

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 12/1/16)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

November 3, 2016
8:00 p.m. Meeting

(Following "Mental Health: Keeping Our Kids Safe" at 7:00 p.m. in Auditorium)

Members Present: Diane Baum, Mary Brolin, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin (8:25 p.m.), Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: Brigid Bieber, Paul Murphy
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

1. **Chairman's Introduction**

Chair Mary Brolin called the ABRSC to order at 8:20 p.m. following a presentation by Dr. Rob Evans.

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

2.1. ABRSC Meeting of 10/20/16 (*next meeting*)

3. **Public Participation** - Lisa Jenson Fellows, parent, urged the School Committee to consider changing the start times for school as soon as possible. The School Committee has been looking into this issue and expects to make recommendations soon.

4. **Enrollment Report**

4.1. October 1, 2016 Enrollment Report – *Marie Altieri*

4.2. Enrollment Projections – *Peter Ashton, Mary Ann Buescher*

4.3. New England School Development Council (NESDEC) Annual Enrollment and Projections Report

They reported that enrollment is declining at a slower rate than expected. The Region experienced a decline of only 33 students, which is almost the same decline as the previous year. Housing turnover has increased significantly, which can dramatically impact projections. New home construction is at about the same rate as the past few years. Overall, the difference between the projection and actual numbers for 2016 was under by 70 students, or an error rate of 1.3%. They now use 4 year average ratios instead of 5 year because they feel this will be more accurate given recent trends. Region-wide enrollment continues to decline through 2025 with a decline of 465 students total vs today's enrollment (significantly less than projected last year). Junior High School enrollment is lowest in 2026 with 760 students, a decline of 150 from today. The Senior High School enrollment is lowest in 2017, with a total decline of 650 students.

Questions were asked about how condominiums are counted. Regarding choice students, Peter said that they are estimating how many staff children will be enrolled, not actually choice students because we have so few now. Diane Baum asked about the cohort survival method that is used and said that towns like Lexington have switched to a different model now because it tends to under predict. The Ashtons replied that Lexington has had a couple of large scale multi-home developments that our community has not had and this affects the numbers. Open enrollment also affects how our district does projections. Peter explained that they apply a statistical test to the independent ratios to test their methods. It turns out they are extraordinarily stable for the cohort survival method, particularly in Acton. Peter and Mary Ann Ashton have done the Enrollment Projections Study for our School District for the past 20 years. Their efforts are very much appreciated.

5. **Recommendation to Approve the Office Support Association (OSA) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) - VOTE – Marie Altieri**

5.1. **Motion:** *To approve the proposed Office Support Association (OSA) Contract for the period from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019, as set forth in the memorandum of agreement between the bargaining committees for OSA and the School Committee.*

Marie Altieri reviewed the Agreement. It has been ratified by the OSA.

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Katie Neville second and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the proposed Office Support Association (OSA) Contract for the period from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019, as set forth in the memorandum of agreement between the bargaining committees for OSA and the School Committee.

6. **Acton Three-Board Meeting Prep Discussion (11/15/16) – Glenn Brand**

6.1. Acton Finance Committee's Point of View Document (POV)

Amy Krishnamurthy reviewed the POV. Mary Brolin urged the Committee to read it thoroughly before the November 15th meeting. She asked the Committee, given the gap in funding, how the School District should fill it. Mary stated that although this is an Acton conversation, the question for everyone is "Do you hold back funding increases as long as you can and then make a big jump when needed, or do it more gradually?" Kristina Rychlik feels that Slide 6 is not a good comparison between the two towns. She feels that showing the 2016 tax rate comparison between Acton and Boxborough, is out of context and does the community a disservice. She stated that not using the full 2 ½ tax levy might give the District less flexibility, especially if there is work that has been delayed and needs to be done.

6.2. ABRSD Three Year Financial Forecast – Preliminary Assumptions – *Clare Jeannotte*

Clare Jeannotte reviewed Table 6, revenues and expenses for the upcoming three years. She stressed that this was an attempt to provide an early outlook of the anticipated budgets for the district and assessments for our two towns, given the limitations due to the level of assumptions and unknowns. Revenue growth is weak.

7. **Recommendation to Accept Gifts from the Elementary Schools' PTO/PTSOs – VOTE – Glenn Brand**

Dr. Brand read the amount of each school's gift (not including the unused amounts from the previous year). The Merriam School does have some money left over but it was not included in their memo. Kathleen Neville stated that this vote makes her uncomfortable every year because of the amount being donated to use for staffing. Glenn has a goal to address this issue and she is grateful for that.

Kristina Rychlik moved, Diane Baum seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept these gifts with gratitude.

8. **Sense of the Committee: Proposed Gift of Outdoor "Bounce Back Wall" from Citizens to ABRHS - (to be voted at 11/17/16 meeting) - Glenn Brand**

8.1. Possible **VOTE:** Recommendation to authorize the Administration to enter into negotiations with the Acton-Boxborough Youth Lacrosse (ABYL) organization with respect to this gift

8.2. **VOTE** at a future meeting: Approval of the proposed Gift Agreement between ABYL and the District
Dr. Brand described this proposed project being offered to the District as a gift. The estimated cost to build the structure is \$88,000 of which there would be no cost to the district. The structure would be donated, not the dollar amount. Per District counsel, two votes would be needed if the Committee wants to move forward (see above). The Committee asked about liability and Dr. Brand assured them that counsel would be sure that would be addressed in any signed agreement between the donor and the district.

Jerry Eaton, from AB Youth Lacrosse, spoke from the audience. A friend of his built the wall at Lincoln Sudbury High School. The AB piece of land being considered cannot be used for other purposes because of drainage issues. Kids are now using the snack bar to hit balls against. He stated that ABYL's goal is to work with Community Education and Todd Tidman from Acton Conservation to get it done before winter because it will get very wet. It will be a big cement wall and Jerry suggested that every year the seniors could paint it and make it an attractive focal point.

Kristina Rychlik and Deanne O'Sullivan spoke in favor of the project calling it an "incredibly generous gift". The Committee felt it important that maintenance be done by the organization, not the district. Maria Neyland stated that public/private partnerships are great, providing things for the kids that the district cannot right now. Her concern is to make sure that the amount really covers the cost and the district is not left funding it. She is comfortable with this proposal as long as this is clear.

Maria Neyland moved, Deanne O’Sullivan seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: that the Committee is in support of this idea and authorizes the Administration to enter into negotiations with the Acton-Boxborough Youth Lacrosse (ABYL) organization with respect to this gift as long as it is safe and the district will bear no cost.

Dr. Brand and JD Head will work with counsel and ABYL to bring a proposed Gift Agreement to the School Committee for their approval at a future meeting.

9. Subcommittee Reports

9.1. Budget – 10/26/16 meeting

Maria Neyland reported that the final FY16 budget wrap up was discussed.

9.2. Policy - Comments should be sent to Dawn, Marie or Mary Brolin prior to the Second Reading

9.2.1. Head Injury Management, File: JJIF – First Read

Dawn Bentley reported that “Marching Band” was added in this “every two years” review.

9.2.2. Staff Ethics/Conflict of Interest, File: GBEA – First Read

Marie Altieri reported that more language from the law and the guidelines has been added.

9.2.3. Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff, File: GBEC – First Read

Marie Altieri reported no real changes have been made. In an effort to be clearer, bullets have been created. The importance of everyone understanding these laws was emphasized. Group gifts might be better than individual gifts from families. Personal notes to staff are particularly appreciated. The staff and administration know that everyone means well, but employees are not allowed to accept gifts over these limits. This updated policy will be shared widely once voted.

9.3. Outreach (including PTO Co-chairs)

9.3.1. October Update

Kristina Rychlik reported that the group met on 10/24/16 and 11/2/16. They will ask the groups they are sending updates to if they are effective. The group needs to decide exactly what topics they will focus on. Flyers for Dr. Pope’s presentation next week were on the table at the Mary Poppins performances.

10. School Committee Member Reports

10.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – Amy Krishnamurthy reported that the next meeting is 11/10/16

10.1.1. Minutes of 10/13/16

10.2. Health Insurance Trust (HIT) – 10/28/16 meeting – Mary Brolin reported that the consultant contract was reviewed.

10.3. Acton Finance Committee – Amy Krishnamurthy reported on the meeting of 10/25/16. Diane Baum’s presentation of the comparative communities subcommittee report was very well received (presented to the School Committee on 9/15/16). The Finance Committee is concerned about going back to the MSBA multiple times for project funding. They asked that once the District gets through this series of building/renovation, a continuous plan for maintenance in the future be established. Maria Neyland responded that the District was financially in a difficult place the last time building projects were discussed. She stated that there cannot always be pushback to cut our budgets when the District is weighing textbooks/teachers/concrete sidewalks in the future. Mary Brolin thought about the issue of going back to the MSBA multiple times, but when they visited Douglas, that did not seem to be such a concern. The focus really seemed to be the need for a particular project, not if the MSBA has been to the community before.

10.4. Acton Board of Selectmen (BOS) – Eileen Zhang reported that the Board voted not to call a Special Town Meeting due to Belmont’s withdrawal from the MMT. Diane Baum reiterated that no Special Town Meeting means they agree with Belmont withdrawing. Belmont will still be in the district for 3 years, exiting in 2020. They will have to pay for some costs, but not the debt, of the construction project.

10.5. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – Brigid Bieber reported that members have been invited to the Nov 7th meeting. They will write a memo recommending their preferred technical schools and the Boxborough School Committee members will bring it to ABRSC for a vote of approval.

10.6. Minuteman Technical High School (MMT) Update – Diane Baum

10.7. Demographic Survey Update

Kristina Rychlik reported that at the Summer Workshop, this topic was reviewed and the Boston College's professors' offer to help the District continue. Kristina was concerned about the overlap with the current Challenge Success initiative and feels that what the School Committee wanted to do with the Demographic Survey, is now being covered. Mary Brolin, Kristina and Dr. Brand met and agreed on this. For some of the issues, there might be better ways to address them than in a survey. Lexington had an effort in this area and she will find out more about this. An issue that does not seem to be specifically covered is racial and ethnic diversity, although it is part of culture and climate, which is one of Dr. Brand's goals and is covered by Challenge Success. Kristina has communicated with Mike Coppolino and Boston College that it does not make sense to do another full fledged survey at this time. Mary thanked Kristina for her substantial efforts on this.

10.8. Acton Capital Improvement Plan Committee

Kristina Rychlik and John Churchill attended the October meeting and briefly shared the School Capital Plan. The group felt they should pick the plan that gets the work done quickly. They toured the Fire Stations and saw the need for renovation. Next meeting is 11/14/16 when they will tour the Acton Highway Department and Transfer Station.

11. Superintendent's Report/Updates – Glenn Brand

11.1. ABRSD Master Plan Study Report Presentation – rescheduled from 11/9/16 to **12/8/16**

11.2. Draft Letter to Commissioner Chester re MCAS 2.0 – First Read

Deborah Bookis shared the draft letter with Mike Balulesco and Karen Sonner from the ABEA and they agreed to sign it. She hopes that the Committee will approve it at the next meeting. Deanne O'Sullivan asked if these kinds of letters, or mention of it on the website, can be shared with all parents as part of community outreach.

Dr. Brand thanked Dr. Campbell and her staff at the High School for their care and concern for everyone during this tragic time of losing a second ABRHS Senior since school began. Assistant Superintendent Dawn Bentley was also thanked for her tireless efforts.

12. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

12.1. Friends of Lower Fields (FOLF) Annual Meeting Update, 10/25/16, Erin Bettez

12.2. FY17 Financial Status as of 9/30/16

12.3. School Committee Liaisons to our Schools – revised memo

12.4. ***Family Learning Series Presentations:***

12.4.1. Dr. Rob Evans, “*Mental Health: Keeping Our Kids Safe*”, Thursday, November 3 at 7:00 – 8:00

12.4.2. Dr. Denise Pope, “*The Well-Balanced Student*” on Tuesday, November 8 at 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

12.4.3. Ms. Maria Trozzi, “*Five to Thrive: A Conversation About the Stresses of Parenting Kids Today*”, Monday, November 14 at 7:00 – 8:15 p.m.

12.5. Danny's Place Youth Services sponsoring “*Talk Saves Lives*” Program by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention on Tuesday, November 15 at 1:00 p.m.

12.6. *Expanding Our Notion of Success*, Family Newsletter – November 2016

<https://www.smores.com/pw9v8>

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda and list of warrants