
- Boxborough Town Meeting begins on Monday, May 8