

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) WORKSHOP
Minutes (approved 8/23/18 and 9/6/18)

Superintendent's Conference Room #13
ABRSD Administration Building

July 16, 2018
5:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Michael Bo (5:30 p.m.), Mary Brolin, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (5:20 p.m., left at 9:15 p.m.), Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Paul Murphy, Angie Tso, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: Maya Minkin
Others: Peter Light, Marie Altieri, Beth Petr, Student Representative Michael Cheng, Amanda Bailey

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 5:05 p.m. by Diane Baum, ABRSC Chair.
2. **Chairman's Introduction** – *Diane Baum*
The Committee took a few minutes to remember the tragic passing of an AB student last week. The compassionate and timely response of the district staff was noted and appreciated. A moment of silence was observed in memory of the young man.
3. **Statement of Warrants & Approval of Minutes**
 - 3.1. Meeting on June 21, 2018
Mary Brolin moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the minutes of June 21, 2018 as amended.
4. **Recommendation to Approve Bus Lease between ABRSD and New England Transit Sales, Inc.** – **VOTE** – *Peter Light*
Mr. Light explained that two bids were received on the 5 year lease of 10 new buses needed for the transition to single tier elementary school transportation for 2018-2019. New England Transit, Inc was the lowest qualified bidder at \$12,900. per bus. Last year it was thought that 11 buses would be needed, but now it is only 10. The salaries for the additional drivers are included in next year's budget.

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and the Committee,
VOTED: to authorize the ABRSD to enter into the proposed bus lease for 10 additional school buses. (All members in favor with exception of Michael Bo who abstained.)
5. **ANNUAL WORKSHOP**
Dorothy Presser/MA Association of School Committees (MASC) Field Director

Dorothy Presser invited the members and others to introduce themselves and describe why members wanted to serve on the Committee and what their legacy would be. She noted the rich discussion of the various perspectives and motivations mentioned at the conclusion.

5.1.1.Roles and Responsibilities of the School Committee and Superintendent
The Committee discussed the attributes and practices of effective school committees positively influencing student achievement. It was agreed that there should be “no surprises” at meetings, meaning that everyone has been provided with the same information

so that they are prepared to deliberate as a cohesive team. It is the expectation that members will talk to the Superintendent if they have significant questions or concerns about agenda topics. Each committee member must respect the fact that they are one of 11 members when expecting action on something. Trust and respect between the Committee and Superintendent is essential.

Good SMART goals are helpful because they have measurements. It is important that all members understand the goals and what they mean.

Committee members were asked to consider the Edmund Burke quote: “Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but judgement; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion” and discussed the idea of using good judgement in governance even when public opinion is not in agreement. If you believe something is right, you have to stick with it. Just because some people are loud, doesn’t mean it is the majority’s opinion. The analogy of a tree with 11 branches was suggested. The Committee is one tree that provides the roots and growth plan for all of the trees in the forest that is the Community.

A member stated that data is very important, both qualitative and quantitative, to show how decisions are made and supported. There are a variety of sources of data, including all of our communities, the many surveys, advice from our members, etc. Dorothy suggested that for every decision, members ask themselves, “How will this decision impact the students that I serve?”

An exercise was done where members were presented with various scenarios and were asked to decide whether, in their individual judgement, the School Committee was appropriately overseeing, overstepping, or if they were not sure. Dorothy encouraged members to think about why they were responding to scenarios the way they were. Members commented that different responses are perhaps rooted in philosophical and/or cultural perspectives that individuals bring to bear on the issues that School Committees are asked to consider. People have differing stories.

A discussion about overstepping continued as members addressed the power dynamic of a School Committee member bringing an idea to the Superintendent with the implicit or explicit expectation that the Superintendent would act on it. If the member brings an idea to the Superintendent but states clearly “Ignore this if you wish.”, then it could be alright. If not, the superintendent may feel pressure. The same dynamic could exist when a School Committee member speaks directly to a staff member.

Individuals have no authority as a School Committee member outside of a meeting. Policy level questions/issues are the School Committee’s purview. Deliberating on the procedural level of issues is not appropriate. Policy is the what/why and procedures are the how.

Once a vote has been taken, all members must support the decision and refrain from preventing its implementation.

Members had a lively discussion about evolving social media and the important role that it now plays in reaching stakeholders. Members brainstormed about ways to officially correct inaccuracies that end up in the public conversation, especially on Facebook. Members acknowledged that, depending on the specific issue the response from the Committee and District Central Office may differ. A community engagement strategy is something that the Committee needs to address.

5.2. Review of ABRSC Operating Protocols

Members reviewed the protocols and considered how/if they might be changed. An example from Melrose and a Board set of norms were handed out. A comment was made that ours was cumbersome because there are many policies in it that have to be looked up. It should be easier to refer to.

Members liked the Melrose example because it was clear and task oriented. There was an inward sense of a meeting protocol. Ours was more outward focused.

Dorothy asked, "Is there a way to look at the agenda items and see how each gets us closer to our values and goals?" Peter offered that some Committees read the vision and values before each meeting. Members liked the idea of everyone signing the protocols.

Diane confirmed that there was consensus that the protocols should be updated. A subcommittee will review the materials and prepared a draft similar to the Melrose format for a future School Committee meeting. Tessa McKinley, Eileen Zhang, Amy Krishnamurthy, Angie Tso, and Ginny Kremer volunteered. The Superintendent will join them. Beth will reformat the current protocols for the subcommittee to start with.

5.3. ABRSD Strategic Plan Overview – *Marie Altieri*

Marie reviewed the Plan and the 2015-2016 process done by the 45 member District Leadership Team (DLT). The 2011 task force was much more community oriented, compared to the FY16 work which was a more internal/educator driven process. Marie reviewed the current Mission, Vision, Values and goals. She reviewed the background and history of the work with Challenge Success from Stanford University. The district has formed a data inquiry team (DIT) which is being supported by the MidAtlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC). The data inquiry team will be reviewing data with a lens towards equity. The School Committee will hear more about this over the next few months. Marie reviewed the Seeking Educational Equity & Diversity (SEED) Project (nationalseedproject.org). The district sent five people to train-the trainer sessions. All of the Principals and Central Office Leaders, as well as 25 Jr. High teachers participated in the training in-house last year. We are scheduling 4 more sessions for educators this year, with a goal of having as many teachers as possible participate over the next 3 years. Marie concluded that the 2018-2019 Strategic Actions are being worked on now and will come to the School Committee in the fall.

5.4. School Committee Goals and Next Steps

Typically the School Committee would do their annual goals now, but with Peter Light just starting, he will be doing his goals soon, and then the Committee will do their goals. The Superintendent's goals should be the District Improvement Goals plus his own. The School Committee's goals are things within the Committee's purview, related but different, from the District goals. Dorothy Presser noted that the Long Range Strategic Plan was great because it is always looking out to the next 2-3 years.

The Committee was cautioned not to set too many goals. Dorothy suggested that the Superintendent have about 5 goals. It was also agreed that the Committee should receive update reports throughout the year, not all at the end. This organization also helps with evaluating the superintendent at the end of the year.

A new member asked for clarification of the School Committee's vision. She felt that different members have different perspectives on the vision. A member also asked how we look at each school's results and understand them, given our focus on Challenge

Success. Marie Altieri said that a district survey will be done this year regarding Challenge Success.

A question was asked about measuring the MCAS results and how the data should be considered. Diane Baum said that she and Eileen had discussed with former Superintendent Bill McAlduff how to best frame presentations of the vast amount of MCAS data provided by DESE so that the public is able to see how cohorts of students are doing over time as they move from our 6 elementary schools through high school. Diane said that this is an appropriate discussion to continue with the Superintendent.

A member asked about the High School schedule because she felt that feedback about the pilot schedule was not provided. Diane asked her to hold the question for a future meeting or ask the superintendent. This topic will be on an agenda in the fall.

5.5. 2018-2019 Subcommittee Structure and Assignments

5.5.1. 2017-2018 Subcommittees and Assignments with memo (6/21/18 meeting)

Based on members' responses to the discussion at the 6/21/18 School Committee meeting, Diane shared a suggested draft of subcommittee assignments. More volunteers than could be used were received for the Policy and Budget subcommittees. Splitting the Budget and Capital Planning Subcommittee into two subcommittees was considered. The Superintendent will discuss this with his administrators.

Mary Brolin talked about the Health Insurance Trust (HIT) and raised the issue of changing the Trust because that is what defines the members. Currently, it is Mary Brolin and Margaret Dennehy (ABRSD part-time Treasurer). There are three town of Acton members to two ABRSD members but now with regionalization, the membership should be more balanced, in Mary's opinion. Instead of requiring the Treasurer to be a member, the Trust could say a designee from the School Superintendent. Mary wants to come off in a year so it would be helpful for someone to shadow her although not be a voting member. Changing the membership makeup would require a vote of Acton Board of Selectmen. Deputy Superintendent Marie Altieri and Director of Finance Dave Verdolino attend, although there are only five voting members.

5.6. Informal Mentoring for New Members

Diane Baum suggested that this might be helpful for new members. Members agreed to the following mentors for new members:

- Adam Klein – Mary Brolin
- Angie Tso – Amy Krishnamurthy
- Michael Bo – Paul Murphy
- Ginny Kremer – Diane Baum

Members were reminded to be especially careful about following the Open Meeting Law protocol. Mentoring should be about process, history and the members' roles, not for deliberation on issues.

6. FYI

Peter is scheduling school tours for the fall and spring. A workshop on Superintendent Evaluation would be helpful for the Committee. Attending an Open Meeting Law webinar, or bringing in our district counsel to discuss it would also be valuable.

As Peter works on developing the new relationship with the Committee, he asked that members go to him first with questions or concerns, not directly to district/school staff, and then he will refer them to others as appropriate. Dorothy reinforced that the Superintendent needs to know what questions are being asked and information being given to do a good job. This helps him understand the scope of things.

Copies of the Challenge Success book, Overloaded and Underprepared, Strategies for Stronger Schools and Healthy, Successful Kids by Denise Pope will be given to members who need one.

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda, Slides from Dorothy Presser