

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee (ABRSC) FY16 Budget Meeting DRAFT MINUTES

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

Saturday, January 31, 2015
8:30 a.m.

- Members Present:** Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin (left at 12:30), Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan (left 3:05), Kristina Rychlik
- Members Absent:** none
- Others:** Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr, members of the Acton and Boxborough Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees, and members of the public

The ABRSC was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Kristina Rychlik, Chairwoman.

- o School Committee Chair's Introduction and Welcome - *Kristina Rychlik*
- o Superintendent's Introduction and Welcome - *Glenn Brand*

1. Panel 1: Budget Overview

a. Superintendent's Budget Overview - *Glenn Brand*

The proposed FY16 budget totals \$80,197,455, representing a \$3,742,332 or 4.89% increase from FY15. This allows the District to "open the doors" in September to receive students with a continuation of current services and programs. It does not provide for new innovation, improvement or expansion.

b. Financial Highlights FY16 Budget - *Clare Jeannotte*

c. Staffing and Enrollment - *Marie Altieri*

It was emphasized that some numbers are still very much estimates (State Aid, Transportation Aid, Circuit Breaker, Middlesex Retirement, Health Insurance). It is also very hard to compare numbers to previous years due to this being the first year of full regionalization.

Questions:

Several questions were asked about how decreasing student enrollment would affect the number of classrooms in future years. Marie Altieri responded that for 10 years, the District was growing with enrollment outpacing the number of classrooms that were available. From 2000-2010, elementary schools were at a plateau for enrollment and a number of "less than desirable" spaces had to be used for classes like art and music. As the number of classrooms needed has dropped, the District has been able to start addressing some of these inappropriate spaces.

A question was asked about an increase in stipends (slide 37). This is a reclassification of money for R and Ds worked in the summer and a change in accounting procedures only. The high cost of out of district student placements was discussed. Mary Emmons stated that while the District is always looking to bring students back into our classrooms, we are also always looking to keep students in district.

The question was asked if slide 32 (FY16 Assessment Revision – Elementary Debt Paid by Towns) is an unexpected cost of regionalization. Clare Jeannotte clarified that it is just a shift due to Appendix A of the Regional Agreement. Regarding slide 37, it was asked, "What percentage of the \$576,344 in the \$ Increase column is allotted to support services? The Committee asked about the practice and success of cutting some full time positions into part time positions, saving benefits costs.

It was noted that it is not always the best in terms of consistency in curriculum and for students. Attention was paid to slide 47 (Low Income Enrollment Trend) and the changes in the state as well as our two towns. Marie Altieri noted that there are things demographically that are happening with housing, mobility and turnover. Ninety new students were identified this year that we can provide assistance to. Educationally it has an impact as well due to the supports required for these students. This is happening in surrounding communities and is affected by the economy as well as other factors.

Bill Mullin asked why we call one group "low income students". Mary Emmons said that low income students are at more risk for disabilities but often have education deficits as well. Many have moved often and missed some instruction. Not all low income students have these issues. He stressed that a lot of innovation happened in the District when the overrides took place and school building/renovations happened. Glenn Brand clarified that the proposed budget does not include funding for possible new innovative ideas.

Bob Evans stressed that the 6.8% assessment increase for Acton is not viable. Every time a teaching position is cut, another is added. This means high levels of increases will continue in the future. Bob noted that the last time this kind of decline in enrollment took place, teachers were laid off, including art, music and gym. Herman Kabakoff stated that most people did not get a 7% raise last year so he related this budget increase to lowering the quality of life in Acton if it goes through.

2. **Panel 2: Departmental Budget Overviews**

- a. Community Education – *Erin Bettez*
- b. Curriculum and Assessment - *Deborah Bookis*
- c. Facilities and Transportation – *JD Head*
- d. Educational Technology – *Amy Bisiewicz*

Questions

12:15 *Lunch Break*

3. **Panel 3: Impact of Increasing High Needs Students**

- a. Pupil Services Departmental Budget Overview and Student Trends – *Mary Emmons, Interim Director of Pupil Services*
- b. Proposed Positions
 1. 0.6 Elementary ELL Teacher – *Suzanne Szwarczewicz, ELL (English Language Learners)*
 2. 1.0 Jr. High Educational Team Leader/Transition/Academic Support - *Andrew Shen, JH Principal*
 3. 0.6 Elementary Special Education Teacher - *Lynne Newman, Gates Principal and Lynne Laramie, Elementary Coordinator of Pupil Services*
 4. 0.4 Elementary School Psychologist - *Hilary Bonnell, Elementary Counseling/Psych Chair*
 5. 0.6 Occupational Development Program Assistant (19 hours) – *Mary Emmons*

Questions

Mary Emmons described the increased job training and planning for transitions that is needed for High School students in the "High Needs" group.

The Committee had many questions about the District's lack of resources for ELL students including the lack of instructional time as mandated by the DESE. DESE does not regulate the ratios of staff to students in this area, but they can cite a district for levels that are too low. Our District has been cited for this issue. Brigid Bieber spoke for a number of Committee members expressing concern that the District is not doing what that they should for these students. She is fully on board for these proposals. She said, "The reality is that it is expensive to educate students that need these services but it is our obligation to do this."

Mike Coppolino asked if it is a common model to have 3 resource models in elementary schools. Lynne Laramie replied that it is. She attends many meetings from EDCO and comparable schools and their caseloads are much smaller than AB staff's. We are asking teachers now to take on 3 grade levels, many subjects, in our resource rooms.

Dennis Bruce requested that Boxborough information be added to slides 93 and 108 regarding out of district students. This will be done for the Budget Hearing on 2/5/15. He also asked that slide 127 "Staffing Structure" be included next year as well because the efficiency of its layout was valuable.

Mike Coppolino talked about accountability. He asked if there is a way over time to measure if adding staff now would actually save money. He questioned, "Are we making any progress, or are we just feeling better about it?" He knows it is difficult, but would like to see if decisions being made are really having a measurable positive effect. He wants to look at a longer term, big picture of adding staff. This was requested similarly years ago when reading specialists were added.

Bill Guthlein spoke on behalf of the Sped PAC about how happy they are that the School Committee and Administration recognize the increasing number of special education students' and ELL needs and they are trying to address it. He feels slide 100's numbers – Staffing/Special Education and total student population – Oct 1 is too low. Lynne Laramie explained that it is purely how many 6th graders are leaving and how many are coming up on IEPs. The numbers may be going down, but the needs are going up. This is based on actual numbers. Bill feels this slide is misleading. He asked how this budget will address the Grade 4 and Grade 7 ELA growth issue that exists. Lynne Newman suggested that adding a learning center and creating smaller groups in the Centers provides more instruction and individual attention. Deborah Bookis noted that it will be a different cohort, or group of students next year so you cannot compare those scores. Deb does agree with Lynne's point.

Andrew Shen said that the disciplinary literacy focus will help all students with their writing including those receiving special education services. Increased help from the reading teacher will also help.

A mother spoke from the audience stating that her child who receives services is doing well, but others are not. She stated that when you look at successful models, 1:1 instruction and 120 minutes of instruction, as early as you can close the gap, ultimately will reduce some of the burden the district is dealing with now. She spoke in favor of certified instruction, not just another adult in the room with students.

4. Superintendent Closing Remarks

Glenn Brand thanked everyone who made this morning possible and those who attended. This budgetary request does not include all of the resources or personnel that were recommended by the Administration and staff. It is felt it is what would be educationally responsible given these tight fiscal times, including some modest funding for repair and maintenance of our facilities.

Questions

Steve Noone spoke from the Acton Finance Committee, thanking Glenn Brand and Clare Jeannotte for the "best Budget Saturday he has ever attended and the most transparent budget." He expressed concern with the amount of reserves being used and the sustainability of budget increases for the Town of Acton. Katie Green spoke from the Acton Board of Selectmen. Although she is concerned with a 6.9% increase in Acton's assessment, her bigger concern is how the assessment increase will be presented at Town Meeting. She urged the Committee to be clear about what people are voting on for their assessments. She mentioned the side payments from the towns, that were not included in what was voted on for this current year. This underinflated last year's budget vote, in her opinion. This is why the majority of the BOS voted to not recommend last year's School Budget and why the increase so high this year. She strongly urged the

Committee not to include that money in the FY16 budget and said that she will speak up about it, if it is not presented correctly.

Glenn Brand explained that the handout had two options given the recent change in Table 6. As a result, there may be concern about voting a final assessment at this time. An alternative would be for the Committee to just vote the appropriation. The second option is the more comprehensive vote but reflecting the modification to Table 6 inclusive of that debt assessment. Another vote could be taken at the Budget Hearing next Thursday night.

Mike Coppolino commented that Katie had a point about the number stated at Acton Town Meeting. He asked the Committee to consider her suggestion seriously, as difficult as that might be. Paul Murphy agreed stating that the budget that was voted and what is being used are different. Clare Jeannotte said that there has never been any interest in not being transparent with the numbers.

Marie Altieri said that the Administration struggled with how to show it all. OPEB is separated out on the line item. Middlesex Retirement is included in the FY16 number so they exactly reflect our budget. She hears Katie's point, and a compromise is that in the Table 6, it is within and without. The Table 6 in the Budget Binder has it on the bottom, so it is explained. It was significant that Middlesex Retirement made that late decision and the Town of Acton was very helpful that they handled it. We need to be clear about how it is presented.

Regarding possible cuts, Mike Coppolino stated that while the Capital Plan study is important, if something has to be cut, compared to critical staffing needs, he asked the Administration to consider cutting the study. Paul Murphy has heard of less expensive ways of doing this kind of study. Glenn and JD Head have discussed spreading it over a number of years if the Committee wanted to consider that.

ABRSC Preliminary FY16 Budget VOTE:

Maria Neyland moved 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 \$80,197,455.

Brigid Bieber seconded the motion.

Dennis Bruce will vote against the motion, not because he doesn't support the request, but because today's decision does not mean it will happen. He asked the Superintendent and Administration to take a step back and consider if the District could survive without some of these requests. He advocated for a deeper discussion of this budget at the Budget Hearing. He is concerned about a sustainability issue at this amount. Mike Coppolino agreed.

Kristina Rychlik summarized that this is an issue everyone has been grappling with but this is a preliminary budget and working with all the groups, we are only part way through the process. A vote on this motion means the budget will not go up. The Administration is willing to recommend proposed cuts. Brigid Bieber made a small suggestion calling it "service creep" that bus passing should be looked at as an issue. Secondly she suggested looking at additional programming that could bring revenue to the district, such as tutoring. She stated that guidance must be given to the Administration, not just voting down the budget today. Maya Minkin, like other members, questioned the high cost of the Capital Study.

While the Administration was asked to bring proposed cuts to the next meeting, Kristina feels the Administration should be allowed to make the final decision, after hearing from the Committee.

Maria Neyland stated that there was complete transparency in Boxborough about Middlesex Retirement and who would pay. She echoed the comment that this is the most transparent budget ever. Several weeks ago the increase was 7.6%

and it has been decreased. A vote on this proposed budget is a statement of values for our educational system. This is the budget we need is what we say today. More specific direction can be given at the next meeting.

Glenn Brand stated that this budget represents what he believe is his and his administration's responsibility to present for educating our students. They have talked about what could be cut if needed, based on School Committee decisions. He could bring these proposed reductions to the Committee next week. This will be the first time the School Committee will see proposed reductions and another School Committee meeting may be needed to decide. The final budget must be voted by February 20th

Dennis Bruce stated that voting today does not mean he's not supportive of the effort made on the proposed budget. In his opinion, it says a hard look needs to be taken at the budget. Marie Altieri replied that the increase is high and the Administration understands that. They will bring a list to the next meeting of where the budget can be tightened. Last year at the end, \$700,000 was cut. Lots of cuts have been made over the years meaning that there is very little contingency left for anything we may need.

It was noted that per the ABRSD Regional Agreement, *"The preliminary budget shall be approved by a majority of the members of the Committee from each member town."* This preliminary vote is required by 1/31/15.

The Committee **VOTED** and the motion was approved:

YES: Bieber, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, Rychlik

NO: Bruce, Coppolino

A number of School Committee and Board members thanked the Administration for one of the clearest budget presentations they have seen from the District.

The ABRSC adjourned at 3:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see Agenda and Budget Binder posted on the School Committee website

ABRSC FY16 Annual Budget Hearing will be held Thursday, 2/5/15, at 7:00 p.m. in the R.J. Grey Junior High Library
Materials to be posted at <http://www.abschools.org/school-committee/meetings-agendas-packets-and-minutes>

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

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

January 22, 2015
6:00 p.m. Executive Session
7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Deanne O'Sullivan (arrived at 6:10 p.m.)
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

Chairperson Kristina Rychlik called the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. Executive Session

At 6:05 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,
VOTED by roll call: to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel
(**YES** – Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated that an open meeting might have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Board.

2. Return to Open Meeting

At 7:10 p.m., the ABRSC was polled to go out of Executive Session and returned to Open Meeting.

3. Chairman's Introduction

- 3.1. Welcome ABRHS Drum Majors - Jeremy Thaller, Julian Grabarek, and Gautham Chitturu
- 3.2. The Committee welcomed Margaret Dennehy, ABRSD Treasurer (part time). Margaret replaces Tess Summers who retired. Margaret worked for 10 years in Boxborough after spending 20 years in Littleton and comes with a wealth of valuable experience.

4. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes

- 4.1. Minutes of School Committee Meeting on 1/8/15 will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- 4.2. Warrant #15-015 dated 1/22/15 in the amount of \$4,632,786.07 was signed by the School Committee members.

5. Public Participation - none

6. FY16 Budget Presentation #3 – Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte

- 6.1. Proposed Preliminary Line Item Budget
- 6.2. Revised Assessment Table 6

Clare Jeannotte explained that the preliminary FY16 budget now represents a 4.89% increase from FY15, compared to the preliminary budget of the meeting on 1/8/15 which showed an increase of 5.25%. This is

the result of completing a thorough review of each of the budget line items and the regional transportation number being refined. The Committee was asked to give the Administration direction on the following: the amount of E&D to use (currently set at \$200,000), Middlesex Retirement assessment number, state funding numbers (including Circuit Breaker and Regional Transportation) and finally, the level of program and service reductions that might be necessary to align needs with the funding capacity of Acton and Boxborough.

Clare Jeannotte explained that the District is contesting the assessment for next year from Middlesex Retirement. We are asking the actuaries to review the data to be sure the right people were in the right organizations and recalculate our FY16 assessment because at 22% combined, it seems extraordinarily high. A few people have been identified in the wrong group.

Brigid Bieber would like to see on Budget Saturday how overall what the District is asking for ties into the Long Range Strategic Plan. She stressed that it is important to show the Plan as guiding the budget requests. If that is not the case, she would like to know why.

Deanne O'Sullivan asked about increases in salaries for substitutes that appear to have gone up significantly, as well as supplies and textbooks. Clare Jeannotte acknowledged that it is complicated and involves the shift in the new chart of accounts. One example is how the accounting of leased equipment is handled. Another factor is that several key retirements are happening this year so overlap for training adds some cost.

The Committee discussed various line items. Dennis Bruce asked if the funding of athletics is accurate, and if the District has what it needs in this budget for this department. Glenn Brand replied that it is level funded. Using round figures, the approximate budget amount is \$500,000 but the budget exceeds a million dollars. The difference is covered by sources such as boosters, gate receipts and revolving funds. We do have to look closely at the fees and revenue. The fee structure was last changed about five years ago. Dennis pointed out that expenses have gone up a lot in the past five years. Glenn will bring this issue up outside of the budget in the spring.

Brigid Bieber suggested that the Regionalization Financial Oversight Subcommittee could report as part of the budget process on their findings.

Mary Brolin advocated for conservative use of E&D. To her the challenge is having a budget that meets the educational needs, while contributing to things like OPEB and Retirement. Kristina Rychlik stated that the FY16 school budget at this time, uses \$200,000 of E and D, Steve Noone said at ALG that it was ok if no E&D was used because it is so far below the \$4 million cap for E and D now. Mary Brolin suggested moving the Capital Study into a warrant article and out of the budget. Marie Altieri explained that the Region cannot have a warrant article at two Towns' Meeting. It would have to be done through the assessment, voted separately with a 2/3 vote.

Clare Jeannotte welcomes comments on the new version of Table 6 and if Committee members find it helpful.

Dennis Bruce asked Clare about Middlesex Retirement Assessment number for the town and the region and the reclassification of 21 employees that were on the town side that could be in the region. This was brought up at ALG. As previously mentioned, Clare is working on this but we have budgeted for what Middlesex is saying the number should be at this time. Nancy Sherburne asked for additional information for Budget Saturday to include how proposed FTE fit with the Long Range Strategic Plan, and how those positions fit in with concerns brought up by SpedPAC, including Grade 4 and 6 special education students who have below state average performance. Nancy stated that for a district of this level, no group

should be performing below the state average for several years. She sees nothing to address this in this proposed FY16 budget and asked for more detailed information on Budget Saturday on this.

7. **FY15 Second Quarter Report** – *(next meeting – 2/5/15)*

8. **Facilities Update** – *JD Head*

8.1. Transportation Bid Update *(brought to meeting)*

8.2. Crumb Rubber Field Surface Update

8.3. Dow Track Scoreboard Donation Application to Middlesex Savings Bank

JD Head described the potential Scoreboard Donation for the Dow Track from Middlesex Savings Bank. It was asked if the Committee voted to accept the previous donations to the other fields. The policy states that it is at the Superintendent's discretion.

Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to move forward with the application for a scoreboard as presented.

JD Head described the testing done on the crumb rubber. There are no standards for this material at this time. It was compared to the most stringent soil standards of MA DEP and it was significantly lower. Referring to page 9 in the packet, Mary Brolin asked why level of arsenic is so low. Paul Murphy stated that this letter is provided by a licensed professional so he would trust it.

JD Head reported that the two largest national carriers came to the initial pre-bid meeting for the Transportation Bid for Contracted Services. Two bids were requested. No bids were submitted for the two tiered alternate proposal. One bid was submitted for the current three tier model. JD felt that the need to have a lot of buses used all at once for a short period of time, created not enough margin for profit and resulted in the lack of responses. Maria Neyland noted that over 5 years the District would spend \$13,000 more than the bid, if we ran it in house. JD agreed using the assumptions made, but numbers could change. A contractor's price would not change due to the contract. JD was thanked for all the time spent on this bid process. Maria concluded that this was an important exercise that showed that the District is doing all they can to save money on transportation.

9. **ABRSD Athletic Director Search Update** – *Marie Altieri*

Over 40 people volunteered to serve on this Search Committee. Application deadline is Monday. Interviews will be scheduled for second week of February and finalists announced by February vacation. Mike Coppolino was concerned that staff are being taken out of the classroom to do these interviews. Glenn said he has always been cautious about this, but a full day approach can make a difference and he has seen this done at other districts.

10. **Recommendation to Approve EDCO Amended Articles of Agreement** – **VOTE**

Glenn Brand described the Agreement and specifically page 12 requesting a change to 2/3 of Board members voting affirmatively to approve some capital assessments.

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

VOTED: to approve the EDCO Articles of Agreement as amended.

11. **Recommendation to Accept Gift from ExxonMobil to RJG Junior High** – **VOTE**

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

VOTED: to accept the gift from ExxonMobil to RJGJHS with gratitude

12. **Recommendation to Accept Gift from ExxonMobil to Gates School – VOTE**

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept the gift from ExxonMobil to Gates School with gratitude

13. **Recommendation to Accept Gift from ABR PTSO to RJG Junior High – VOTE**

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept the gift from the ABR PTSO to RJGJHS with gratitude.

14. **Subcommittee Updates**

14.1. **Budget** – meeting on 1/14/15

Dennis reported that the budget presentation was discussed and focused on plans for Budget Saturday.

14.2. **Policy** – *Maria Neyland*

14.2.1. Enrollment of Students, File: JC – **SECOND READ**

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the Enrollment of Students policy as proposed.

14.2.2. Assignment of Students from Other School Districts or Homeschooling, File: JCAC –
SECOND READ

Mary Brolin moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the Assignment of Students from Other School Districts or
Homeschooling policy as proposed.

14.2.3. Kindergarten Entrance, File: JEB – **SECOND READ**

Paul Murphy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the Kindergarten Entrance policy as proposed.

14.2.4. School Admissions/Residency & Student Enrollment, File: JF – **SECOND READ**

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

VOTED: to approve the Residency and Student Enrollment policy as amended.

Note: This policy replaces the “School Admissions” policy and now includes a Proof of
Residency Affidavit, file: JF-E.

15. **School Committee Member Reports**

15.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)

15.1.1. Materials from 1/15/15 meeting – Kristina Rychlik updated the Committee.

15.2. Acton Finance Committee – *Mary Brolin reported*

See 15.4

15.3. Acton-Boxborough SpedPAC – *Paul Murphy*

15.3.1. Update: Population Trends of High Needs Students re: Chapter 70 Funding

15.3.2. Foundation Budget Review Commission Public Hearing: 1/24/15 in Bolton

Paul Murphy shared a proposed letter for discussion that could be signed by the School
Committee members so he can take it to the meeting on Saturday. Kristina Rychlik confirmed
that it was the sense of the Committee to support this letter. Members signed the letter and Paul
will take it to the meeting on Saturday.

15.4. Joint PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs

Deanne O’Sullivan reported that they met last week and Rich Dushanek from Community Education
attended to discuss custodial fees involved when groups use the school buildings. It was very helpful.
Tuesday night’s excellent presentation at Douglas had Dr. Kirsty Kerin speaking about sleep.

16. **Response to 9C Cuts in Regional Transportation – *Kristina Rychlik***

16.1. Response from Local Legislators (1/12/15) to ABRSC Letter to Governor Patrick and
Governor-elect Baker requesting Restoration of 9C Cuts in Regional Transportation from
ABRSC, 12/29/14

17. **Acton and Boxborough Local Elections – Kristina Rychlik**

Brigid Bieber announced that she is planning to run again from Boxborough. Dennis Bruce announced that he will not be running again from Acton. Deanne O’Sullivan is still unsure. Frances Cook is a Merriam parent who has pulled papers from Acton.

18. **Superintendent’s Report – Glenn Brand**

Glenn described Dr. Kerin’s informative presentation on the importance of sleep to the Administrative Council this week. She has been speaking to several parent groups. He is still confirming the School Start Time Study group. It was decided to broaden the focus to cover student health and wellness, not just school start time, with a broad base of representation. The Wellness Committee is up and running co-chaired by Diana McNicholas and Diane Spring. The start time of school itself is only one part of this.

19. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

2015-2016 Kindergarten Registration -

Marie Altieri reported that last Tuesday was the annual kindergarten orientation night. This week siblings and walkers registered. We had 140 children registered of a projected approximate 300 total expected in kindergarten in September.

MA Association of Regional Schools (MARS) is moving forward with a request to the Attorney General for an opinion on the 9C cuts based on the 2010 law that states regional school transportation aid shall not be lowered more than other funding sources. There are 80 regional districts in the state. MARS is asking for \$500 from regional school districts to help support this activity. Glenn asked for the Committee to consider contributing \$500 to the legal fund, as suggested. It was the sense of the Committee to donate \$500 to MARS for this activity.

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS:

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meetings,

- 2/5/15 at 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library:
 - FY16 Open Budget Hearing at 7:00, followed by regular School Committee meeting
- 2/26/15 at 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library

FY16 ABRSD Budget Saturday Presentations, 1/31/15 from 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library

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

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

January 8, 2015
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik

Members Absent: none

Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr, Auditor Tim Harrison from Borgatti Harrison & Co.

Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik called the ABRSC to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Chairman's Introduction

2. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes

- 2.1. The minutes of the School Committee meeting on 12/18/14 were approved.
- 2.2. ABRSD Warrant #15-013 dated 12/24/14 in the amount of \$3,508,847.30 and #15-014 dated 1/8/15 in the amount of \$2,824,154.35 were signed by the School Committee.

3. Public Participation - none

4. Presentation of Independent Auditor Reports by Borgatti Harrison & Co. – VOTE

Clare Jeannotte and Auditor Tim Harrison presented.

- 4.1. ABRSD Basic Financial Statements for Year Ending 6/30/14 (Draft) – Clare stated that the majority of time is spent reviewing this document. Pages 1 and 2 are the auditors' statements. Clare takes responsibility for the rest of the information in the report. One of most useful pages is 17, Budget to Actual – General Fund for FY14 showing a net positive balance of \$113,147.
- 4.2. ABRSD Management Letter for Year Ending 6/30/14 – These are suggestions that come out of the audit. Nothing significant. It was suggested that Clare look into some of the checks and balances that have been overlooked with all of the change in personnel. Tim said it is nothing to be worried about, but something to stay on top of.
- 4.3. ABRSD OMB Circular A-133 – Reviews internal controls of the District.
- 4.4. ABRSD Student Activity Funds for Year Ending 6/30/14 – Junior High and High School funds are each audited. With the new region, there will some funds this year for the elementary schools.
- 4.5. ABRSD Independent Auditors' Reports for Year Ending 6/30/14 – The District submits these to the DESE every year.

The Committee discussed the E and D number on page 13 of \$688,695. Tim explained that \$1.2 million is being used for E and D.

Mary Brolin moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the Independent Auditors' reports as presented.

Glenn Brand thanked Clare for suggesting that this presentation be provided to the Committee.

5. **FY16 Budget Presentation #2**

Glenn Brand stated that, unfortunately, this proposed preliminary budget does not provide for program growth or new innovation. It does not really “move the district forward”, but it provides what is needed to open the doors for students in September. Funding sources are declining 4.21% while the preliminary budget is rising 5.25% when compared to FY15. There is also concern because some of the numbers are not confirmed yet so assumptions are being made. This FY16 preliminary assessment for Acton would be an 8.0% increase and for Boxborough, it would be a 6.7% increase.

Questions from the Committee:

Brigid Bieber asked about the trend between the assessment numbers for Acton compared to Boxborough. She noted the dramatic swing. She stated that while it is important to have a statement about what the Committee feels is needed educationally to move forward, the numbers “have to come down”. She noted that the Budget Subcommittee meets next Wednesday and that will be helpful to provide more direction to the Administration.

Paul looks forward to the detail coming up in future meetings. He hopes to see support for the issues in special education students’ MCAS performance highlighted at previous meetings. Glenn Brand stated that the allocation of resources are not in response to any one thing but rather a consideration of caseload numbers and a commitment to further improve programming for students. There is a strong desire to try and improve services by striving for a model of three special education teachers in each elementary school. Mike Coppolino agreed with Brigid’s comment.

Mary Brolin asked for clarification of slide 11 about Gates +.6, and -1.0 should be added to Blanchard. Douglas should show +1. She asked about how the handling of capital outlay is decided, whether it should be in the budget or outside. She asked if the proposed Capital Study could be done outside the budget. Glenn stated that there has been some discussion of this, including how to handle OPEB. Currently, it is included in the base budget but it could be discussed.

Maria Neyland stated that during the Regionalization discussions, there was talk about trying to bring some special education programs into the District, where appropriate, to save money. She asked if any of this had been done yet. Mary Emmons stated that there is nothing specific in this budget but there may be some students returning to the High School. It has not been reflected yet, but it is always something they are thinking about. Maria agrees that the numbers need to be tightened up. She feels like every year funding is being reallocated to pupil services, and emphasized that the Committee needs to make sure that they are addressing all students’ needs throughout the district.

Mike Coppolino agreed with Maria, saying that during regionalization discussions, it was clear that Blanchard would provide some resources for more efficient special education programs and save money. He stated that Assistant Principals and more English teachers have been added over the years which help all students but he expressed concern about the increase in special education needs as well. Mary Brolin agreed but noted that there is a 40% increase in the OPEB line, stressing that it is hard to think of the needs of all students and meet all of these new liability requirements as well.

Dennis Bruce thanked the Administration for putting all of the budget numbers on the table and the transparency that that provided. He requested several things for future budget discussions. This included: 1. What does the projected drop in enrollment and resources mean to the JH and HS. Marie Altieri noted that part of this answer is enrollment and the shift of students from Boxborough to Acton but it also involves the split of savings from regionalization that changes year to year. 2. Regarding the decrease in staff of 2FTES and one custodian – he asked about what is above the funding line and below it. 3. He asked about the percentage increase for CASE and bus monitors, and

why. 4. For Budget Saturday, Dennis asked that the Administration consider that knowing enrollment and revenues are declining, what has been cut. He stressed that there must be a decrease somewhere.

6. **Capital Planning**

JD Head presented on upcoming capital needs that are being considered. Deanne O'Sullivan asked for an update on getting all buildings ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. JD will provide that information in a more comprehensive plan in a few weeks. Paul Murphy is concerned about the Conant issues. Kristina Rychlik asked for recommended dates of when these items are needed. Brigid Bieber asked if there are any efficiencies being seen in the custodial staff with regionalization. JD said there are no FTE reductions but we could see savings in interschool activities for time savings.

7. **Recommendation to Approve FY'16 Carol Huebner Preschool Program Tuition – VOTE –**

- 7.1. FY16 Program Alignment Memo
- 7.2. Current Tuition Rates and Proposed FY16 Rates
- 7.3. Staffing Costs FY15
- 7.4. Tuition Comparables
- 7.5. Community Correspondence

The Superintendent asked for approval for the tuition for the regular education students in this program for next year. The conversation began with a discussion about realigning hours at the last meeting, but the requirement for the Committee is to vote the tuition rate.

Katie Neville stated that there is significant frustration among Acton and Boxborough preschool parents over the proposed tuition and program changes for next year. She feels there is a sense of defeat from Boxborough parents and is concerned that some parents feel they are not being heard. She stated that she is a preschool parent who will be directly affected by this decision, so she will abstain from voting.

Mary Brolin asked about the materials and information provided to families at the meetings, what was mentioned and if they were warned that tuition might increase. Glenn was not sure about the material, but the location was a main focal point. The Committee discussed Mary's idea of a possible process for Boxborough parents where half of the increase might be charged this year and half next year for the four families in this group. Glenn Brand could not recommend this due to concern for inequity with new families that enter the program. Brigid noted that the Committee's purview is the tuition rate and it is still comparative and reasonable. What bothers her more is that the Blanchard program is being changed from a 5 hour day to a 6 ½ hour day, accounting for some of the tuition increase. Her concern is how the tuition and program change were communicated to the families. Maria Neyland agreed, particularly given that preschool parents who are just entering the system are involved. Phasing in would be nice but having different tuition rate for different families feels wrong. She urged the Administration to budget appropriately for scholarships because they may be needed next year by some families.

Several members of the public spoke. A father asked that the Committee take a step back and consider how important exposure to typical kids (who are affected by this tuition increase) is for these young kids with special needs. Nancy Sherburne spoke on behalf of the SpedPAC, and the petition with 60 names. She voiced concern about the perceived lack of partnership and feedback from families on the preschool programs and the educational benefit to students in reducing the hours.

Another father stressed that a 36% increase in tuition is still significant even with the comparisons, but it starts with communication. He urged a phased in approach for the increase. This program does

not exist without typically developing children attending. It concerns him that a delineation between the two groups of children is being made.

Mary Emmons agreed that while it is a mandate to provide these services, the integrated program requires typically developing children. All of the students are held in the highest regard. Kristina Rychlik pointed out that this is a 5% per hour basis increase.

Dennis Bruce moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was

VOTED: to approve the proposed FY16 tuition rates for the Carol Huebner Preschool program for All Day of \$6830 at both sites and for Half Day of \$3530 at both sites.

(YES: Bieber, Bruce, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neyland, O'Sullivan, Rychlik
NO: Brolin ABSTAINED: Neville)

8. **FY'16 School Calendar** – addition of early release days – **VOTE**

Kristina Rychlik explained that an incorrect email was sent to parents from a PTO asking parents to give their opinion on early dismissals. She has replied to those who responded. Marie Altieri recommended sticking with the first and third Thursdays as early release for elementary every month, and the two conference days as the last two Thursdays in October. Having the Jr High conference days coincide with the elementary half days was considered, but two of the three are on Thursdays and there was a reason it could not be done in December. Next year there are two full professional development days and one half day but the first one is August 31st, before students begin.

Dennis Bruce moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY16 school calendar early release days as presented.

9. **Subcommittee Updates**

9.1. **Outreach** – *Kristina Rychlik*

9.2. **Policy**

9.2.1. Special Education Parent Advisory Council, File: BDFB – **SECOND READ** – **VOTE**

Mike Coppolino moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the Special Education Parent Advisory Council policy as presented.

Procedures will be revised at a later time.

9.2.2. Enrollment of Students, File: JC – **FIRST READ**

Some of these changes are due to regionalization as well as the need to update.

9.2.3. Assignment of Students from Other Schools to Classes, File: JCAC – **FIRST READ**

9.2.4. Kindergarten Entrance, File: JEB – **FIRST READ**

Marie Altieri gave some background about how requests for children to be held used to be handled regarding testing. This revision is what is actually being done.

9.2.5. School Admissions, File: JF – **FIRST READ**

9.2.5.1. Proposed policy revision with exhibit

A committee was formed to review this policy including looking at other communities' for their best practices. An Administrative intern helped to draft it. All families who are enrolling will now complete an affidavit of residency and show three forms of ID. Because this is new, and a fairly active policy, the detail was kept as policy not as procedures. This is consistent with other communities.

Dennis Bruce asked about an update to the financial policy(s) per the District's auditor. The subcommittee will be doing this. Clare Jeannotte noted the difference between the financial department procedures manual and School Committee policy. The auditor was referring more to the manual in his comments.

Glenn Brand said that MASBO (MA Association of School Business Officials) will come in late February or March to do their review of the District and that will be another opportunity to address this.

10. School Committee Member Reports

10.1. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– *Mary Brolin*

10.1.1. Financial Statements and Management’s Discussion and Analysis for years ended June 30, 2014 and 2013

A member asked if the auditors have made any recommendations due to the Affordable Care Act. Mary Brolin said they discussed it but nothing that is a huge red flag issue right now. Some discussion took place about employers who provide “rich” plans and are then taxed 40%. HIT is talking about this. Marie said this does not affect the District’s HMOs which covers almost all of our people. The few people that it would affect are retirees and the District may recommend plan design changes to address this.

10.2. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – *Brigid Bieber*

Brigid reported that the BOS was interested in knowing more about the Superintendent Review process so she discussed it with them.

10.3. Joint PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs – *Deanne O’Sullivan*

At the meeting next Tuesday, Erin Bettez will discuss facilities use. Kristina Rychlik will speak at the Merriam PTO meeting about the budget.

11. Response to 9C Cuts in Regional Transportation – *Kristina Rychlik*

11.1. ABRSC Letter to Governor Patrick and Governor-elect Baker requesting Restoration of 9C Cuts in Regional Transportation from ABRSC, 12/29/14

11.1.1. Letters from other communities

All three elected officials responded to the letter and Kristina has been following up with the Governor’s office. She also spoke to Glenn Koocher of MASC. Glenn followed up with MARS.

12. Acton and Boxborough Local Elections

Kristina Rychlik reminded the Committee and the public of the Town Clerks’ deadlines.

13. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Glenn Brand highlighted “*Broadcasting Happiness, The Science of Igniting & Sustaining Positive Change*”, 1/15/15, 7 p.m. ABRHS Auditorium, sponsored by AB Regional PTSO, AB United Way, Danny’s Place Youth Services. He reminded the public of Kindergarten Registration Night on January 13th. He thanked everyone for their cooperation with the two hour delay this morning due to extreme cold. Three buses did not start so it was helpful to have the extra time.

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS:

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meetings, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library:
1/22/15 and 2/5/15

FY16 ABRSD Budget Saturday Presentations, 1/31/15 from 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES (Open Meeting part of Executive Session)

Classroom 409
R.J. Grey Junior High School

December 11, 2014
7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin (8:10 p.m.), Dennis Bruce (7:32 p.m.), Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri (left at 8:35 p.m.), Glenn Brand, Beth Petr, Attorney D Moschos

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik.

1. ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION #1

At 7:30 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,
VOTED by roll call: to enter Executive Session pursuant to MGL chapter 30A, section 21 (a) (3),
litigation: to consider a claim by an employee

(YES – Bieber, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, O'Sullivan, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated that an open meeting might obstruct the litigating position of the District.

2. ADJOURN EXECUTIVE SESSION #1

At 8:25 p.m., the ABRSC was polled to go out of Executive Session and returned to Open Meeting for a brief break.

3. ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION #2

At 8:35 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,
VOTED by roll call: to enter Executive Session pursuant to MGL chapter 30A, section 21 (a) (1),
to receive, consider and act on an Investigative Report pertaining to an employee of the District

(YES – Bieber, Bruce, Brolin, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, Neyland, O'Sullivan, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated that the ABRSC would return to open session solely to adjourn.

4. ADJOURN EXECUTIVE SESSION #2

At 11:13 p.m., the ABRSC was polled to go out of Executive Session and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

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

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 16, 2014
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: Dennis Bruce
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

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

1. **Chairman's Introduction**

Senior Class of 2015 Leaders Varan Culanathan, Nina Euele and Albert Kong were introduced by the Superintendent. Albert spoke about how the class officers work to build school spirit and raise funds for activities. Mr. Brand noted that having student leaders share their efforts with the Committee, does not replace the School Committee student representatives from the High School.

2. **Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of Committee Meetings on 9/4/14, 9/18/14 and 10/9/14 will be done at the next meeting. APS warrant #201507 dated 9/30/14 in the amount of \$4,269.56 was signed by the Committee members. ABRSD warrant #15-007 dated 10/2/14 in the amount of \$4,081,642.08 and #15-008 dated 10/16/14 in the amount of \$3,718,082.88 were signed by the Committee members.

3. **Public Participation - none**

4. **Discussion of Naming of Elm Street Basketball Courts – VOTE**

Maria Neyland described the process used by the screening committee per the "Naming School Facilities" policy and procedures, File: FF. Two nominations were received but only one satisfied the criteria. Mr. Paul Cartwright's name was the only one being put forth for School Committee consideration.

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

VOTED: to accept the nomination of Mr. Paul Cartwright to name the Elm Street Basketball Courts after.

Former AB student Connor Brandon's name was the other nomination, but the policy makes it difficult for a young adult to satisfy all of the requirements for naming. JD Head and Glenn Brand will decide how to move forward with the specifics of this naming. Maria noted that at the August School Committee meeting, Mr. Levine and his friends offered to help financially with this naming. Kristina thanked all involved in the process as well as the volunteers.

5. **Educational Technology Update**

Director of Educational Technology (EdTech) Amy Bisiewicz presented on her Long Range Strategic Plan Outcomes and 2015-2016 Projected Outcomes. At the conclusion, Michael Coppolino stated that he was "blown away" by the excellent presentation. He appreciated her attitude of asking "Who is going to use these devices"? Committee members are excited about all of the possibilities of technology in education. Amy stressed that both iPads and chromebooks as well as paper and pen are

important because they give the flexibility that is needed to address different students' styles. Learning styles and teachers' preferences must be taken into account. Flexibility is key. Mary Brolin was enthusiastic about how students are using google docs to share information and collaborate. "This is an unprecedented time for amazing learning."

Katie Neville asked if it is possible to plan 5 years out for all of this technology. Amy stated that it is tricky but you have to be financially responsible and plan. This requires a lot of conversation with parents, staff, teachers and others. Deborah Bookis stated that the curriculum office staff spend a lot of time discussing the use of technology and it has really changed the delivery of the educational material. The Innovative Learning Program was described. Amy stated that there are a lot of expectations of teachers over the year to use these devices. She described it as a commitment to using the technology with the students based on the learning goals and what success is expected.

6. Special Education Parent Council (SpEd PAC) Presentation

Amanda Bailey and Bill Guthlein presented the SpEd PAC's Population Trends Report dated 9/22/14. They spoke about the group's goals for the year which included: surveying parents/guardians, forming a parent support group, updating their handbook, performing 2014 MCAS analysis, and sharing the Special Education Population Trends Report.

The number of students with disabilities is increasing as overall students enrollment is decreasing. The disabilities also involve more significant learning needs, requiring more resources, than in the past. The autism spectrum group has grown significantly. Two new growing groups are the low income students and the English Language Learner (ELL) groups. Students in these high needs groups cost significantly more to educate than typical students, which will increase per pupil expenditures.

The Committee thanked Amanda and Bill for such a comprehensive report.

7. Follow-Up and Proposal Regarding School Start Times

Glenn Brand has asked some administrators to start serious consideration of this issue. While the Administration is in support philosophically of considering this change, it must be done in a thoughtful and thorough manner. A number of communities are currently discussing this topic.

Deanne O'Sullivan emphasized the increase in mental health issues, concussions, in home hospital care and more that were presented at Budget Saturday. She feels that data shows that having a later start time might significantly decrease some of these issues. Acknowledging a significant impact to transportation, she asked if it could be considered along with one tier busing.

Maria Neyland asked what the specific benefits would be and what the Committee would be trying to accomplish. She noted the large population of our students that have lots of after school activities that would be affected by a change in start time. She likes the timeline outlined in the memo. Changing the time won't change the stress and expectations we have of our students. Lots of buy in would be essential if this is done, including from students. Mary Brolin stated that an hour change would not solve the mental health problems. She asked if the question should be broadened to include the homework policy and similar topics. Time is needed to engage the community. It was a sense of the Committee that this is a topic worth considering, but it will take a long time because there are so many aspects to consider. Kristina Rychlik asked, "What really is our problem, and what is the best solution to it?" She suggested that it could be considered in phases.

A few emails were received from the public in support of this idea. Several people spoke from the audience. One mother asked, "Can we talk about the pressure and how children learn and what they

need?" She appreciated that the discussion was turning to the pressure on the kids. Blanchard parent, Kirsty Kerrin offered her expertise as a presenter to several Fortune 500 companies advising them on the importance of sleep and how it impacts all areas – health, budget, special education needs.

Glenn Brand concluded that his exploratory group would only be administration/staff at this time, then inside and outside groups later in the process. The School Committee tried to decide what to name the working committee but struggled because the problem/goals were not clear. Glenn will take this idea back to the staff and then decide on some next steps.

8. **Finance Department Update – Clare Jeannotte**

8.1. Recommendation to Accept Additional Grant Funds from the Town of Acton - **VOTE** – Clare Jeannotte

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

VOTED: that pursuant to M.G.L. c.44, Sec. 53A in accordance with the Intermunicipal Agreement signed 3/17/14, to accept the following grants and gift funds from the Town of Acton as outlined in item 9.1 in the 10/16/14 packet totaling \$8,499.25, to be held as separate accounts and spent by the District for the same purposes as the prior Town of Acton fund, grant or gift.

8.2. Recommendation to Accept Gifts from the Acton Elementary Parent Teacher Organizations – **VOTE** – Clare Jeannotte

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

VOTED: to accept the gifts from the five Acton Elementary Schools as presented.

Mike Coppelino noted a clear discrepancy between the amounts of the schools and that Blanchard was not included. He stressed that parents are paying for public school staff, and in his opinion, this needs to be considered and resolved, as he has consistently stated for many years.

8.3. Fiscal Year (FY)14 and FY15 Status Update (*oral*)

Clare Jeannotte reported that FY14 is now closed. The auditor is finishing field work on it. She expects to present in December to the Committee. Financial reporting will happen at the next meeting.

8.4. FY16 Budget Process

Glenn Brand reviewed the assumptions and timeline in the packet. He highlighted the Key Decisions. He explained the idea of a Capital Planning Committee that JD and Amy are involved in, stating the need to think more holistically about the District's capital needs.

8.5. Five-Year Financial Forecast – Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte

Clare Jeannotte presented a five year forecast anticipating cost increases from Fy16 – Fy20. She called it “an early outlook... to begin conversation”, and that it contains significant unavoidable uncertainties. She noted that the forecast does not include program improvements or enhancements to those which currently exist within today's level of services. She is not sure how the Committee would like to handle OPEB contributions going out in the forecast.

Mary Brolin noted that when early budget discussions begin, it is important that people see the \$966,000 (slide 6) NOT as a budget increase, but the impact of not fully including OPEB and Middlesex Retirement for expansion of the Region. This is 1.27% which would make the FY16 increase 3.47% without it.

Vacancy factor appears to be an issue this year, and that we will not make the \$425,000 number at this time. Clare said that the District may end up with a negative balance in salaries for this year.

Kristina Rychlik asked how realistic it is to plan for no programmatic changes in the next five years. Continuing to do more with less will continue to be an issue. Brigid Bieber noted that the OPEB number needs careful attention. Segel is doing a new report in December but it won't be out in time for the next decision to be made. Clare was thanked for an excellent presentation. This information will be shared at the Acton 3 Board meeting (School Committee, Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee) on Oct 28.

9. **Recommendation to Accept Gift from Littleton Electric Light and Water to Blanchard School – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to accept this gift with gratitude

10. **Enrollment Report, 10/1/14**

This information will be given to the Ashtons for their annual Enrollment Projection Presentation at the meeting on 11/6/14. Marie Altieri reported that the District is down about 100 students K-12 since last year. She highlighted the increase in low income families. Two reasons are an actual growth in the number, as well as increased ability to identify them. Breakfast is now offered at the Junior High and High Schools in response to this shift. Paul Murphy asked if the Ashtons take into account any of the future special education student needs per Bill Guthlein's presentation. Marie will check on this. It was requested that any one school not be identified in the chart on the first page.

11. **FY15 Goal Setting/Evaluation Process – Glenn Brand, Marie Altieri**

11.1. Superintendent Evaluation Process

A midyear review of the Superintendent and his goals (see his Entry Plan) will be done in February. Previous years' goals have been district goals, but this process is different. Goals will now include an individual professional practice goal, a student learning goal and district goals. Kristina looked at the Evaluation Guide and emphasized that there is a lot to consider.

12. **Subcommittee Updates**

12.1. **Outreach – Kristina Rychlik**

Katie Neville is working on a draft School Committee mission statement and review of the School Committee section of the website. Members should send a bio and picture to Kristina for posting.

12.2. **Policy – Brigid Bieber**

The subcommittee has met twice and will be bringing policies to the next meeting.

12.3. **Establishing New School Committee Budget Subcommittee - VOTE**

The Committee discussed establishing a new budget subcommittee. Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to establish an ABRSC Budget Subcommittee.

The Committee will vote on members of this new subcommittee at the next meeting. They hope to meet every other week.

13. **School Committee Member Reports**

13.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)

13.1.1. Material for 10/9/14 meeting

Kristina reported that ALG decided to redo their spreadsheet to reflect the fully regionalized ABRSD.

13.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)

Brigid reported BLF talked about the budget process and how regionalization was going.

13.3. Boxborough Board of Selectmen

Brigid reported a request for an ABRSC Representative for the Boxborough Master Plan Committee as an Associate member, not a voting member. Maria Neyland volunteered to do this.

14. **Superintendent's Report – Glenn Brand**

Glenn has started visiting all of the schools for 90 minutes each. McCarthy Towne School has been designated a Columbia University Reading and Writing School. He extended kudos to Dianna Woodruff, Director of Visual Arts, who will travel to Finland on a research trip.

15. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

The Superintendent highlighted Deborah Bookis' Professional Learning Release Day Memo describing the first elementary Thursday early release for professional learning.

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

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

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

September 18, 2014
7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maya Minkin, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Dennis Bruce, Maria Neyland
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairperson Kristina Rychlik.

1. **Chairman's Introduction**

2. **Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**

- 2.1. Minutes of the School Committee Meeting on 9/4/14 will be done at the next meeting.
- 2.2. The following warrants were signed by the Committee: ABRSD warrant#15-006 dated 9/18/14 in the amount of \$4,048,951.05 and APSC warrant #201506 dated 9/16/14 in the amount of \$248,678.26

3. **Public Participation** – none

4. **Completion of the Richard E. Dow Track Project**

Recommendation to Accept Gift of \$45,000 from the Richard E. Dow Track Fundraising Committee/Friends of Leary Field (FOLF) - **VOTE**

In August 2013, stakeholders working through FOLF committed \$450,000 to the track project and the District committed \$150,000 for a total project cost of \$600,000. This past summer FOLF donated an additional \$45,000 to offset expenses related to a change in the project bringing the total project cost to \$645,000.

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

VOTED: to accept the gift of \$45,000 to complete the Dow Track Project.

A construction update was given by JD Head. Donors and others were thanked for their tremendous efforts including: John Raguin, Chip Orcutt, Lisa Blackshaw, Jill Solomon, Siobhan Donofrio, Deborah Malloy, Wendy Craib, Marisa Tejada, Tim Kelly (FOLF), Ken Feit, Mary Price Maddox, Brian Crossman, JD Head and former Superintendent, Dr. Stephen Mills.

5. **Transportation Update** – *JD Head*

JD Head presented on the current status from the start of school on 9/4/14 as we begin full regionalization. While some routes are not as efficient as we would like, over time JD expects this to improve. He and his staff continue to monitor it. Software is used to plan out routes.

5.1. FYI: Elementary Bus Passes Policy File: EEAAA and Procedures File: EEAAA-R

The policy subcommittee will be reviewing this policy to see if the District can continue to offer this service to families. The numbers of students using bus passes, and the places they are going to, are really increasing. This is taking a large amount of staff time to ensure student safety, as

well as transportation resources. Blanchard students are not using bus passes yet but JD hopes to offer this soon. Without some sort of staging area, it will be difficult. A Committee member noted that it seems like bus passes are adding "a great deal of stress to the system". It was also noted that Community Education offers many of the same programs that kids are being bus passed to.

The Committee agreed that bus passing needs to be reconsidered after looking at appropriate data. JD emphasized that these issues are not due to regionalization (We aren't even able to offer it to Boxborough families yet). Some simple restrictions could be considered. Transporting to childcare needs to be maintained for working families.

6. Update on Naming of Elm Street Basketball Courts

Kristina Rychlik reviewed the process. Two suggestions for naming the courts have been received. One more faculty member and one more community member are needed for the screening committee.

7. Danny's Place Youth Services Update See <http://dannys-place.org/>

On 9/6/14 Kristina Rychlik attended the launch meeting for DPYS' exciting new structure and focus. Saturday night programming at the High School may want to apply for funding from this grant.

8. Enrollment Update

Marie Altieri thought preliminary numbers might be of interest to the Committee given regionalization, even though the October 1 official enrollment numbers will be reported next month. See her report. Class sizes are being watched closely. One third of our elementary students are Asian-Americans. This is consistent with the last 2-3 years.

9. Finance Department Update – Clare Jeannotte

9.1. FY14 Update (oral)

Clare Jeannotte reported that the FY14 APS preliminary numbers are in, including a \$35,347 turnback to the Town of Acton. The audit is in process and should be done in the next few weeks. Auditor Tim Harrison will present the report to the Committee in mid-November.

9.2. Recommendation to Establish Transportation Revolving Account per M.G.L. c. 71, Sec. 16C amended - VOTE

Clare Jeannotte reported that as discussed at the last meeting, this new utility tool is an option. Use would be restricted to transportation expenses and/or limited to the prior years' revenue. Regarding transparency, if the budget plan assumes a certain amount to be used, she would bring it back to the School Committee if that amount was going to change. At least quarterly reports for special revenue funds will be given. Lastly, there are certain desires to have stability in the budget plans, to prevent peaks and valleys. For example balloon payments for bus leases' end, could be planned for with this tool. Two votes would be involved - one to establish the account and another to decide how much to put into it.

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to establish a transportation revolving account as proposed.

9.3. Recommendation to Authorize the Treasurer to Borrow in Anticipation of Revenue – VOTE

This is an annual formality per ABRSD Treasurer Tess Summers.

Mary Brolin moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to authorize the Treasurer to borrow in anticipation of revenue

10. Subcommittee Updates

10.1. Outreach – Kristina Rychlik

They met today and are considering whether the monthly updates should be continued. Feedback is always welcome. Mike asked that a School Committee mission statement be discussed by the whole School Committee instead of the policy subcommittee. Kristina agreed.

10.2. Policy – Brigid Bieber

This subcommittee will meet every other Wednesday morning.

10.3. Possible New School Committee Budget/Finance Subcommittee – Kristina Rychlik

Noting that the school budget is complicated and on a tight schedule early in the year, the Committee liked the idea of this new subcommittee, if it would be helpful to the Administration. Glenn stated that this is often done in other communities. Kristina proposed voting to establish this subcommittee and members at the next meeting. Brigid will check to see if other towns had a charter or anything similar for their committees.

10.4 Regionalization Financial Oversight

Mike Coppolino said that a meeting is being scheduled for next month.

11. School Committee Member Reports

11.1. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)

Mary Brolin reported that they met this morning and discussed EGWP. Bob Evans asked the Town and school members to review this option and state their preference at the next meeting. There is a positive cash flow balance at this time.

12. Superintendent's Report

Glenn Brand wants to give a snapshot of the great things going on in our District in this part of the meeting. He recognized Eileen Barnett, Deb McLean, Kathryn McMillan and Jason Diment from Blanchard for receiving awards recently. ABRHS Principal JoAnn Campbell has been asked to speak at the London International Conference on Education. The DESE has established a section of their website to provide parents/guardians with resources regarding PARCC and the MA Curriculum Frameworks, including the Common Core, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/parcc>

13. The ABRSC adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS:

10/2/14 ABRSC Meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Jr High Library

10/16/14 ABRSC Meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Jr High Library

10/28/14 Joint Acton Finance Committee/Acton Board of Selectmen/ABRSC Social/Meeting, 6:15 p.m.

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

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

September 4, 2014
7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Liza Huber, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee was called to order at 7:31 p.m. by Kristina Rychlik, Chairperson. She thanked the Administration and staff for Tuesday's wonderful Opening Day program where she gave a few words of welcome.

1. Chairman's Introduction

1.1. First Day of School Report – Glenn Brand

Mr. Brand said that it had been a great week full of energy and enthusiasm. He was able to visit many of the schools on the students' first day. With each day that goes by, transportation gets a little smoother and more efficient, with all of the details being addressed. It can take up to two weeks to get the system worked out with all of the new bus stops. Staff are taking the required e-learning modules on blood borne pathogens, civil rights/bullying and harassment, and life threatening allergies.

1.2. Introduction of Dr. Perry Davis

Mr. Brand's New Superintendent Induction Program coach, Dr. Perry Davis, was introduced. Dr. Davis described the program and the value of new superintendents developing a network of people to learn from as well as a strong leadership team. Dr. Davis will be doing observations of Mr. Brand in the schools.

2. Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes

The following Acton Public School warrants were signed by the Committee: #201503 dated 8/5/14 in the amount of \$19,005.45, #201504 dated 8/19/14 in the amount of \$311,951.99 and #201505 dated 9/2/14 in the amount of \$28,725.65.

The following ABRSC warrants were also signed by the Committee: #14-029A dated 6/30/14 in the amount of \$72,766.88, #15-003 dated 8/7/14 in the amount of \$978,237.28, #15-004 dated 8/21/14 in the amount of \$1,186,776.16 and #15-005 dated 9/4/14 in the amount of \$2,432,803.36.

2.1. The minutes of the School Committee Workshop on 7/24/14 and Meeting on 8/4/14 were approved as amended.

2.2. The minutes of the Acton Public/Acton-Boxborough Transitional/ABRSC Meetings on 6/28/14 were approved as amended.

3. Public Participation - none

4. Recommendation to approve High School field trip to Nicaragua, July 2015 – VOTE

Mr. Brand described the trip and introduced teachers Michael Csorba and Emily Fishkin who are proposing it. Acknowledging that this is a time of increasing concern for safety around the globe, and although there are no warnings for this area at this time, they will monitor the situation and watch State Department information that could impact security in Nicaragua.

Committee members were told this trip would be open to any High School students, even those who would graduate in June. Emily and Michael said more chaperones would be added if more students were participating. The organization requires an 8 – 1 ratio. Kristina Rychlik added that there is High School trip planned next summer for Costa Rica and there will be security concerns there as well. She asked if it would be as easy to buy travel insurance for this trip as it is for the Costa Rica trip. Emily stated that insurance is offered but she is not sure when the deadline is. Michael stated that if the organizer cancels the trip, all money that has not been spent already will be refunded. Mike Coppelino asked how the chaperones are selected and approved. Marie Altieri stated that the High School principal decides.

Paul Murphy moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the High School field trip to Nicaragua in July 2015.

5. **Discussion of Process of Naming Elm Street Basketball Courts**

The Committee was asked to decide whether or not they wanted to proceed with the process of naming the Elm Street Courts. After some discussion and acknowledging the policy and procedures in place, the Committee agreed to move forward with the process of naming.

Maria Neyland reviewed the memo found in the packet. This information will be publicized. Nine people are needed for the Screening Committee. Maria and Dennis Bruce will go through the list and choose these people. The School Committee will be given the 3 possible names by the Screening Committee and then vote on one at their meeting on 10/16/14.

6. **Recommendation to Accept Gifts from AB Community Education to Conant, Gates and McCarthy-Towne Schools – VOTE**

Mike Coppelino asked why there was such a discrepancy between the schools' amounts. Marie Altieri replied that these programs are one source of revenue to the schools and the programs are very different sizes. This an allocation based on total amount that comes in from each program. 75% goes back to the school and 25% covers administrative fees.

Paul Murphy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept the gifts from AB Community Education to Conant, Gates and McCarthy-Towne Schools as proposed.

7. **Staffing Update – Marie Altieri**

7.1. 2014-2015 New Professional Staff

7.2. Staff Recruitment Forms (since 8/4/14)

7.3. Agenda from Orientation held 8/27/14

Marie Altieri stated that the District is almost fully staffed, but they do need a few more bus drivers. They are also looking for a .6 psychologist at the elementary level. The average salary level being budgeted for is at 3M, but the average now is probably closer to 6M or 7M. She is not overly concerned about the delta because the salaries of the retirees who have left are close to that amount. When asked why the psychologist position was hard to fill, Marie replied because it is part time.

8. **Finance Department Update** – Clare Jeannotte

8.1. Recommendation to Accept Gift and Grant Funds from the Town of Acton– **VOTE**

Clare Jeannotte stated that all of these funds will go toward the same expenses as they have in the past, but this vote is a result of regionalization. Some grant funds for Acton have not been quite nailed down yet because they extend to the end of August. As a result, she may need to bring a small amount back for a vote at a future meeting.

Maria Neyland moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: pursuant to M.G.L. c. 44, Sec. 53A in accordance with the Intermunicipal Agreement signed March 17, 2014, to accept the following grants and gift funds from the Town of Acton, as outlined in item 9.1 totaling \$680,537.50, to be held as separate accounts and spent by the District for the same purposes as the prior Town of Acton fund, grants or gift.

8.2. Recommendation to Accept Gift and Grant Funds from the Town of Boxborough – **VOTE** –
Clare Jeannotte

Mike Coppolino moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: pursuant to M.G.L. c. 44, Sec. 53A in accordance with the Intermunicipal Agreement between the District and the Town of Boxborough dated May 22, 2014, to accept the following grants and gift funds from the Town of Boxborough, as outlined in item 9.2 totaling \$675,596.15, to be held as separate accounts and spent by the District for the same purposes as the prior Town of Boxborough fund, grant or gift.

8.3. FY14 Update - no information ready at this time

8.4. Discussion of Recommendation to Establish Transportation Revolving Account per M.G.L. c. 71, Sec. 16C amended (*to be voted at next meeting*)

Clare Jeannotte explained the new statute and suggested that this could be voted at the next meeting. Establishing this account gives regional districts some flexibility in their budget process. Clare said that she has spent a good amount of time with counsel preparing the previous two votes for the two towns and she is convinced that this could be helpful to the District. She described it as “a unique opportunity to add a tool for flexibility.” It could be a very transparent part of the budget process. She explained that it is a revolving account only to be used for transportation. More guidance from DOR and DESE will be coming out soon. Glenn Brand agrees about the value of this flexibility, for instance providing a cushion if the reimbursement rate ends up below the estimate.

8.5. Recommendation to Approve Bus Lease – **VOTE**

Clare Jeannotte described this as a housekeeping item. Procurement law requires leases over 3 years be voted on by the School Committee. Mike Coppolino asked if there was any discrepancy between what was budgeted and what was spent in the prior years. Clare stated that she has not verified that.

Maria Neyland moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the new five year lease for six additional buses with New England Transit as proposed.

9. **School Committee Member Reports**

9.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Dennis Bruce next one is Thursday morning*

9.1.1.Minutes of meeting on 7/31/14

Mike Coppolino asked for clarification of the \$40M in cash referred to on page 2, under #5 Global cash flow.

10. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brand will use this new section to highlight some things each meeting. He is in the middle of his Entry Plan and scheduling meetings with staff, parent/guardians/students so he has met with many of them by end of October when he will report back to School Committee.

The Track project has been completed and a final financial report will be given at the next meeting. The District website is being renovated. A prominent PowerSchool button would be helpful. Parent Online for Food Services should also be added. Deanne O'Sullivan would like to see all teachers with their own websites. The Superintendent has over 140 Twitter followers. He intends to use this as an additional communication medium.

11. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

11.1. Parent Communication Map

Mr. Brand highlighted this important resource.

11.2. Summer Professional Learning Memo

Deborah Bookis elaborated on these opportunities. The Conflict Resolution workshop always has a wait list. Our District has been invited to present at a DESE conference in October.

11.3. FY15 School Improvement Plans

Mr. Brand has reviewed the School Improvement Plans and intends to do this much earlier in the year next year. School Improvement Plans are part of policy BDFA E-1 and involve the School Councils.

Dennis Bruce noted the many changes in the District from a technology perspective. He asked for an update from Amy Bisiewicz with a thorough review of the District's technology and what it looks like going forward.

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS:

9/18/14 ABRSC Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the Jr High Library

10/21/14 ABRSC Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the Jr High Library

10/28/14 Joint Acton Finance Committee/Acton Board of Selectmen/ABRSC Social/Meeting 6:15 p.m.