

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING APPROVED OPEN MINUTES (with Budget Hearing)

Administration Building Auditorium
15 Charter Road, Acton

March 3, 2022

7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

To view only: <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

7:05 p.m. Annual Budget Hearing

7:20 p.m. (approximately) Return to Business Meeting

8:05 p.m. (approximately) Executive Session

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook, Ginny Kremer,
Adam Klein, Tessa McKinley, Andrew Schwartz, Yebin Wang
Members Absent: Amy Krishnamurthy, John Petersen, Nora Shine
Others: Marie Altieri, Deb Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. Call to Order (7:03)

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairperson Adam Klein.

Members of the public who wish to view the meeting were invited to use Acton tv's youtube channel (found at the top of the agenda). Adam stated that the meeting was being recorded and will be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.

2. Chairperson's Welcome

Adam thanked everyone for attending the annual Budget Hearing.

FY23 BUDGET HEARING

The FY23 Budget Hearing was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairperson Adam Klein.

Please see budget material posted for the February 17, 2022 School Committee meeting at https://www.abschools.org/school_committee/meetings_agendas_packets_minutes

1. Chairperson's Introduction

2. ABRSC FY23 Budget Overview– Peter Light

1. FY23 Approved Preliminary Budget

2. Recommended Assessments and Table 6 as voted on 2/17/22

Mr. Light shared that at the ALG meeting the day after the previous School Committee meeting, there was agreement on how to balance the ALG budget so further cuts/adjustments to the School Budget would not be necessary at this time. He reviewed his Recommended FY23 Budget with a total appropriation of \$102,889,440 for a 3.19% increase from the prior year. Acton's assessment change is an increase of 3.18% and Boxborough's increase is 4.59% for FY23.

3. Budget Feedback and Public Participation

Comments and Questions from the Public included:

- How are the classroom assistant cuts being spread out? The schools will be given some flexibility to work with their staff to decide how to make their cuts.
- Is the All Day Kindergarten tuition coming down? Yes, from \$3,750 to \$1,800 next year.
- Why are we adding more to the budget when we know it will get worse in future years? What about inflation? Current taxpayers are being asked to fund things (ADK) that they will never benefit from.
- The Acton Finance Committee is preparing for a small override in a couple of years and it will be very difficult to be win.
- For a district that is big on choice, not offering half day kindergarten is not appropriate. For some kids, it is the right choice to go half day.

As noted on the agenda, the FY23 Final Budget and Assessments vote will be taken at the next School Committee meeting on 3/17/22.

4. **Adjourn**

Ben Bloomenthal moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to adjourn the FY23 Budget Hearing at 7:20 p.m..

RETURN TO BUSINESS MEETING

3. **Discussion of ABRSD FY23 Preliminary Budget - Peter Light, Dave Verdolino**
 No further questions or discussion.

4. **Chairperson's Welcome - Adam Klein**

a. **Student Representatives Update - Rohan Ravindran**

Rohan thanked the Administration for fixing the Guest wifi over the break.
 The big topic now is the change in the mask mandate. Some wear it and some don't. Many wear it intermittently during the day. Regarding "mask shaming", students have been respectful and he has not seen this happening.

b. **Public Participation**

Marty Benson repeated his concern about his public records request for text messages from meetings on Oct 15 and Dec 17, 2020.

c. **Superintendent's Update – Peter Light**

Mr. Light showed video highlights from our new recruitment website involving students, staff members and several School Committee members. Andrew Shen has been working on this project. A listing of postings for next year will be shared next week and sent out to many organizations to try to reach as diverse a candidate pool as possible. The videos will be linked to the postings and also shared with all staff and families to broaden our reach. Currently 6.5% of our staff are teachers of color and we want to grow that number to 10% or better. Evelyn thanked Peter and his staff for taking baby steps in this very important work.

5. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

a. **Request to Rename the ABRHS Pool - Adam Klein**

i. Naming District Facilities, File: FF and procedures, File: FF-R
Adam referred to the memo in the packet describing the history of this request. The Committee must first decide whether naming the High School pool is appropriate and if that is approved, the Committee may vote to establish a screening committee, per policy FF and the procedures.

Ben Bloomenthal spoke in favor of the naming request. Amy Maruskin, who presented a petition with this request at a School Committee meeting in March 2020, spoke again urging members to support the request. Gretchen Turner, current AB boys and girls swim coach also spoke in favor. Many emails were sent to the School Committee in the past few weeks as well. Marty Benson spoke in support of Coach Johnson. Ginny Kremer thanked everyone who wrote in support of this request and said she was in strong support. Peter said that he and Adam spoke and suggested that due to the unprecedented level of support for Coach Johnson, a screening committee should be convened but the need to solicit multiple names for consideration probably was not necessary. Instead the public could be asked for comments on the proposal being made.

Ginny Kremer moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to rename the High School pool and to convene a screening committee to evaluate the proposal from the community to name the pool in honor of Coach Jeff Johnson.

Anyone interested in serving on the screening committee should contact Adam Klein.

b. Subcommittee and Members' Reports

- i. ALG – Kyra Cook (2/18/22)
ALG agreed to a balanced FY23 plan after the town adjusted their budget increase to 3%, increased their Free Cash use, and changed their revenue projections to less conservative numbers. While all parties were able to make necessary adjustments to get to consensus, everyone must hold a more sober outlook for FY24 and likely FY25. The Acton Finance Committee met on February 22 and voted to support the ALG plan, noting concerns about sustainability of both town and school budgets.
- ii. Budget – Kyra Cook (2/28/22)
The preliminary budget vote on 2/17/22 was reviewed as well as ALG concerns. A memo from the Administration to FinCom and the Select Board with a detailed overview of our Pandemic-related losses and expenses, and a more specific ask for ARPA allocations for FY24 and beyond was discussed.

The Subcommittee is looking ahead to FY24 and the challenges for next year. There are concerns about the sustainability of budgets and the difficulty of limiting budget growth to the nominal 3% which can be supported within the constraint of Proposition 2 ½. The potential for a

future tax override is being discussed in our community. Members discussed how an override would affect not only the school budget and budgeting process, but the financial health of our friends and neighbors during a continuing tumultuous time. We do not believe that an FY24 override would be acceptable by the community at this time particularly in light of our reserve position (across school and town reserves). There are strong arguments for additional state support for our regional school system and encourage everyone concerned about the limits of our educational services to lobby at the state level.

iii. Mascot Screening - Peter Light (3/2/22)

The students have been working hard. Their survey has gone to 20,000 email addresses. Based on responses, eight choices for names were narrowed down to five, in a “spirited debate”: Nor’easters, Revolutionaries, Thunderstorm, Bs and United. The students will create a narrative around each name for the next survey that will go out soon. The goal is to have a strong students’ voice in this decision and to bring a recommended name to the School Committee in May. Martin Benson requested the School Committee pause the process which he believes was done in direct violation of School Committee policy.

c. **Approval of Meeting Minutes of 2/17/22 and 2/3/22 – VOTE** - Adam Klein

Kyra Cook moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the minutes of 2/17/22 and 2/3/22.

d. **Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - VOTED** - Adam Klein

Tessa McKinley moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the warrants (see memo).

e. FYI

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Adam Klein stated the need for an Executive Session to be convened under MGL Ch 30A, sec. 21 (a) purpose (2): to conduct a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel. He also state that the Committee would not return to open meeting.

At 8:12 p.m. Kyra Cook made the motion, seconded by Ben Bloomenthal and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to enter executive session for the reason stated.
(Abayaah-Issah, Bloomenthal, Cook, Kremer, Klein, McKinley, Schwartz, Wang)

ADJOURN

The ABRSC adjourned from executive session at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used for Budget Hearing:

Agenda

FY23 Budget Hearing – Budget Overview slides

Recommended Assessments and Table 6 as voted on 2/17/22

Reference was made to budget materials posted for the ABRSC meeting on 2/17/22

List of Documents Used for Business Meeting:

Agenda

Request to Rename the ABRHS Pool memo, 2/28/22

Naming District Facilities policy, File: FF and procedures FF-R

Draft ABRSC Budget Meeting Minutes of 2/17/22

Draft ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 2/3/22

Warrants memo and motion to approve, 3/3/22

FYI:

1. Acton 2022 Annual Election Calendar
2. Boxborough 2022 Annual Election Calendar, Town Meeting is May 9
3. Certification of Acton Boxborough Excess and Deficiency, 2/15/22
4. Acton Finance Committee FY23 Point of View

NEXT MEETINGS:

ABRSC: March 17, April 7 and May 5 at 7:00 p.m.

Next Community Coffee with the Superintendent & ABRSC Chair via zoom:
March 9th at 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION (FYI)

1. Acton Annual Election is March 29, 2022 and Town Meeting is May 16
2. Boxborough 2022 Annual Election Calendar, Town Meeting is May 9
3. Certification of Acton Boxborough Excess and Deficiency, 2/15/22
4. Open Meeting Law Training sponsored by the Town of Acton on Wednesday, 3/9/22 at 6:30 p.m. at Acton Town Hall
5. Acton Finance Committee FY23 Point of View