

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Administration Building Auditorium

15 Charter Road, Acton

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

May 19, 2022

7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (left at 9:10 p.m.), Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley (8:10 p.m.), Andrew Schwartz, Yebin Wang, Rebecca Wilson
Members Absent: Liz Fowlks
Others: Marie Altieri, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. **Call to Order (7:00)**

Chairperson Adam Klein called the ABRSC to order at 7:02 p.m.
He stated that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.

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

Adam welcomed Rebecca Wilson who is the new member from Acton. He also congratulated and thanked Ginny Kremer for being reelected. Liz Fowlks, the new Boxborough member, will join the Committee at the next meeting. Adam thanked the town meeting members from both towns for passing the school budget and John Petersen for doing the presentation.

a. **Public Participation - none**

b. **Superintendent's Update**

Mr. Light congratulated the Class of 2022 on their upcoming graduation. He also publicized the need for volunteers for Project Graduation, gave an update on Covid, asked families to complete the Climate and Culture survey coming out next week, and recognized the 30 staff members celebrating their 20 years of service to the school district. Lastly, Mr. Light thanked everyone who attended the two Town Meetings and supported next year's school budget, acknowledging that concerns were heard in both towns about the sustainability of budget increases and the impact of increasing tax rates on families, especially coupled with rising inflation.

3. **Guests and Presentations**

a. **Acceptance of the Official ABRSD Mascot - Peter Light**

- i. Subcommittee Update and Student Video
- ii. Recommendation to Accept the Acton-Boxborough (A-B) "Revolution" as the new Mascot of the AB Regional Schools - **VOTE** (*Second Read*) (*public comment limited to 1.5 minutes per person*)

A video created by the students was shown describing how some members of the student working group felt about the proposed new mascot. Screening Subcommittee members, Chris Lynett and Meg Spring spoke about how inspirational it was to be part of this process. The students listened to all of the input and voices from the community, then they made their decision - the Revolution. The students were passionate and "so dedicated to this process". Meg commented that the Colonial has a different connotation than it did in 1994 when she was a student at AB. It was felt that the Revolution honors our history and is inclusive.

Mr. Light thanked everyone who participated in this process, especially the students. He described the process as "all about moving forward and selecting the next mascot in a way that honors both past and present." He stressed that this change was not about eliminating the period of time when AB celebrated the Colonials, but the recommendation now is about looking forward to the future. We need to recognize that some of our community felt like they were not heard.

Mr. Light concluded that the Mascot Screening subcommittee was formally recommending that the AB Revolution be the new mascot.

Adam invited the public to comment if they wished. Comments included:

- The administration and school committee have lied to the community and violated laws and district policies during this process. This was never a student led initiative.
- Changing the mascot goes against the Committee's fiduciary responsibility to the community. This expenditure should be put on hold.
- The process was flawed and did not include everyone. \$20,000 in legal fees have been spent on records requests.
- Issues need to be addressed before this vote takes place.
- Thank you to all who made it possible to retire this problematic mascot. The mascot is meant for the students.
- The argument to honor the colonial is strange because we were fighting against being colonized. This change respects our current population and their concerns.
- Thank you to the School Committee and all of the students who worked on this.
- To prepare for Town Meeting, a speaker looked up the diversity at our High School and was amazed at how it has changed since he was there. He stated that this is a "proud place to live with this new change".
- It's time for a change. Acton voting to the change the state flag at Town Meeting is a great example. It is time to put this to rest and be equally represented.

After much thanks to all of the members of the working group and subcommittee, comments from the School Committee included:

- The issues that this district is experiencing, like equity for kids of color need to be addressed. If we could focus the energy that we have on school issues it would be amazing. Black and brown kids are failing in this school district. Why don't we have more black teachers and black counselors? The passion that was shown about this mascot, should be put toward other issues now.
- This process was driven and led by these student leaders, especially when emotions were high in our community. We can learn a lot from these students. Let's go Revs!
- Although grateful for the students' work, the Revolution also has a negative side. What is a Revolution? 1. An overthrow of an established government. 2. Radical change in society and social structure especially one that is sudden and violent. 3. Complete change in something. The American Revolution was a good thing but the Russian and Chinese Revolutions were not so great. Is it necessary to choose such a provocative name?
- A member didn't prefer the name "Revolution", but when she saw how the students presented it to the subcommittee, the energy and positivity, and put themselves out there, it changed her mind.
- I am so proud of the kids for being willing to step up and take this challenge on. I am in awe of their bravery and dedication and all their time spent.
- Thank you to Mr. Light for leading the community through this difficult time. We are so proud you are here.
- This mascot came from the students, and their beliefs. What we are and how we can be better. This isn't just a name, it's what we do – spark change, create a revolution.
- It is clear that the Colonial alum feel great pride and they should, but it's time to move forward. We need to recognize our past and celebrate our future. I've been focusing on words that keep coming up – community, voice, honor, process, student led, pride and revolution. I am fully in support of this proposal.

Expressing gratitude for the time and care that had been given to this process, Kyra Cook read a statement. "Our students have been given the extraordinary gift to feel grounded in our community's history and to use that foundation to reach, to risk, and to realize their destinies." (see attached)

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the Acton-Boxborough (A-B) "Revolution" as the new Mascot of the AB Regional Schools.
(Yebin Wang abstained.)

b. **Elementary Schools Update**

Mr. Light welcomed Principals Dana Labb, Val Gransewicz, Lucia Sullivan, Lynne Newman, Christy Nealon and Juliana Schneider. Lynne was recognized for her upcoming retirement and Juliana was wished well on her move to a new school district closer to home.

It was noted that the principals wanted to present together but they also realize that they have individual schools and are proud of that. School Improvement Plans, Equitable Opportunities and Outcomes (MTSS), Inclusive Practices and Social and Emotional Learning were reviewed followed by highlights from each of the six schools.

Members enjoyed the presentation, especially that the principals did it together, sounding like they are part of the same district, but still unique. The data being used to measure success was appreciated. Mr. Light explained that we are a district that has never collected data across all of our schools in the past, only MCAS. The first year we used Panorama, it was not a great indicator of what to expect due to covid and other factors, but this second year it was much more helpful.

c. **Elementary Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Update**

Working with Deb Bookis, Andrew Shen described the meetings of the 14 member Steering Committee and 4 working groups. Playbook components and tiers for behavior supports were discussed. Next steps will include: continuing to provide vision for MTSS model, analyzing district data, and compiling school-based MTSS DESE Self-assessments.

MTSS is not a substitute for special education services. MTSS benefits all students, including those on an IEP. Regarding the initial concern of some around the data and disproportionality, Christy Nealon reported that staff at McCarthy Towne are really “loving the data”. Some opinions are shifting, but slowly. It’s a multi-year process. They want to create a safe place for teachers. Andrew added that it’s also about “Being ok with uncomfortable answers to some of our questions”, referring to a member’s previous comments regarding the mascot process.

Amanda Bailey is glad that the family communication handbooks are being used, but asked how data will be shared with families. It’s hard to know if a child is missing skills when there’s no homework. She encouraged data sharing with families, because without knowing, parents can’t help. Members encouraged Andrew to return to the Committee next year with some data and readable graphics that can be shared with the public.

d. **ABRSD Food Services Update - Kirsten Nelson**

- i. Recommendation to Set FY23 Lunch Prices - **VOTE**

Mr. Light thanked Kirsten for the amazing work that she and her staff have done for our students and the community, including serving over 300,000 meals. In response to a question, she shared a list of local farms and businesses that she buys food from including Carlson Orchard in Harvard and Costa Fruit and Produce.

The increase in lunch prices is a federal requirement, so the district has to vote it. We have minimums that we have to charge per the government in order to participate in their programs. Kirsten was asked if the federal waiver expires, and we stop offering free meals, how would it affect kids? She replied that our virtual gateway program provides students' information, so she can see automatically how the Free and Reduced Lunch numbers change. We were at 2.5% and are now at 11% for FRL just from the data, which is very discrete. We also have other ways to help families that need it. Kirsten encouraged everyone to follow AB Food Service on social media. Marie thanked Kirsten and her team. At the beginning of covid, a Food Security Task Force was started and they are still meeting monthly with community groups. There is a lot of partnering and exchanging of ideas and resources. United Way is part of it. Supply chain issues and the Greater Boston Food Bank problems all come up for food providers.

Andrew Schwartz moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to set the FY23 ABRSD Lunch Prices as presented.

4. Ongoing Business

- a. **Superintendent Annual Evaluation - Adam Klein**
 - i. Final Report on Status of FY22 Goals - *Peter Light*
 - ii. Invitation for Public Input by June 2, 2022
(to AKlein@abschools.org and BPetr@abschools.org)

An editable version of the evaluation template and a copy of the Superintendent rubric will be sent to members tomorrow. All evaluation is judgmental but this should be guided by the rubric.

Regarding his goals, Mr. Light was encouraged not having too many goals and action steps due to how hard it can be on the staff when too many new initiatives are added. Mr. Light reminded members that last October, he had 6 goals and suggested that he wanted to skip one, but the Committee voted all 6 and they were not all successful. He will keep this in mind. A member said to keep some perspective and that some goals are longer term and that's ok.

- b. Request to Suspend Policy BDA and Procedure BDA-Rs' Requirement that the ABRSC Reorganization Occur at the First Regularly Scheduled Committee Meeting after all new members have been sworn in and to Postpone the Reorganization until June 16, 2022

Andrew Schwartz moved, Evelyn Abayahh-Issah seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: Request to Suspend Policy BDA and Procedure BDA-Rs' Requirement that the ABRSC Reorganization Occur at the First Regularly Scheduled Committee Meeting after all new members have been sworn in and to Postpone the Reorganization until June 16, 2022.

c. **EDCO Update - *Peter Light***

EDCO met today and is on schedule to close as of June 30. All districts have agreed to meet the financial restrictions. The Executive Director is finalizing a letter to DESE stating that requirements are all set. There are enough funds so additional funds will not be required from the districts. There will be some reimbursement to districts when all is complete due to grants, etc. as auditors are comfortable at the closing.

d. **Subcommittee and Members' Reports**

- i. Community Engagement subcommittee - *Andrew Schwartz*
See draft minutes of this meeting in the packet.

e. **Consent Agenda - VOTE - *Adam Klein***

- i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 5/5/22
ii. Recommendation to Approve Bus Lease Agreement and Addendum between N.E.T. Leasing Corp. and ABRSD dated July 1, 2022
iii. Recommendation to Approve Donation of \$1800 from Merriam PTO
More information will be coming next year regarding electric buses next year.

Tessa McKinley moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the consent agenda.

f. **Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - VOTE – *A. Klein***

Kyra Cook moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded, and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the warrants, see memo for wording.

g. **FYI**

5. Adjourn

Tessa McKinley moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to adjourn the ABRSC at 10:01 pm

FOR YOUR INFORMATION (FYI)

1. ABRSC Meetings for 2022-2023
2. Reception for ABRSD Staff with 20 Years of Service
3. Acton Town Meeting begins May 16
4. Boxborough Annual Election is May 17

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used:

- Agenda
- Superintendent's Update, 5-19-22
- Mascot Memo from P. Light, 5/13/22
- Statement from C. Hogseth, 5/19/22
- Statement from K. Cook, 5/19/22
- Principal Presentation slides
- ABRSD Elementary MTSS slides
- AB Food Service Department slides, K. Nelson
- 2021-22 Superintendent Evaluation slides, P. Light
- Superintendent's End-of-Year Goals Update, P. Light, 5/13/22
- End of Cycle Summative Evaluation Report: Superintendent template
- ABRSD District Strategy 2021-2026, Mid-Year Update: Annual District Improvement Plan FY22
- Superintendent Evaluation Process Overview
- Request to Postpone School Committee Reorganization memo, A. Klein, 5/11/22
- ABRSC policies: School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting, File: BDA, BDA-R, Suspension of Policies, File: BGF
- Draft Minutes of ABRSC meeting 5/5/22
- Master Equipment Lease Agreement between NET and ABRSD, 7/1/22
- Request for Approval of Donations Valued over \$1,000 memo, J. Schneider 5/11/22
- Warrants memo, D. Verdolino, 5/19/22