

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

Administration Building Auditorium  
15 Charter Road, Acton

September 23, 2021  
7:00 p.m.

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\\_x59Jq1GUSJmVILvQKW1twA](https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_x59Jq1GUSJmVILvQKW1twA)

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

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## CALL TO ORDER

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:02 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 along with members of the public. The following committee members were in attendance: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Andrew Schwartz and Yebin Wang. Nora Shine was absent.

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*

Adam stated that this would be the last hybrid meeting. Future School Committee meetings would not be using zoom. Public comment will be done in person in the auditorium, or via email to the Committee at [abrsc@abschools.org](mailto:abrsc@abschools.org). Meetings will continue to be broadcast via Acton TV. Adam told the Committee members that a significant amount of work is coming up in the next meetings. He asked them to "be prepared and present" and to please participate. Three important topics at the next meeting are: a review of School Committee protocols, an introduction to the superintendent evaluation process (webinar from MASS/MASC), and a

presentation from the administration on the district goals/plans. Adam will send a link regarding the superintendent evaluation process so members can view the webinar and read some material before the meeting.

- b. Public Participation - *See above if participating remotely (virtual)*  
A member of the public spoke against the requirement that teachers get the vaccine, calling it “unnecessary”. She felt that everyone has had time to decide to get vaccinated and has reasons if they choose not to.
- c. Superintendent’s Update - *Peter Light*

## GUESTS AND PRESENTATIONS

- d. New Administrators Introduction: Jen Truslow, Joanie Dean, Jim Marcotte, Christy Nealon, Abigail Dressler, Lucia Sullivan - *Peter Light*

The Superintendent introduced and welcomed the newest administrators. Some have been in the district (Jim, Christy and Abigail) and others are new to AB (Jen, Joanie and Lucia). They are all excited to be in their new positions.

## ONGOING BUSINESS

- e. Recommendation from the School Building Naming Committee to Approve “The Boardwalk Campus and provide a land acknowledgement to the Nipmuc Tribal Nation” - (2nd Read) - **VOTE** - *Amy Krishnamurthy*

There was no additional feedback or questioning from the community or the School Committee since the First Read that was done at the 9/9/21 School Committee.

Tessa McKinley moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED**: to approve “The Boardwalk Campus” as the name of the new school building and grounds, and provide a land acknowledgement to the Nipmuc Tribal Nation.

Adam thanked the Naming Subcommittee and Amy Krishnamurthy for their work on this effort.

- f. Recommendation to Establish an ABRSD Mascot Naming Committee - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*

Mr. Light reviewed his proposal that the School Committee establish a Mascot Screening Subcommittee consistent with policy and procedures FF and FF-R. He and Athletic Director Steve Martin could lead the process. A High School working group would design a process that allows students and staff, as well as the broader community to have appropriate levels of engagement to solicit, communicate, and narrow options for a new mascot. This working group would make a final recommendation to the School Committee Subcommittee.

Comments from the Committee included:

- The thought that went into this proposal was appreciated.
- Although the School Committee wanted to phase the old mascot out so money would not need to be spent, some purchases are needed because if you don't supply some items (like a t-shirt), kids will keep wearing what they have. The administration wants to be transparent.
- A consultant was asked what the process might look like because we want to provide a framework and appropriate level of guidance to the student working group.
- The goal is to bring a recommendation from the students in mid-spring, and then spend some time on branding.
- How do you make sure the group members are representative? So many members of the people voiced opinions on the mascot last year, but this memo allows for only one community member. Mr. Light replied that the mascot belongs primarily to the students. He is trying to balance student and community voices. Although the subcommittee to the School Committee only has one community member, the student working group will include a lot of input from the general community.

Ben Bloomenthal moved, Andrew Schwarz seconded and it was unanimously

**VOTED**: to establish a mascot screening subcommittee to receive, review and recommend a mascot as proposed by the student bodies of the high school and junior high school.

g. Budget Update - *Dave Verdolino*

1. Revolving Accounts and Reserves Update

Dave reviewed the FY21 Revolving Accounts: Athletic, Integrated Pre-K, All-Day Kindergarten, Community Education, Extended Day Program, and the School Lunch (Food Services) accounts. He also covered the Circuit Breaker account due to its overall significance. The total revolving accounts' year end amount has dropped significantly since FY2019 due to the pandemic.

Regarding Circuit Breaker (Special Education Reimbursement) Program (CB), budgeted use of reserve increased significantly for FY21 to offset the hiring of six new special educators. Consistently budgeting to use more CB reimbursement than is expected to be received from the state is not sustainable. The District will try to reduce the use of CB reserve in the future.

Members discussed the budgetary implications and importance of the Committee's decisions about using reserves. Operational decisions are not really School Committee issues. Two years ago, the administration wondered why we needed that much reserves and now we appreciate that it was available during the pandemic. The Committee needs to understand how we are charging some items to reserves so if that stops, it becomes a budget

challenge. It was agreed that this is part of a longer conversation about how money moves around and transparency.

## 2. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Update II

Peter referred to last meeting's ARPA slides #7 and #8 showing the District's original request for ARPA funds. It was learned at ALG this morning that requests far exceed the funds available. Mr. Light asked the Committee where they would like to see the school district focus.

Comments from the Committee included:

- Kyra Cook attended the Selectboard's listening meeting and spoke in support of the District's requests. Given the limited funds, it will be sad if something that we really care about is eliminated because we didn't advocate.
- Adam Klein asked which of the two buckets is the Committee's priority, revenue replacement or items that align with our values, mission, and goals that support students.
- Tessa McKinley replied that she would like to focus on equity items because they will be most effective to the students we serve.
- Ginny Kremer added that items #2,3,4,5 talk about our youngest and most vulnerable kids during covid. Families really need this support. She hopes the Selectboard understands that the School Committee is charged with caring for our youngest and most vulnerable.
- Ben Bloomenthal agreed that these are the core needs of our community. Slide 7 is basic necessities. Some families are still struggling. For students in grades 7-12, we need to give these kids the ability to compete with their peers. The future of our community lies with items #2 through #6 on slides 7 and 8.
- Evelyn Abayaah-Issah urged members to think more broadly and remember that public health issues are equity issues.
- John Petersen reminded the Committee that there are budgetary consequences to these decisions. He advocated for starting with revenue replacement as a priority to get our "house in order". Ben disagreed calling revenue replacement a bandaid. "If we can't generate the revenue because families are struggling, why do it?"
- Mr. Light added that if we don't have sufficient amounts in our All Day Kindergarten (ADK) revolving accounts, it could affect the Committee's future moves to get to free ADK.
- Several members wondered how critical the telephone system was for \$700,000 given the priorities. Mr. Light stated that the new Douglas/Gates system is designed to be a backbone of an entire phone system, and Blanchard's phones were very outdated. The timing of this item is important, and it also involves security.
- Kyra concluded by saying that the \$2.6 M is a lot of money but it is what the District needs to do a good job this school year.

3. Annual Town Meeting Updates

Acton's Town Meeting is May 16, the week after Boxborough's. Having the coordinated meetings later in the year was much appreciated.

h. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 8/19/21 and 9/9/21 - *Adam Klein*

Evelyn Abayaah-Issah moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED**: to approve the meeting minutes of August 19<sup>th</sup> and September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

i. Subcommittee and Member Reports

1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) 9/23/21 - John Petersen reported that he and Kyra Cook attended. Both the schools and Town reported hiring challenges. The primary goal of the ALG process is to balance revenue and expenses to the "net position" in the ALG plan is zero. With Acton taxing to the levy limit, the "net position" for FY23 is negative by \$900K in the first preliminary look. The Select Board is discussing how to utilize ARPA funds and have invited the public to complete a survey. Decisions may be made by the Select Board as soon as mid-October.
2. Ginny Kremer shared the information about the denial of FEMA reimbursement from Dave Verdolino with the state delegation and a rep in Congresswoman Lori Trahan's office. She will keep members posted.
3. Adam Klein asked any members who are interested in serving on the new Mascot Screening Subcommittee to let him know.

j. Statement of Warrants/Recommendation to Approve – **VOTE**– *Adam Klein*

John Petersen moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the warrants. See memo.

Mr. Light thanked Dawn Bentley, Dana Labb and Michael Votto for their tireless efforts this past week at the Blanchard School.

**ADJOURN**

At 8:58 p.m., Kyra Cook moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to adjourn the ABRSC.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda