

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 6/25/15)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

May 21, 2015
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Diane Baum
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr, members of the public including ABSAF

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Kristina Rychlik, Chairperson.

1. **Chairwoman's Introduction** – Kristina Rychlik thanked Brigid Bieber for serving as Boxborough vice chair this year and for running for another term.
2. **Policy Update #1 – Maria Neyland**
 1. School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting, File: BDA – **Second Reading**
Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the revised policy BDA as proposed.
 2. School Committee Officers, File: BDB – **Second Reading**
Brigid Bieber moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the revised policy BDB as proposed.
3. **Election of Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Officers for FY16**
Glenn Brand announced that the election for FY16 Officers would begin.
 1. Chairperson
Paul Murphy nominated Kristina Rychlik to serve as FY16 ABRSC Chairwoman. Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: that Kristina Rychlik be elected FY16 ABRSC Chairwoman.
 2. Vice Chairperson(s)
Michael Coppolino nominated Paul Murphy to serve as FY16 ABRSC Vice Chair from Acton. Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: that Paul Murphy serve as FY16 Vice Chair from Acton.
Maria Neyland nominated Mary Brolin to serve as FY16 ABRSC Vice Chair from Boxborough. Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: that Brigid Bieber serve as FY16 ABRSC Vice Chair from Boxborough.
 3. Secretary
Kristina Rychlik nominated Beth Petr to serve as the FY16 ABRSC Secretary. Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: that Beth Petr serve as FY16 ABRSC Secretary.
4. **Recommendation to Accept Donation from Acton Boxborough Student Activities Fund (ABSAF) for FY16 – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

Heather Harer and student representatives presented an \$80,000 donation from the Acton-Boxborough Students Activities Fund (ABSASF) for FY16. She noted that over \$575,000 have been donated to the school district over the years.

Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept the ABSASF FY16 donation with much gratitude.

5. Approval of Minutes (no warrant)

1. Meeting on 4/30/15 (*will be voted at next meeting*)

6. Public Participation

Mike Scanlon spoke from the audience. The Minuteman Tech presentation at Town Meeting highlighted a significant building project that the school plans to begin and that will affect both of our towns' finances. Mike suggested that the School Committee should be considering a strategy relative to this upcoming issue and the politics involved. He encouraged the Committee to start considering whether the questions would go to ALG and BLF and/or both Town Meetings. He believes the number of students going to Minuteman Tech from the Acton Boxborough community is too low if the towns are going to pay that much money for the project they are considering.

Maria Neyland stated that she would have a hard time supporting anything that would have to do with Minuteman Tech if Boxborough is not part of it. (They are discussing withdrawing from the Minuteman District.)

Mary Brolin suggested that our District could help publicize some of Minuteman's events in an effort to increase awareness. Glenn Brand is looking into these issues and has spoken to the Superintendent at Minuteman. Kristina Rychlk will add this topic to a future School Committee meeting agenda.

7. Recommendation to Accept Gift of Track Scoreboard from Donors – VOTE

Chip Orcutt explained that this is the second time the scoreboard has come up because after the January School Committee meeting, the proposal did not make it through the rounds of funding with Middlesex. As a result, he has pursued another option and outlined total new funding of \$30,500. Included in this amount is a private donation of \$18,000 that comes with a request for sponsorship labeled on the scoreboard of "Hit the Net Sports", a new sports store opening in Acton soon. This proposal (for \$30,500) leaves a shortfall of about \$5,600 to complete the project.

Maria Neyland confirmed that the \$10,000 is from the track account, separate from Lower Fields account. The Committee acknowledged that per policy, sponsorship is up to the Superintendent, but it was confirmed that if something were to happen to "Hit the Net Sports", the district can replace it with no obligation to pick another business. The Superintendent noted that he will need to provide an annual report to the School Committee about any sponsorship, per the policy. Committee members expressed gratitude to Chip and everyone on his committee for their generosity and commitment to making this gift possible.

Clare Jeannotte pointed out that perhaps the gift should be accepted contingent on her review of procurement law. It was explained that the only thing the Committee needed to vote on was to accept the gift. It was up to the Superintendent to decide if the corporate sponsorship was appropriate.

Paul moved, Maria seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the gift in the amount of \$30,500 along with Mr. Orcutt's gift of a yet-to-be-determined amount not to exceed \$1,000 for materials toward the installation of the scoreboard.

8. School Improvement Plans Presentation

1. Gates School – *Principal Lynne Newman*
2. McCarthy-Towne School - *Principal David Krane*

The Committee appreciated the presentations. Questions were asked about homework and report cards – each school has their own version of report cards and not all schools use report cards. The Committee asked if some costs were covered by the curriculum office compared to the school’s budget. Both schools appreciated their collaboration this year.

9. ABRHS Handbook for 2015-2016, Review of Changes – First Reading

Maurin O’Grady presented the proposed changes. Mary Brolin asked about the vague terms of “good academic standards” and if it is defined in the document. Maurin explained that the Administration prefers to give some discretion to the principal in case a student has extenuating circumstances. Per state law, the Committee will vote on the handbook changes at the next meeting.

10. Athletic Department Revolving Fund Update – *Steve Desy, Steve Martin*

Glenn recognized Steve Desy on his retirement and thanked him for his years of service to the district. He also introduced Steve Martin as the incoming Athletic Director for ABRSD.

Glenn presented the athletic budget stating that the ongoing deficit must be addressed because the District cannot legally end the year in a deficit. There is a trend toward a drop in participation in athletics. Our fee has not changed since 2010. Steve Martin has some ideas about how to address the deficit including a fee increase, spending reduction plan and/or an increase in the allocation charged to the annual operating budget. Glenn confirmed that the School Committee should be approving fees annually including the athletic participation fees.

The Committee discussed why this deficit has been recurring for a number of years and how it has been handled in the past. Some members urged consideration of higher fees, given the financial cuts that have been made in the classrooms, while all acknowledged the difficulties of the amount of what parents are already paying for.

Mike Coppelino does not want to charge parents more, but suggested that the automatic increases in coaches’ stipends be reconsidered. Marie Altieri explained that these were negotiated increases. Steve Desy explained that the sports teams are down 120 students total. Football is down 50 players. This is consistent across the groups the Steve is involved in. Football may be somewhat due to publicity about concussions. Also, some districts are cutting JV or freshmen teams.

Mary Brolin suggested the cost to participate in teams be calculated, keeping in mind how many hours the kids participate and how many coaches are needed. She would relate the fee to the cost somewhat so it is fair to participants.

Glenn stated that the bottom line is still somewhat fluid but projections are that it will be a significant deficit. Options are to deal with it within the current fiscal year, which he and Clare believe can be done. This would permit Steve (Martin) to begin his new role with a better starting point. Alternatively, funds could come out of next year’s budget.

Fees have not been increased for a number of years because Steve Mills did not want to increase them for families. Deanne O’Sullivan advocated for holding off on increases to give Steve Martin a year to get into the job. She would like more details before voting any increase. Kristina Rychlik summarized

that the Committee felt that money from another source would cover this year's athletics account deficit, but the Committee will consider a different decision next year.

11. Elementary & Junior High Bus Passes – How the current service has grown over the years

1. Current policy, File: EEAAA and procedures

Director of Transportation, JD Head, focused mainly on the elementary level because that is where the majority of the concerns lie. This is an issue that has been coming up slowly for a few years and has nothing to do with regionalization. So much stress has been put on the system over the years with the increased use of this service that it must be addressed.

Hiring enough qualified bus drivers has become an issue for many communities. Of the 34 drivers that we had when school started, only 27 of them are still driving today. Some of the local businesses give the impression that the school district is obligated to bus children to them. This adds to the number of bus stops and in turn, the length of the bus routes and time spent on the bus for children. At some point, it can increase the number of drivers needed. JD has not been able to find another school district that offers this service.

The school attorney has advised the District that parents should be required to sign a liability release. Even if a parent filled out the proper paperwork, and the driver or school person let a child off and they got hurt, the District may be liable.

JD recommended the following changes for daily bus passes:

- Restrict the age of students eligible to daily bus pass to 2nd grade and higher
- All schools to use the same form which must be submitted by 3 p.m. the day before the change
- Routes will no longer be altered to accommodate for daily bus passes
- Bus routes will not be altered to accommodate for local businesses and they will change annually based upon student ridership
- Parent/Guardians must sign a release from liability

Glenn Brand noted that not having neighborhood schools makes this service more valuable to our community. He explained the attorney's view that by changing a child's routine by dropping him/her off somewhere different than their home, it may be reasonable to assume the District is increasing the Schools' liability because we are increasing the chance of miscommunication, accident, etc.

The Committee discussed how transporting children to so many local businesses has also cut down on some programs offered by Community Education. They wondered if families know the variety of options offered by Community Education, right on the school campus, and that all profit from these programs goes back into the schools.

Maya Minkin asked for a slide showing the benefits of the bus passing service. She noted that this is another option of going to play at a friend's house instead of going to a program. She loves the uniqueness of our community that facilitates kids going to a friend's house because that is what being a child is about, in her opinion. This is particularly valuable given that we do not have the connectivity of bike paths and sidewalks. Brigid Bieber agreed that there are benefits but due to the growth of the demand, it scares her to think about our transportation department trying to manage it all. In years when we are cutting academic programs, and everything else, and identifying budget deficits, she stated that the Committee needs to take a hard look at bus passing now because it has morphed into something very different than it started out to be.

A member of the public agreed with Maya, and stated that bus passing to businesses should stop. Maria Neyland said that she is less concerned about house to house bus passing, but the 15 hours/week being spent processing these requests this is time that the schools cannot afford. Liability also concerns her. She suggested that perhaps businesses could stop being included, with the exception of licensed daycare. The goal was for the Committee to give the policy subcommittee some direction so they can bring back a proposed policy for a first read at the next School Committee meeting. Mary Brolin stated that it would be challenging for her to change this habit so she asked for more community input before any decision is made. Mike Coppolino suggested “tightening the process” and automating it. A suggestion was made to charge families for the service, which may not be possible in a regional district. Maria Neyland stated that she is adamantly opposed to charging students to go to businesses because the district is not in the business of transporting children.

12. Boxborough Local Election/Town Meeting Update

Brigid Bieber was reelected for another term and the FY16 budget and regional assessment passed.

13. Annual Superintendent’s Evaluation Process

1. Report on FY15 Goals – *Glenn Brand*

The Superintendent reported on his FY15 goals, which were presented last November and reviewed in March.

2. Survey Results Memo

- i. AB Staff Survey Summary
- ii. Administrators’ UMASS Survey Summary

3. Spring 2015 timeline (FY15 Committee members only)

4. Evaluation Form back to Kristina by June 1, hard copy or electronic.

Marie Altieri reviewed the surveys. This is the 4th year that administrator feedback surveys were done. All administrators have their own surveys with lists of strengths and weaknesses. 370 people responded at principal level and 280 at the superintendent/administrator level. Another survey was with the 15 people who report to Glenn. She suggested that the Committee use the summative form and rubric. The surveys are one piece of evidence that can be used. Members will rate the five goals and four standards, and then consider all of the committee meetings and work that Glenn has done. The two vice-chairs will help summarize the evaluations with Kristina. The public was invited to send their comments by June 1st to Kristina Rychlik and Beth Petr.

14. ABRSD FY15/16 Budget Updates– *Clare Jeannotte*

1. FY15 Quarterly Report

- i. Appropriated Budget v. Actual (Expenditures and Revenues)
- ii. Special Revenue, Revolving and Gift Funds
- iii. Grants

Clare presented the quarterly update. The net risk summary shows \$323,800 unfavorable although actions taken to curtail costs where possible since January will result in more savings. Long term substitute account is high this year.

2. FY16 Budget Update

The Senate issued their budget last week based on governor’s budget.

15. Recommendation to Approve FY16 Education Cooperative (TEC) Bid – VOTE – *Glenn Brand*

Mike Coppolino moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY16 TEC bid as proposed.

16. Recommendation to Support Construction of Conant Playground and Foundation Grant to Conant PTO – VOTE

Glenn Brand said that this project has been in the works for a number of years. Because Community Education uses the Conant playground every day, some of this money can be used for this project. Deanne O’Sullivan noted that the handicap accessibility of this project is wonderful and each school should have this. A member stated that the Steinberg Lalli Foundation gives a tremendous amount to our students and schools, including multiple scholarships.

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to support construction of the Conant playground and Steinberg Lalli Foundation Grant to the Conant PTO.

17. Subcommittee Updates

1. Policy Update #2 –

i. Small Necessities Leave Act, File: GCCCA/GDCCA – Second Reading - VOTE

The only change was from the wording “son or daughter to “child”.

Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the policy as amended .

ii. Family and Medical Leave, File: GCCC/GDCC – Second Reading - VOTE

Brigid Bieber moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the policy as proposed .

18. School Committee Member Reports

1. Acton Finance Committee – Glenn, Clare and Kristina are presenting on Tuesday.
2. Acton Board of Selectmen - Paul reported that the Board is grappling with the job descriptions for the two new positions.
3. Acton-Boxborough SpedPAC – Paul reported that a survey of families is being done as a follow up to the 2011 survey.
4. Joint PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs – Deanne reported that there are lots of new ideas for next year such as doing some activities cooperatively to save money, e.g. district licenses.

19. Superintendent’s Report – Glenn Brand

1. Update on Naming of Elm Street Courts – *Dedication June 17 at 6:15 p.m.*
2. PARCC Forums - Members are interested in attending and making a statement. Kristina feels the Committee needs guidance from the Administration before making a statement.

20. FY16 School Committee Meetings Calendar – First Reading – Kristina Rychlik

The Committee reviewed the two proposed calendars - twice monthly meetings starting in September, with one in April and one in May, compared to meetings approximately every 3 weeks. The new proposal would allow more time to prepare materials between meetings. With twice monthly meetings, often there is a meeting followed by material preparation the next Friday for the next meeting. They discussed having too many agenda items making some very late meetings.

At 10:35 p.m. the ABRSC adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda