

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

Administration Building Auditorium
15 Charter Road, Acton

November 2, 2021
7:00 p.m.

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

Members Present: Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook, Ginny Kremer (left at 7:55 p.m.), Adam Klein, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Andrew Schwartz, Nora Shine (7:03 p.m.), Yebin Wang (7:04 p.m.)
Members Absent: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Amy Krishnamurthy
Others: Marie Altieri, Deb Bookis, Dawn Bentley, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

CALL TO ORDER (7:00)

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Adam Klein.

- a. Chairperson's Welcome - *Adam Klein*
Adam thanked everyone for attending and noted that the meeting was being recorded and will be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.
- b. ABRHS Student Representatives Update
The three reps, Depre Carr, Sivapriya Marimuthu and Rohan Ravindran, shared their perspectives. Comments included: A Service Animals policy is a good idea. Clocks should be in every classroom, especially during tests, because teachers don't always give the time in all classes. While one rep's experience with the Counseling department has been very positive, and he really appreciated the support, some of his peers' experiences have not been as positive. In 9th and 10th grade, some students don't have a lot of interaction with their counselor. Examples were given regarding difficulty with course selection or rules for assessments. Specifically, the process to request that a test be delayed to another day only applies if the tests are the same day. If you have 2 tests, followed by 2 more tests the next day, a delay typically would not be given.
- c. Public Participation
A parent shared that his child has been bullied in his class and he is upset about how the issue is being handled. Two other community members spoke in support of the parent. Committee members were asked to help with a resolution.

A parent who spoke at the previous meeting regarding her frustration with the Colonial mascot retirement process last year read her statement again because she felt that important parts were missing due to technical issues. She asked that the Committee delay the new mascot process to ensure that all voices are heard.

Martin Benson stated that some community members have been accused of prolonging the debate regarding the colonial mascot, when in his opinion, it is the

School District's refusal to release records that are involved in an Open Meeting Law complaint. Since December 2020, multiple public records requests have been filed and he expressed frustration that the District is spending tax money on legal assistance to address these requests and prolong the process.

Chairperson Adam Klein read the following statement:

"In regards to the matter of the school mascot: The decision that this committee made last October to retire the Colonial as the school mascot was made unanimously by the school committee, as a matter under our purview. This decision was made by the committee following our open process, including listening, seeking input, researching, weighing multiple perspectives, carefully considering stakeholders with differing opinions, and finally, discussing and deciding as a committee to retire the mascot. The school body can begin their process of choosing their new mascot. In making this decision, we have followed our school committee operating protocols, specifically working to support the educational welfare and well-being of ALL students in a positive district climate and culture, prioritizing student needs and interests above all else, and working actively to create an anti-racist community to respect the increasing diversity of our community. It is our hope that members of this community will act with inclusivity, understanding, and compassion, in this and other matters."

d. Superintendent's Update - *Peter Light*

Mr. Light shared information regarding November being Native American Heritage Month, the English Language Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC), transportation and Covid updates and the next zoom coffee with the Superintendent and School Committee Chair which will be November 17th. He wished everyone a Happy Diwali!

ONGOING BUSINESS

e. Transportation Update - *Peter Light & JD Head*

The District is implementing a vaccine requirement for all staff consistent with the Memoranda of Understanding between the School Committee and our three unions. Staff are required to be vaccinated by November 15 or be approved for a medical or religious exemption. Mr. Light explained the possible impacts this could have on our students and families regarding transportation.

Noting the "incredible" job that the transportation team has done working through the challenges and many possibilities that exist, Mr. Light said that with 98% of staff vaccinated, at this time, it is a very small number of staff (perhaps 8) that may be leaving. The transportation department is "right on the precipice" of trying to figure out if schedules need to be changed to accommodate a smaller number of bus routes due to driver shortage. JD Head explained that they need to be prepared on November 15 if they are faced with a diminished workforce.

Compensation incentives and referral bonuses have been very helpful. He and his staff have worked very hard on recruiting and poster hanging, in an effort to create as little disruption for our families as possible. We have 35 full time drivers on staff and thought we might lose 7 but now it is down to only 3. Approximately

90 students have opted out of transportation if needed based on an email that went out last week explaining the situation.

f. Budget Update - *Dave Verdolino*

i. 1st Qtr FY22 Report

Although very early in the school year, a modest \$200,000 surplus is projected by yearend. The process of E&D certification has begun. The projected balance, subject to certification adjustments, is \$3.2M or 3.2% of the FY22 appropriated budget.

g. Subcommittee and Member Reports

i. Budget Subcommittee - *Kyra Cook*

Approval of FY23 Budget Timeline & Guidelines - **VOTE**

It was noted that the School Committee meeting scheduled for January 20th has been moved to 27th.

Ben Bloomenthal moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the FY23 Budget Timeline and Guidelines as presented.

ii. Legislative Update - *Ginny Kremer*

Ginny and Mr. Light met with Rep. Dan Sena and Rep. Tami Gouveia to explain the financial difficulty with moving to universal Kindergarten that has become an even bigger budgetary challenge. Rep. Sena included an amendment in a request for ARPA funds for our All Day K program. Although it was supported by Rep. Gouveia, it did not make it into the final numbers. Rep. Sena will continue to work on this going forward. Ginny will continue to work on possible funding with Dave Verdolino.

iii. Policy Committee - *Nora Shine*

1. NEW: Service Animals in School, File: IMGA - *First Read*

2. NEW: Non-Service Comfort Animals in School, File: IMGB - *First Read*

Nora reported on these two new proposed policies for our District. The difference between a Service Animal and a Comfort Animal in that Service Animals are defined and protected by law. Input is welcome by November 10 so the subcommittee can consider it at their next meeting that day. Emails should be sent to Nora and cc to Beth.

iv. Community Engagement Committee - *Andrew Schwartz*

The Subcommittee met for the first time on Oct 22. Members are Andrew, Amy Krishnamurthy and Kyra Cook with Peter Light and Andrew Shen as administrators. Objectives are to review the social media policy and how information is shared between the School Committee, School District and Greater Community, including digital, physical and broadcast outreach.

- v. Health Insurance Trust (HIT) - *John Petersen*
John reported on the meeting of Oct 28th. The projected loss for the year is more than \$1M. Calendar Year 2022 Medex rates were increased to \$345 per month, a 5% increase. FY23 rates will be finalized in January with the next meeting to be held in late November/early December in the afternoon for those members interested in attending.

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

- i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 10/21/21
ii. Request for Approval of \$5,000 Grant from Danny's Place to Comm Ed
Kyra Cook moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously
VOTED: to approve the consent agenda.

- i. Request for Approval of Donations Valued over \$1,000 - Blanchard PTF & Gates PTO - **VOTE** - *Adam Klein*

Tessa McKinley moved to approve the Blanchard PTF's and Gates PTO's anticipated donations this year valued at over \$1,000. John Petersen seconded the motion.

The PTO Co-chairs met last night to discuss the new approval procedures with Mr. Light and Tessa. Gates decided to send all of their budget items at once for approval but other schools may do it item by item. If there is any question about a donation, it will be communicated to the principal and PTO chair.

The ABRSC unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the Blanchard PTF's and Gates PTO's anticipated donations this year valued at over \$1,000.

FYI

- English Language Parent Advisory Council Meeting, 10/26/21 HIGHLIGHTED!
- Donations for the William James Interface Referral Service
- FY22 ABRSC Operating Protocols, *voted 10/7/21*
- NEXT Community Coffee: Wednesday, Nov 17 at 7:00 p.m. via zoom.

The annual MASC/MASS conference starts tomorrow and a few members are attending. Peter and Tessa are presenting regarding communication during the pandemic.

ADJOURN

Kyra Cook moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously
VOTED to adjourn the ABRSC at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents used: see agenda