

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING Approved Minutes

Administration Building Auditorium
15 Charter Road, Acton

October 7, 2021
7:00 p.m.

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

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

CALL TO ORDER

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

After a year and a half of zoom and hybrid meetings, Adam was happy to welcome everyone to a “regular”, in person meeting again. Members of the public were invited to view the meeting using Acton tv’s youtube channel. It was stated that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on actontv.org.

- a. Chairperson’s Welcome - *Adam Klein*
- b. ABRHS Student Representatives Update - *Depre Carr, ~~Sivapriya Marimuthu,~~ Rohan Ravindran*
Depre and Rohan shared their thoughts regarding moving from remote learning back to inperson and how it is generally, extremely rewarding. They also mentioned concern about the number of wasps around the Junior High and High School, the wifi issues at the High School (being worked on), and the bottlenecks in the High School hallways and doorways when classes are changing. Although one of the students said there is a noticeable level of stress, so far things are going well, and even smoother than expected.
- c. Public Participation - *in person only, no preregistration*
Martin Benson spoke regarding last year’s process used to retire the mascot which he felt was rushed.
- d. Superintendent’s Update - *Peter Light*
Mr. Light thanked Depre and Rohan for providing the student voice. A long term solution for the wifi issues is in the works but the controllers need to be upgraded first. He will look into the wasps that are bothering students outside.

Mr. Light’s update included:

- The Junior High and High School have sent out an invitation for students to indicate interest in participating in the mascot student working group.

An invitation will go out to the community regarding their interest next week.

- Covid Public Health update, Blanchard update and testing programs
- The extended statewide school mask requirement
- Staffing has become challenging in a number of areas.

The public was invited to attend one of the upcoming zoom Community Coffees with the Superintendent and School Committee Chairperson. The first one is Oct 20 at 8:30 a.m.

ONGOING BUSINESS

e. Review of School Committee Protocols - *Adam Klein*

The Chair invited members to have an open discussion on last year's protocols in regard to members' priorities. He noted that there was no intention to rehash them all.

Comments included:

- The goal to support all students is really important given the stress so many are feeling after being remote last year. This is true for all ages. It has been a huge transition for kids. The High School reps were thanked for speaking up.
- Although the mascot discussions and decision were extremely difficult, it was valuable to model respectful behavior and listen to those with different opinions. Although it is difficult, an essential part of serving on the School Committee is being able to move on when a decision has been voted.
- Being a supporter of public education is meaningful.
- A member expressed ongoing concern regarding how well the district is communicating.
- Debating effectively and efficiently is important. Hearing all voices is key but meetings should not run on for many hours.
- The Committee is a deliberative body and time is needed to ask questions and consider pros and cons. Members need to read the posted materials and not depend on presentations at the meetings as their only source.
- Presentations are an important way to share information with the public, the people that the Committee is serving.
- When the protocols were created, the headings were very important. This isn't about members as individuals. It is about our first priority, members' dedication to ALL of our students.

Members were invited to sign the FY22 protocols, unchanged from FY21.

f. Overview of Annual Superintendent's Evaluation Process - *Adam Klein, Marie Altieri*

i. Slides: Evaluating the Superintendent, *MA Association of School Committees* and Superintendent Evaluation, *DESE*

Marie reviewed the Evaluation Process and Timeline. Because Mr. Light has completed three years, the Committee could move from a one year to a two year cycle if they wished. The same process would be spread out over two years.

Members talked about which Committee members would complete the evaluation if it were done every two years. The policy says and the tradition is that members who were on the Committee for that year do the evaluation, but it could be discussed. At the end of year one, there would still be a formative assessment by everyone.

Additional channels of gathering information were considered. The public is always invited to give input and that is incorporated into the summative evaluation. The amount received varies by the year. Tessa noted that of the 21 indicators, there are pieces that School Committee members do not know about. She has some concern that for a two year evaluation, it would take a lot of evidence gathering during a busy time for members (May/June). More supportive help/structure would be needed for members.

It would still be important to have a good formative assessment at end of first year. There was some discussion of the calendar timeline and whether goals for the year could be done before school starts. Marie explained that our goals are the product of a lot of work that the Leadership Team does to develop goals along with our strategies. The summer retreat is primarily to develop the goals and may not work as well to try to do that in May. Our School Improvement Plan timelines traditionally could be an issue as well.

A two year cycle could be changed next year by a vote of the Committee. It is not permanent. This year really represents the first year we see goals tied to the strategy. One member doesn't want them to feel pressure to start reporting out on this in January. There is a lot that our administrators and teachers are being asked to do this year. A two year cycle would give them some time to breath and do good work. The message would be "we trust you" and "we like the direction you're going". Several members agreed.

ii. Possible **VOTE** of Evaluation Cycle

Although slide 7 is a rough timeline, members asked for a little more detail for a two year cycle before deciding. It would be very helpful if members could also be alerted when something specifically pertains to the goals so they can track it. It was agreed that a decision on the cycle would be made at the next meeting.

g. District Goals/Action Steps/Benchmarks 2021-22 (First Read) - *Peter Light*

Mr. Light asked for feedback on which of the six goals should be prioritized. Given the results of the pandemic, he advocated for narrowing the focus in favor of depth. He asked that the Committee chose three or four goals. See slide 3.

Comments included:

- Several members like goals 3, 4 and 5.
- MTSS may be "too heavy a lift this year".

- The High School has been left out. The way students choose levels at the High School should be less restrictive. Kids should take what they're interested in. Increased engagement, especially at the High School should be a top 3. A member added that given a new principal this year, Joanie Dean should be given some time to work.
- Goal #4 about Equitable Opportunities is similar to the Operating Protocol where it's all about students. In noting that the goals say we are doing Iready assessment, a member questioned whether the Committee needs to be involved in that much detail.
- Goal #6 about Engaged Learning was appreciated by two members because it means kids are getting excited about learning, and creating their own learning environments.
- How can we bring this all together for the main goal? Mr. Light replied that as a leadership team, they have started to look at what a culturally responsive culture looks like. Universally designed instruction is also part of it. No one goal will do it but it is about balance. Goals 4 and 5 have to go together because you can't do 5 without doing 4.
- A member would love to see language about how you do evidence based instruction. She is happy to hear Goals 4 and 5 going together, but it doesn't feel "normal". Better engagement with families that speak different languages is important. We need to empower them.
- Literacy is the foundation. If students can't read, they can't access any of the other information. Foundational math and literacy skills are essential.
- Amanda Bailey shared her thoughts expressing concern about the lack of a deep emphasis on mental health, and a question about the role families play in partnerships with schools.

Adam Klein summarized that the Committee seems to prioritize Goals 1, 3 and 5, but they are also not minimizing Goals 2,4, and 6. Mr. Light will bring the Goals back to the next meeting.

h. Subcommittee and Member Reports

i. Budget Subcommittee - Kyra Cook

1. *ARPA Update*

Budget sub met on 9/27/21 and reaffirmed their charge. They discussed budget guidelines, info on FY21 and FY22. Regarding ARPA, the Acton Selectboard met on Monday. The spreadsheet in the packet includes feedback from the last meeting and the Leadership team discussion. FEMA line is a concern although it is getting better. They decided to make Revenue Replacement the #1 priority. They deprioritized the phone system.

ii. Mascot Screening Subcommittee - *Adam Klein*

Ben Bloomenthal and Andrew Schwartz have been appointed as the School Committee reps to this subcommittee. In the interest of time, Martin Benson will email questions that he has to the Superintendent.

iii. Health Insurance Trust (HIT) 9/30/21 - *John Petersen*

The FY21 treasurer's report for the Acton Health Insurance Trust showed a loss of \$2.8 million on revenues of \$18.6 million for the year ended June 30, 2021. These financials are consistent with the cash flow presented by Cook & Co. The loss was much larger than planned and leaves the Trust with an unrestricted fund balance of only \$3.0 million. The reserve is now at 15% of expected expenses which is the minimum level considered acceptable by the Trustees. Rates will need to set to minimize the possibility of further losses in FY23, I have suggested to the Trustees that rates will likely need to increase at least 10%.

- iv. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) - *Tessa McKinley*
BLF met on Tues. There are still many questions about how funding will be allocated. Nothing in particular on the list was concerning to them.

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

- i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 9/23/21
ii. Approval of Donation of \$2,000 from the Town of Acton for [William James Interface](#) Referral Service

Ben Bloomenthal moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the consent agenda.

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

Tessa McKinley moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the warrants. (see motion in memo)

FYI

- Monthly Student Enrollment Report, 9/1/21
- Anonymous Donation of \$500 to Aid Families with Food Insecurity
- [This Month in the Division of Open Government](#), September 2021
- Acton Annual Town Election and Town Meeting Information, 9/15/21

ADJOURN (9:00)

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

VOTED: to adjourn the ABRSC meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda