

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING  
MINUTES (approved 3/19/15)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 12, 2015  
7:00 p.m.

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*Members Present:* Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin (7:20 p.m. ), Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik

*Members Absent:* Michael Coppolino

*Others:* Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

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1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Kristina Rychlik, Chairperson.

2. **Chairman’s Introduction –**

The Town of Acton will sponsor a forum on March 4<sup>th</sup> on the PAYT (Pay As You Throw) warrant article at Acton Town Meeting.

3. **Public Participation - none**

4. **FY15 Second Quarter Report**

Clare Jeannotte reported that it appears that the District will need to make up \$100,000 in revenue by the end of the year based on current projections. This is a result of 9c cuts to Regional Transportation of \$240,000, a favorable charter payment offset of \$\$46,000 and unbudgeted revenues of \$105,000 YTD as of 1/31/15. This keeps E&D use at \$300,000. Legal expenses this year have been high due to several unexpected cases. Clare would like to not transfer revenue from general funds to cover the special revenue deficits as has been done in the past.

Brigid Bieber asked at what point do we take steps to try to mitigate this shortfall? What might the steps be? The Superintendent responded that the District is at the point now to tighten things up in some areas, although nothing specific has been put into place yet. Things may turn out more favorable as the year goes on, however the books must be balanced. He will provide more information on this at the next meeting. Clare is going through the budget line by line to confirm where things stand. She will give this information to Glenn as soon as possible.

5. **FY16 Budget Discussion – Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte**

5.1. Possible **REVOTE** of FY16 Proposed Budget and Assessments – Glenn Brand

5.2. See budget materials posted at <http://www.abschools.org/school-committee/meetings-agendas-packets-and-minutes> under meetings held 1/31/15 and 2/5/15

5.3. Slides from presentation to Acton Finance Committee, 2/10/15

Glenn Brand stated that the cuts outlined in the material were seen at the last meeting (2/5/15) but the School Committee was not ready to vote on them at that time. This meeting was scheduled to discuss and decide on the numbers.

Clare and Glenn presented at the Acton Finance Committee on 2/10/15, and the cuts were discussed at the Budget Subcommittee meeting on Wednesday morning taking into account the

Fincom's advice to take a hard look at the budget and consider possible cuts. Dennis Bruce explained that at ALG, it was agreed that \$200,000 would be suggested to be cut from the Town of Acton budget and \$446,000 be suggested as a cut to the School District budget as a way to compromise and gain the support of the boards.

Clare emphasized the two significant FY16 numbers could still change, the CASE Assessment (expected to vote 3/6/15) and Health Insurance Trust rates (may vote 2/19/15). News on the Middlesex Retirement issue was received on 2/11/15 and yielded \$98,573 for the ABRSD FY16 budget. This was due to the way employees were moved between the Town and the Region. It appears to have been the result of an incorrect assumption by Segal.

Based on the preliminary FY16 Budget of \$80,197,455, the change from FY15 is an increase of 4.89%. Glenn Brand presented two options for possible additional cuts (not prioritized), although emphasized that the proposed budget is what he believes is necessary to continue the programs we have now. He described the Level 1 (\$264,000) and 2 (\$200,200) cuts outlined as those that would be farthest away from the classroom setting. When asked if some of these cuts are safety issues and if so, why have they not been addressed sooner, Glenn responded that safety issues have been dealt with, but not in a permanent or most efficient manner. The bleachers and tables were an example.

Brigid Bieber moved, and Maria Neyland seconded the motion:

**MOTION:** that the total appropriation for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District for the fiscal year of July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016 be set at \$79,749,882 and that member towns be assessed in accordance with the Education Reform Law and the terms of the Agreement and amendments thereto as follows: Acton \$53,171,009 Boxborough \$11,120,240, remainder to be accounted for by the Anticipated Chapter 70 Aid in the amount of \$14,393,376, offset by Choice and Charter Assessments of \$546,513, Anticipated Charter School Aid in the amount of \$26,761, Anticipated Regional Bonus Aid in the amount of \$111,200, Anticipated Chapter 71, Section 16C Transportation Aid, in the amount of \$1,266,283, a transfer from E&D Reserves in the amount of \$200,000, and a transfer from the Junior High School Project Premium on Loan in the amount of \$7,526,

The Committee continued the discussion of Option 2, a budget reduction of \$447,573.

Paul Murphy dislikes making these cuts because of what they represent, on the other hand, the vote was split with the Acton Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen, not in favor, and he felt it would be best for next year to accept the cuts so he would vote in favor of the motion. Brigid Bieber emphasized that she agrees with Paul, obviously you want support of the boards, but it has to be School Committee decision. It is really important to understand these cuts are not little, they are a big deal and will be felt by young people. She noted that one of the biggest concerns has been that there are so many unknown numbers. Knowing the Middlesex number now makes her more comfortable supporting this now. As painful as it is to cut like this, she understands. Maria Neyland agreed with Brigid and Paul, and is not happy about the cuts. She stressed that parents need to understand that every year when School Committee is forced to cut the budget amount, it changes our schools. At some point, the community has to be very careful

that the schools are not changed so much that they are not recognizable to younger kids coming up through the system now. It changes the flavor of who we are as a community, in her opinion. Mary Brolin stated that while she supports the full preliminary budget, to get the support of the taxpayer, cuts need to be made. She expressed concern about OPEB liability being a huge part of the budget and suggested that perhaps in the future, the Committee should consider not funding OPEB but instead save for E and D. Several members are also concerned about capital needs/expenses and that projects keep getting put off. Mary wants to have these conversations earlier in the year next year. The Acton Finance Committee asked if some capital items could be funded by other accounts, such as Community Education. Glenn Brand will look into that, but it is not guaranteed that it could happen.

Dennis Bruce read a statement from Michael Coppolino who was absent, in support of making the cuts. He emphasized that the amount of funding coming from the town of Acton this year and projected for next year is “stunning, clearly unsustainable and cannot be ignored.”

Kristina Rychlik stated that based on ALG, the Town of Acton expressed a target budget number that the School Committee was going to try to meet and this motion meets the target.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee unanimously **VOTED** to approve the motion, resulting in a reduction of \$447,573 to the previously voted FY16 preliminary Budget. This reduces the total operating budget to \$79,749,882 or a 4.31% increase from the current year.

## 6. Search Committee Updates

### 6.1. ABRSD Athletic Director

Marie Altieri reported that 3 finalists have been chosen and site visits are being planned. A public forum to meet the finalists will be scheduled. It is hoped that the decision will be made by mid March.

### 6.2. ABRSD Director of Pupil Services

This Search Committee has just been appointed and will be headed up by Andrew Shen. Both positions have been widely advertised.

## 7. School Committee Member Reports

### 7.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)

Kristina Rychlik reported that Nancy Banks would like a meeting with the Acton BOS, Fincom and School Committee to review the Minuteman Tech Building plans.

Plans are being made for the School Committee to present the FY16 budget to the boards of both towns in preparation for their votes and the upcoming Town Meetings.

The ABRSC adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents used: see agenda