

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

Administration Building Auditorium  
15 Charter Road, Acton

September 9, 2021  
7:00 p.m. Business Meeting

8:30 p.m. (approximately) Executive Session

To view the meeting virtually (no participation): <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

To make a public comment (two options):

1. In-person - please wear a mask
2. Virtually - preregister for Public Comment (required for virtual):  
(pre-registration must be submitted 24 hours prior to the start of the meeting)  
[https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_rRX6KWM2TtaDNn1rfh6\\_JQ](https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rRX6KWM2TtaDNn1rfh6_JQ)

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Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook (8:25 p.m.), Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Adam Klein, John Petersen, Andrew Schwartz, Nora Shine,  
Members Absent: Tessa McKinley, Yebin Wang  
Others: Marie Altieri, Deb Bookis, Dawn Bentley, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

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**1. CALL TO ORDER (7:00)**

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairperson Adam Klein.

Adam stated that the meeting was being conducted as a hybrid with all of the School Committee members in the auditorium (with the exception of Tessa McKinley and Yebin Wang who were absent), along with members of the public. The following committee members were in attendance: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Ben Bloomenthal, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, John Petersen, Andrew Schwartz, and Nora Shine. Kyra Cook would be coming late.

In an ongoing effort to make meetings as secure as possible, members of the public who wished to comment virtually were asked to register 24 hours prior to the start of the meeting using the link at the top of the agenda. Members attending in person were invited to speak at the public microphone as in the past. To view the meeting virtually the public was asked to use Acton tv's youtube channel (found at the top of the agenda). The Chair stated that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on Acton TV's website at [actontv.org](http://actontv.org).

- a. Chairperson's Welcome - *Adam Klein*
- b. Public Participation - *See above if participating remotely (virtual)*  
Esha Gangolli introduced herself as a liaison from the Acton Finance Committee.
- c. Superintendent's Update - *Peter Light*

Mr. Light reported on the August 30<sup>th</sup> opening of school and updated the Committee on Remembering 9/11, Covid issues, Transportation and Help Wanted needs, the new Annual Report that has been mailed to all Acton and Boxborough residents, and the awarding of a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant. It was noted that the testing consent form does not work on mobile apps because it is in Powerschool. Dawn will look into this. Mr. Light confirmed that the testing consent is opt-in instead of opt-out because it is medical testing and opting-in gives parents more control over their child's condition.

## **2. GUESTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **a. Staffing Update - Marie Altieri**

Marie shared updates on our 35 new teachers (plus 4 administrators), teachers who retired/left/taken leaves, data regarding teachers of color, FY22 salary ranges, and the new ABEA Memo of Agreement – Covid-19 Fall 2021. The average teacher's salary this year is \$67,125. We currently have 508 teachers.

Questions from the Committee included:

- “What are we specifically doing to attract and retain teachers of color? It may cost money but we need some deliberate tests to measure success in this area.” Marie totally agreed adding that the administration wants to hear any ideas that people have. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) group had some great ones. We are working with the most racially diverse groups in the state trying to bring in more student teachers. The job fair groups that we attend are recruiting from across the country. DESE is also trying to help districts attract candidates. We plan to make a video to welcome diverse candidates.
- “What happens if we don't make our goal in 3 years?” We don't know, but the goal is an intention. Many of the suggestions from DEI, won't take hold until next year. We need to check our annual progress and adjust as we go. Only 8% of MA educators are of color, but we want to be at 10% so it means we need to be better than all other districts to increase at that rate. We are trying to get strategies from our teachers and families of color, but some of it will be trial and error.
- The goal should be to have staff look like our community. If so, it has to be higher than 10% and that will be a challenge. We won't do well initially but we will get better.
- There has been little turnover specifically of our teachers of color over the past 4 years but we are watching it closely. A welcome kit for new teachers of color outlining specific supports is being planned.

Adam thanked Marie for her work and appreciated most that the District is measuring these efforts and reporting on it to the Committee.

## **3. ONGOING BUSINESS**

### **a. School Building Naming Update (1st Read) - Amy Krishnamurthy**

Amy reviewed the process that began on April 1, 2021. After much deliberation, the 15 member subcommittee unanimously approved “The Boardwalk Campus”

as their recommended name for the School Committee's consideration. Members also recommend recognizing the tribal nation that used to live on this land, similar to the tribute at the Sargent Library in Boxborough.

A member expressed disappointment that the recommendation was not the name of someone who means something to the community. Amy reported that there was a lot of discussion about names that were submitted, but in the end, members concluded that the boardwalk is a very special landmark for the Douglas and Gates families. Another member agreed that it is a beautiful and distinctive feature but added that it seemed like a "safe" choice. There would be the danger that a person wouldn't live up to the tribute. Andrew Schwarz, who was on the subcommittee, added that every name that was proposed had some possible negative that could be associated with it. Rather than looking backward to someone, they decided to look forward to what kids will do with the space. Some of the strongest advocates were the Douglas and Gates teachers who are very connected to what happens on the boardwalk with the students.

Adam reminded people that they are naming the campus rather than the building because there are already three school names that will remain in use at the facility. Adding an additional name to the three schools would be a lot. Members wanted the name to be simple and provide clarity.

A second reading and vote are expected to take place at the School Committee meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.

b. Budget Update - *Dave Verdolino*

- i. FY21 End of Year Report
- ii. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Update

The End of Year Report is preliminary because it will be audited and certified before being final. The net revenue variance was \$70,358 (0.07%). Net expenditure variance was \$1,170,370 (1.21%). Significant components of the expenditure variance were explained. The net budget variance was \$1,240,728. The preliminary estimate of E&D as of July 1, 2021 was \$3,225,560 (3.2%). Dave also reviewed District Reserve Accounts, Revolving Fund Accounts, and Federal Grant Accounts.

Comments included:

- Should members lobby for the pending funding? Dave has spoken with Congresswoman Trahan and Congressman McGovern's offices and they are aware of the need. MA Association of Regional Schools (MARS) has been reaching out as well. President Biden will be making a decision about changing eligibility. The FEMA liability is significant and members should reach out to legislators about it.
- Why is some Title 1 money in our regular budget and some in a different category? Dave explained that a lot of annual entitlement grants are not accounted for with regular funds because they are not appropriated money. They are not part of the tax payers' burden in funding the schools. The first half of the

presentation was tax payer money, and the second was due to Covid. A member felt it would be better to have all of the funds in one place, so it could be discussed in a unified way, just like the various reserves/E&D/circuitbreaker funds. It was suggested that this discussion should start in the budget subcommittee. Dave reminded members that everything related to covid will be an anomaly once the pandemic ends. If funds are incorporated all together, it could skew the numbers for quite a while. Dave's job is to show as clear a message as possible. Adam agreed with Dave. A balance is needed and we need to be cognizant of where our reserves are.

- Dave was asked for the specific grant application numbers to make it easier for federal representatives to help. Ginny has a meeting coming up with Lori Trahan's office and she will bring that information to her.

Mr. Light presented on the District's requests for ARP funding. This is similar to CARES funding but it is not retroactive. It is for specific items after March 2021. We don't qualify for most of the reasons listed. Funds go directly to the Towns. John Mangiaratti is presenting at the Selectboard on Monday night. Boxborough's presentation was last week. It is a tight timeline. Members were encouraged to remind their town officials that the schools really need a share of this funding.

c. Consent Agenda/Action Items – VOTE - *Adam Klein*

- i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of ~~8/19/21~~ & 8/26/21 (Minutes of 8/19 will be at the next meeting)
- ii. FY22 Assignments and Liaisons
- iii. Recommendation to establish a Community Engagement Subcommittee

Ginny Kremer moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the consent agenda.

d. Subcommittee and Member Reports

Adam reported on the Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) meeting on September 1, 2021.

Mr. Light reported on the recent Building Committee meeting. The Boardwalk is now officially open to the public, and will be a centerpiece of the community. The project is going well and according to plan. An area of concern is that there were numerous early change orders and now the construction contingency is down to \$500,000. Although a little low, the cost savings from other areas are making up for it. The project is in a sound financial position.

e. Statement of Warrants/Recommendation to Approve – VOTE– *A. Klein*

John Petersen moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED**: to approve the warrants, see memo.

#### 4. FYI

The 2020-2021 Annual Report should arrive in homes soon. The June 1 Enrollment Report is in the packet because it was not available for the last meeting of the school year. The annual enrollment presentation is done in early November using the October 1 numbers, per the state. The revised Family Communication Map is now simplified and the Superintendent encouraged anyone with a concern to use it as a resource. The goal is to resolve concerns as fast and efficiently as possible by speaking to the person closest to the issue.

#### 5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Adam Klein stated that there was a need to convene an executive session under MGL Ch 30A, sec. 21(a) purpose 3: to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA), Acton-Boxborough Office Support Association (ABOSA) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee and that the Committee would not return to Open Meeting.

At 9:00 p.m., Amy Krishnamurthy made the motion, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED by roll call:** to enter the Executive Session as stated.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Bloomenthal, Cook, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, Klein, Petersen, Schwartz, Shine)

#### FYI

- f. ABRSC FY22 [Meetings](#) and [Members](#)
- g. AB Annual Report, 2020 - 2021
- h. June 2, 2021 Enrollment Report
- i. [2021-22 Family Communication Map](#)
- j. NEXT MEETINGS: ABRSC September 23 and October 7 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda