

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

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 7, 2019  
7:00 p.m. Open Meeting  
7:05 p.m. Annual Budget Hearing  
7:20 p.m. (approx.) Open Business Meeting

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Members Present: Diane Baum, Michael Bo (7:05 p.m.), Mary Brolin, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Paul Murphy, Angie Tso (left at 9:45 p.m.) , Eileen Zhang  
Members Absent: Maya Minkin  
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis (left at 9:45 p.m.), Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

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1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Baum.

2. **Chairman’s Introduction**

2.1. Annual Spring Town Elections

- Acton Election is March 26
- Boxborough deadline to submit papers is April 2 for Election on May 21

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

3.1. Meeting Minutes of 1/10/19 and 1/26/19

The Chair read the summary of the warrant and members signed the documents.

Mary Brolin moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.

4. **FY20 Budget Hearing**

The FY20 Budget Hearing was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Baum. (*see separate agenda*) The Budget and Capital Subcommittees were thanked for their efforts in the budget process.

Superintendent Light reviewed the recommended final budget as voted on Budget Saturday 1/26/19, including key funding details and the request to authorize a new Regional Stabilization Fund. He commented on the need for the new project manager, given the significant work that is being planned for next year and the years to come.

Paul Murphy responded to a comment previously received from the public that Budget Saturday seemed like a rubber stamp for the Administration’s decisions. Paul stressed the many budget presentations and discussions held throughout the year and that February was not the time to be significantly questioning the current process. He suggested that next year perhaps the Chairperson of the Budget Subcommittee should give more updates to the School Committee along the way so all understand the amount of deliberation that goes on throughout the year.

It was confirmed that on slide 6, first bullet, \$2.75M is the 2 year total of the increase in Budgeted Capital.

Michael Bo asked about the stabilization fund and bonding. He said that in the budget subcommittee meeting, in 3 years, FY22, our capital upgrading balance is expected to drop to \$300,000 and he asked if the stabilization fund would be used to cover that. Superintendent Light referred to Dave Verdolino’s chart about bond payments. Because we plan to make level payments, it will leave about \$300,000 and the

Administration is anticipating coming to the Committee at the end of the year to ask to transfer \$1M into the fund so in those “lean years” this fund can be tapped.

Despite members in the audience being invited, there was no public participation.

At 7:25 p.m. Paul Murphy moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED** to adjourn the Budget Hearing.

5. **Return to ABRSC OPEN BUSINESS MEETING**

6. **Public Participation - none**

7. **ABRSD FY20 Budget**

7.1. Recommendation to Approve the FY20 Final ABRSD Budget and Assessments – **VOTE**

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded offering a friendly amendment which was accepted to correct one of the numbers and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** That the total appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 be set at \$90,982,111, 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** \$61,235,254 (consisting of a Capital Assessment of \$2,726,396 and an Operating Assessment of \$58,508,858); and

**Boxborough** \$11,522,285 (consisting of a Capital Assessment of \$384,822 and an Operating Assessment of \$11,137,463);

with the remainder to be accounted for by the following sources of funds:

Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$15,187,441,

Anticipated Chapter 71, Section 16C Transportation Aid of \$1,907,131,

Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$30,000,

Anticipated Federal Medicaid Reimbursement of \$200,000,

Anticipated Investment Earnings of \$200,000,

Estimated Miscellaneous Revenues of \$10,000, and

A transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$690,000.

7.2. Recommendation for Appropriation of the ABRSD Capital Improvement Plan and Related Debt **AND** Recommendation to Bond \$7.5M Debt for the Purpose of Capital Improvements – **VOTE**

Adam Klein moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** That the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District hereby appropriates the amount of \$7,500,000 for the purpose of paying construction, installation and all other associated costs of providing the capital improvements identified hereof in the District’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP); and to meet this appropriation, the District Treasurer is hereby authorized to borrow up to \$7,500,000 under and pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Chapter 16 (d), the Regional School District Agreement, and/or any other enabling authority; and that, subsequent to an affirmative vote, within seven days thereof, the District, through its Secretary, shall notify the Board of Selectmen of each of the member towns as to the amount and purpose of the debt so authorized.

### 7.3. Recommendation to Establish Regional Stabilization Fund – **VOTE**

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

**VOTED:** That the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District hereby establishes a regional stabilization fund in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Chapter 16G-1/2, for the purpose of providing funding for its future capital needs in conjunction with the District’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP); and, subsequent to an affirmative vote, within seven days thereof, the District, through its Secretary, shall notify the Board of Selectmen of each of the member towns as to the fund so authorized.

### 8. **Presentations: School Improvement Plan Updates**

8.1. McCarthy-Towne School – *Principal David Krane*

[https://mct.abschools.org/the\\_mct\\_school/school\\_improvement\\_plan](https://mct.abschools.org/the_mct_school/school_improvement_plan)

8.2. Blanchard Memorial School – *Principal Dana Labb (addendum)*

<https://blanchard.abschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=229316&pageId=498565>

### 9. **Superintendent’s Update – Peter Light**

Superintendent’s Report of Entry Findings

Mr. Light presented his report which was the culmination of 6 months of work. He hopes that it creates a dialogue within the School Committee and the community. He thanked everyone who assisted him in this effort, especially Deputy Superintendent Marie Altieri for her support, as well as Assistant Superintendents Deborah Bookis and Dawn Bentley.

Six broad themes emerged from his findings which he framed as questions to promote “curiosity and dialog”. Support evidence came from stakeholder meetings, school and classroom observations and data analysis. Mr. Light described his conclusions as his professional judgement based on the evidence that he gathered. He led a discussion of the six theme questions that actively engaged Committee members and the audience, and could have lasted much longer than one meeting.

Comments included:

- Our diverse culture is amazing and exciting and should be leveraged moving forward.
- Peter really listened to the community and focused on the positives and opportunities, while acknowledging the unavoidable tensions that exist.
- There need to be open conversations about some of the stereotypes that exist in our community.
- The importance of starting foreign languages in younger grades is very important. We should also encourage our EL students to maintain their native languages.
- What kind of opportunities do we want to increase for our students?
- The first theme will guide the rest of theme discussions. “Empathy” and being able to put yourself in someone else’s shoes will be required. To be successful, the community has to be behind the Committee’s initiatives and decisions. Groups need to have empathy for others so they can see what things like “wellness” means in another’s eyes. Creating community empathy is essential for the work that lies ahead.
- Members have confidence in AB’s education in the future but global awareness, and creating opportunities for our students to shine globally will be important.
- The impact of eliminating the math skip test is different for different students. Some thought it meant that they were not good at math, however some considered the test as a goal and used it to generate positive energy to pursue more math study. When decisions are made in the future, the District should consider the issues from many students’ eyes.
- Protocols will be considered for the next workshop discussion. Mr. Light wants to be sure there is synergy in developing priorities.

- It is very important to share this report with our communities so when the District proposes changes they can see why/how. Have copies at the Annual Town Meetings and other gatherings.
- Give them to our High School students; they are stakeholders as well. Some of the empathy has to be from students' perspectives.
- People's lives are richer when they are surrounded by a variety of people. Our community has all of this variety and we are not taking advantage of it.
- If we're not looking at our scores, how do we know that our kids are going to be successful? What are the skills we want our kids to have as they leave us? We need to give ourselves benchmarks for success.
- AB has some really creative teaching and learning but there is not always an opportunity for it to be shared. Efforts tend to be siloed in the buildings. This is one area that Mr. Light would love to see AB "swing from the fences". A member urged the administration not to just look at the elementary schools for this effort.
- Schools have an impact on the first 20% of kids' lifespans. Our endpoint is not graduation or SATs, but beyond. Consider what success at age 50 would/should be.
- Regarding the wealth of our community, we have so many amazing college level educators and business people including non-profits and for profits. What are they looking for in employees?
- This all involves curriculum to develop. What are the impediments for the teachers? Consider this as a springboard to drive instruction as opposed to delivering it.
- Make sure students are educated with their peers – this is an important big rock that we need to focus on.
- We knew the social-emotional needs of students were critical, and the result was the adoption of Challenge Success. This was before the student suicides occurred. What are the skills we actually want students to have, and how do we teach them? Resilience is one example.
- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is one team and another is the School Committee. We need to make sure that all function at the same high level. As an elected body, the School Committee is tougher due to their annual turnover. What are the structures that the School Committee can put in place to ensure they are effective?

A follow up School Committee workshop will be scheduled in March to "be sure everyone is rowing in the same boat, AND in the same river". Mr. Light will bring an expanded strategy to the community in the fall. The Superintendent was thanked for his "incredible work and deep thinking".

#### 10. School Building Project Update – *Mary Brolin*

- 10.1. Recommendation to consolidate the future C.T. Douglas and Paul P. Gates Schools into one school building while maintaining separate educational programs – **VOTE**

Mary Brolin gave an update explaining that the MSBA does not do a lot of consolidated schools so the Building Committee asked if the School Committee would confirm the District's plans with this vote.

Throughout this process the preschool has been a key part of the building plan, but the Building Committee has raised some issues and will discuss inclusion of the preschool at the Building Committee meeting next Tuesday. The wet land is making the larger building more difficult. The footprint must be smaller, making the cost smaller as well, although something has to be done for the preschool. Including it with the new building means reimbursement is received from the MSBA. The Building Committee will decide.

The purpose of the vote is to show that the School Committee supports the Douglas and Gates educational programs being in one building. The Building Committee has already approved that consolidation. Mary Brolin explained that many districts consolidate schools into one program. The ideal elementary school size is 450 students and we are talking about 1,000 so that is too large for one elementary school. That is why we want to make it two programs and show the MSBA that the School Committee and the Building Committee both support this arrangement.

Paul Murphy moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously.

**VOTED:** to consolidate the future C.T. Douglas and Paul P. Gates Schools into one school building while maintaining separate educational programs

(Angie Tso and Deb Bookis left at 9:45 p.m.)

- 10.2. Recommendation to Authorize the Superintendent to Submit to the MSBA the Statement of Interest (SOI) for the Blanchard Memorial School – **VOTE** (see specific language)

JD Head was thanked for his work on this document and including the information from the Dore & Whittier report. Peter Light explained that on page 4, they are confirming whether or not they should state that the Blanchard SOI is “the District priority SOI”, given that the Douglas Project is currently the priority. After Douglas, Blanchard is the priority. The Committee agreed to let the Superintendent confirm the appropriate response to the question.

Paul Murphy moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 7, 2019, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee of Acton and Boxborough, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated February 7, 2019 for the Blanchard Memorial School located at 493 Massachusetts Ave, Boxborough, MA which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future for priority 5 which identifies the majority of the roofing system and window systems in need of replacement; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the City/Town/Regional School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

- 10.3. Minutes of the Building Committee meeting on January 9, 2019

**11. Recommendation to Approve \$2,490 Grant Gift from the Blanchard PTF Organization to the Blanchard School – VOTE – Peter Light (9:10)**

Adam Klein moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED:** to approve the \$2,490 Grant Gift from the Blanchard PTF Organization to the Blanchard School with gratitude.

**12. Subcommittee and Member Reports**

- 12.1. Policy – *Amy Krishnamurthy*

12.1.1. Staff Recruitment, Selection and Appointment, File: GCE – Second Read – **VOTE**

Due to comments that were received, the policy subcommittee will meet on Monday to discuss and bring this back to the School Committee for approval.

- 12.2. Capital Improvement - *Adam Klein*

12.2.1. They are considering lengthening their meetings now that much work has been done.

- 12.3. Budget –meeting on Jan 15 and Jan 29

They are talking about creating a policy about how much E&D is used and the stabilization fund. The budget subcommittee would draft it, then send it to the policy subcommittee and then to School Committee.

- 12.4. Acton Leadership Group Update (ALG)
  - 12.4.1. Meeting minutes of Jan 17, 2019  
ALG met this morning. Much of the discussion was about the building project.
- 12.5. Boxborough Leadership Forum Update (BLF)  
The Superintendent did an outstanding job presenting to the Selectmen and Finance Committee.

13. **FYI**

- 13.1. Thank you for gifts to R.J. Grey Junior High School from
  - 13.1.1. Alliance Energy/Exxon Mobil Gas Station for \$500
  - 13.1.2. Applied Materials and a parent for \$300
- 13.2. Acton and Boxborough 2019 Election Calendars
- 13.3. Revised ABRSC FY19 Meeting Schedule
- 13.4. CASE Collaborative Family Community News & Resources Pages, Jan 2019  
This is a great resource and contains an excellent description of how language matters.
- 13.5. EDCO Collaborative FY18 Annual Report –  
This report is required to be provided. There will be a vote at the March 7 meeting to vote the revised EDCO Articles of Agreement.
- 13.6. This Month in the Division of Open Government, January 2019

Tessa McKinley moved, Mary Brolin seconded and the ABRSC unanimously adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, presentation slides

**NEXT MEETINGS:**

- Wednesday, Feb 13 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library
- March 7 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library
- Acton Town Meeting begins on Monday, April 1
- Boxborough Town Meeting begins on Monday, May 13