

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

Administration Building Auditorium

15 Charter Road, Acton

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

April 7, 2022

7:00 p.m. Business Meeting

7:30 p.m. FY23 School Choice Hearing

Followed by Return to Business Meeting

8:45 p.m. (approximately) Executive Session

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

1. Call to Order (7:03)

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairperson Adam Klein.

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

a. Student Representatives Update

Depre Carr reported that some people are wearing masks in school and some are not. "Senior slide" has begun for some students. There is a mixture of support for the four new mascot suggestions. All seem very uncontroversial.

b. Public Participation

Due to the large number of attendees who wanted to speak, people were limited to 2 minutes each by the Chair.

Scott Smyers expressed the concern that in his opinion many parents have about how and what children are being taught on the topics of race and gender in school. He asked for details about the appropriateness of what is being taught at each of the grade levels and by whom. He asked how our hiring policies for new teachers "that prioritize certain ethnicities and sexual orientation" not violate Title 6 of the Civil Right Act of 1964. He shared a recent Superior Court of CA decision striking down a requirement for racial quotas. He has asked the Superintendent for this information.

Many people wanted to comment about the mascot process. Comments made in support of the Committee's mascot retirement process included:

- The process was thorough and good.

- Referring to the vision and values of the school district, the decision to retire the mascot was made with the wellness of the students in mind. Students deserve an inclusive mascot.
- The mascot should promote equity.
- This was a unanimous School Committee decision, made with input from students and community members, but it was not a town or community decision because it the School Committee is authorized to make it.
- Please have some compassion for people who do not feel represented by the Colonial. Set an example for the future.
- People are minimizing the legitimate concerns of other people.
- The Committee has done the right thing. This state has always been ahead of its time regarding issues of freedom and who it applies to.

Comments against the retirement of the mascot and the process included:

- What are the costs of changing mascots?
- Cleaning up the JV baseball field would be better than getting a new mascot.
- The survey showed very strong support for keeping the Colonials.
- A series of individuals read students' comments from the recent survey in support of reinstating the Colonial mascot. The 12 page document was given to the Secretary for the record.
- The District's Naming policy has not been applied truthfully.
- This was a faulty study and the Colonial should be included as an option. Mr. Light should step down from the Naming Committee.

Adam thanked the members of the public who spoke for their flexibility about having only two minutes.

c. **Superintendent's Update – Marie Altieri**

Deputy Superintendent Marie Altieri gave the update. Mr. Light was attending a professional development conference. There has been a slight uptick in covid cases and the numbers are being watched closely. Last week we had 46 cases, compared to previous weeks which ranged from 7 to 14. In early January we were seeing 285 cases per week.

Marie gave an administrative hiring update. Two finalists have come in for the Jr High Principal position - Jim Marcotte and Russ Kuperstein. Merriam Principal Juliana Schneider is going to Hamilton Wenham at the end of the year. A search committee is being formed. Alison Warren will be the new Gates Principal replacing Lynne Newman who is retiring. Alison appointed Kate Worth as her Assistant Principal at Gates. Val Gransewicz has been appointed Principal at Conant. Allison Leahy was appointed Assistant Principal by Val. At Douglas, Chris Whitbeck is retiring and Lucia Sullivan will continue as Interim Principal.

3. **Guests and Presentations**

a. Boardwalk Campus Building Project Update - *Marie Altieri*

Marie introduced Jim Burrows, Larry Spang and Jeremiah Driscoll who gave a very exciting update on the project, which is on time and on budget. Members asked about all the solar panels. A green roof is something that would be nice to have if there was funding. Larry described the building as being “a leader in sustainability and energy usage as well as water and light.” Recycling of the air will be very healthy. Mary Brolin, Chairperson of the Building Committee since 2015 was introduced and thanked. A tour will be arranged for Committee members in the next few weeks.

- b. **Public Hearing: FY23 ABRSD MA DESE School Choice Program – M. Altieri**
Adam Klein Called the Hearing to Order at 8:02 p.m. Marie reviewed the memo. There were no questions or comments.

John Petersen moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to adjourn the FY23 School Choice Hearing at 8:12 p.m.

- c. FY23 ABRSD MA DESE School Choice Program Participation – **VOTE** - A. Klein
Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to withdraw from the School Choice program due to class size and space limitations, noting that existing school choice students will remain through graduation.

4. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

- a. **Establish a Pool Naming Subcommittee - Adam Klein**
Ben Bloomenthal and Amy Krishnamurthy were asked to join the screening subcommittee. Mr. Light will also ask two administrators. The District is very busy right now until the end of the school year, so the School Committee will get a recommendation by September 16th.
- b. **3rd Quarter Financial Update - David Verdolino**
Dave updated the Committee. John Petersen pointed out how difficult it is to compare the past three years due to covid. He wondered if there should be a type of contingency line item in the budget to compensate for this. Dave felt it was not needed because E&D could be used if necessary. Adam reminded members that we have used the most E&D and had the smallest turnback ever. Expenses will continue to rise next year so they will have to be very careful about the budget as work begins with the Administration next year. Dave’s presentation was very helpful to begin thinking about turnbacks.
- c. **Recommendation to Authorize the Superintendent to Submit to the MA School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form for the Conant School - VOTE - JD Head**
Although this is the same document that has been submitted for the past few years for Conant, it keeps us in line for consideration. If we do get a favorable reaction, we would have to decide if this is a CORE project, an addition/renovation, just a renovation, or an accelerated repair program.

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

VOTED:

To authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 3, 2022 for the Luther Conant Elementary School located at 80 Taylor Road, Acton MA which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future for the following Priorities:

- Priority 2 - *Elimination of severe overcrowding* – the building lacks the space to operate as a 3 section school while also accommodating other necessary programs to meet the needs of all students.

- Priority 5 – *Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility.* – Based on a facilities study, the building is in need of \$22,500,000 in capital needs and code upgrades and an additional \$2,110,000 in hazardous materials remediation.

- Priority 7 – *Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements.* The building is over 50 years old having been constructed in 1970 with the only updates being a roof in 1986 and boilers in 2007. Temporary modular classrooms were added in 1995 to address overcrowding then and are still in use 27 years later.

;and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

d. Kindergarten Update - Marie Altieri

Marie reported that although we budgeted for 18 sections based on projections, given current enrollment, she is comfortable proposing only 17 sections for next year. This is not just saving one K section, but 7 years of sections which is about \$.5M, and is impactful.

The Blanchard space is something that should be paid attention to. If we had to do the original plan, there would not be enough room for all of the Boxborough students to go to Blanchard. We might want to reconsider the hometown guarantee. This year families that came in after registration were told that they would not be guaranteed the home town guarantee in Boxborough.

e. **Subcommittee and Members' Reports**

i. Budget - *Kyra Cook (met on March 28)*

Members discussed the Town Meeting presentations that will be done by John and Adam. They will meet again on April 25.

ii. Policy - *Nora Shine (met on March 29)*

1. NEW: Social Media Policy, File: IJNDD - Second Read/Possible **VOTE**

a. Draft Procedures, File: IJNDD-R

Nora reviewed the changes made to the policy. The most significant one was that it is much shorter now based on feedback. Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the new Social Media policy IJNDD.

A member felt that the procedures were too long and people won't read them. There are a lot of complex issues involved in this subject and many people were consulted which made it long.

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

- i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 3/17/22 as amended in the final packet, 3/24/22, 3/25/22
- ii. Reconsideration of Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 2/3/22, 2/17/22 and 3/3/22 re List of Documents Used
- iii. Recommendation to Transfer Inactive ABRHS Student Activities Gardening Club Fund Balance per [policy JJF](#)
- iv. Recommendation to Approve ABRPTSO Grant to ABRHS for Community Service Awards Night
- v. Recommendation to Approve Gates PTO Donation for End of Year Celebration

There were no holds to the Consent Agenda.

Kyra Cook moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED**: to approve the Consent Agenda.

g. **Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - VOTE - Adam Klein**

Kyra Cook moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the warrants (see memo for language)

FYI items were briefly mentioned.

5. Executive Session (8:45)

Adam stated the need for an executive session to be convened under MGL Chapter 30A section 21(a) purpose 7, to comply with or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements - MGL Chapter 30A section 22(f) to consider approval and possible release of executive session minutes from previous

meetings on: ~~October 18, 2021~~, December 2, 2021, February 3, 2022, March 3, 2022 and March 17, 2022. He stated that the Committee would not return to Open Meeting.

Andrew Schwartz moved, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED by roll call**: to enter executive session at 8:51 p.m. for the reasons stated. (YES: Abayaah-Issah, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, Petersen, Shine, Schwartz)

The ABRSC adjourned at 8:55 pm. from executive session.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used:

- Agenda
- Decision of the Superior Court of CA, County of Los Angeles, Crest, De Vries, De Vries Plaintiffs v. Padilla Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief dated Sept 30, 2020 (from the public)
- AB Student Survey Responses to Questions 4, 5 and 6 in support of keeping the current mascot (from the public)
- Project Update Slides, Skanska, Consigli, Arrowstreet, April 7, 2022
- School Choice Hearing memo from M. Altieri, April 1, 2022
- DESE Advisory on Inter-District School Choice Pursuant to G.L. 76, 12B dated 4/23/19
- Naming Subcommittee memo from A. Klein, March 31, 2022
- FY22 Q3 Financial Presentation slides, D. Verdolino, April 7, 2022
- FY22 Budget Q3 Update – Overview, D. Verdolino, 4/1/22
- FY22 Budget Q3 Update – Revenue by Type & Admin Budget, D. Verdolino 4/1/22
- MSBA Statement of Interest for Conant School
- Kindergarten Registration Memo from M. Altieri, 4/4/22
- K-12 Enrollment Projections slides, M. Altieri
- ABRSC Social Media Policy Second Draft 3/29/22 File: IJNDD
- ABRSC Meeting Draft Minutes of 3/17/22, 3/24/22, 3/25/22
- Reconsideration of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 2/3/22, 2/17/22 and 3/3/22
- Memo re Transfer of Inactive ABRHS Student Activities Gardening Club Fund Balance
- Memo to Approve ABRPTSO Grant to ABRHS for Community Service Awards Night
- Memo to Approve Gates PTO Donation for End of Year Celebration
- Warrants Memo from D. Verdolin, 4/7/22
- FYI items:
 - Proposed ABRSC Meetings for 2022-2023
 - Letter from ABRSC to Lexington School Committee and Superintendent re EDCO Termination, 3/25/22
 - Monthly Student Enrollment, 4/1/22
 - AB Student/Staff Mascot Working Group Survey