

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) WORKSHOP  
Approved Minutes

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

July 11, 2017  
6:00 p.m. Dinner  
6:30 p.m. Executive Session  
7:00 p.m. (approx.) Business Meeting  
7:30 p.m. (approx.) Annual Workshop

---

*Members Present:* Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O'Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik, Eileen Zhang  
*Members Absent:* none  
*Others:* Marie Altieri (left at 6:40 p.m. and returned at 7:13 p.m.), Beth Petr, Dorothy Presser (arrived at 7:13 p.m.)

---

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chairperson Amy Krishnamurthy.

2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

2.1. At 6:35 p.m., Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED by roll call:** to convene an executive session under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §21(a)(3) to consider release of minutes of the executive session held on 5/15/17 for strategy with respect to collective bargaining sessions with representatives of the employees of the Acton Boxborough Regional School District (Acton-Boxborough Education Association, Office Support Association, and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) regarding health insurance benefits. (YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O'Sullivan, Rychlik, Zhang)

The Chair stated that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board.

2.2. Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED by roll call:** to convene an executive session under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §21(a)(2) to consider release of minutes of the executive session held on 5/2/17 to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel. (YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O'Sullivan, Rychlik, Zhang)

2.3. Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED by roll call:** to convene an executive session under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §21(a)(1) to consider release of minutes of the executive session held on 4/26/17 to consider the discipline or dismissal of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual. (YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O'Sullivan, Rychlik, Zhang)

The Chair stated that the Committee would return to open meeting at approximately 7:00 p.m.

**The Committee RETURNED TO OPEN MEETING at 7:13 p.m.**

3. **Chairman's Introduction** – *Amy Krishnamurthy*

4. **Statement of Warrants & Approval of Minutes**

4.1. Meeting of 6/22/17

The warrants were reviewed and signed by the Committee.

Katie Neville moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED** to accept the minutes of 6/22/17 as amended.

5. **Policy Subcommittee – Third Read – VOTE** – *Brigid Bieber*

5.1. Homework Policy, File: IKB

The Committee discussed the latest revision to the proposed policy. The school handbooks, instead of the policy, can address some of the points being made. It was agreed that a forum for families will be helpful to answer specific questions like the frequency of homework. Marie Altieri said that each school will probably draft their own procedures and the principals can explain this at the forum. Procedures will also be posted on their websites. The district will not write a set of procedures for K-12. Marie emphasized that the whole literacy team worked on this proposed policy for a long time. Maya Minkin added that when the policy subcommittee talked about this policy they wanted to put a stake in the ground and say that for better learning to happen, students should have better balance in their life. Social and emotional wellness is tied in with deeper learning. Mary Brolin felt that the proposal is building on the policy as is done whenever policies are revised. The Committee asked that some of the research be footnoted on the policy, if appropriate.

Paul Murphy moved, Kristina Rychlik seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED**: to approve the revision to the Homework policy IKB as proposed.

6. **Open Meeting Law Complaint**

Allen Nitschelm submitted a complaint that was received on 6/26/17 regarding the Executive Session minutes of 4/26/17 and 5/2/17. The Administration will work with the Chair to respond.

7. **ANNUAL WORKSHOP**

Dorothy Presser, Field Director for the MA Association of School Committees (MASC) was welcomed as the presenter/facilitator. She noted that she is in her 20<sup>th</sup> year as a School Committee member in her community as well.

Discussion began with what makes an effective SC member. Ms. Presser referred to The Essential School Board Book by Nancy Walser as an excellent resource. District goals and the Long Range Plan can help to measure a School Committee's success because these are agreed upon for the year. It was noted that in the last revision of the Long Range Strategic Plan, there was no School Committee input and that was a sore point with members. Also the Superintendent's Goals were done in July and the plan was approved in September, so the order was wrong. The Plan should drive the goals. The goals should then drive the work in the key areas of policy, budget, and evaluation. There has to be an understanding and respect

for the roles of the School Committee and the Superintendent, so that committee decisions are supported even if they are not what an individual would have liked.

#### 7.1. Review ABRSC Operating Protocols

Members reviewed the ABRSC operating protocols and talked about Committee concerns.

The Committee discussed how meeting agendas are created. Members liked knowing what is coming up on future agendas, but there has to be some flexibility when things change or come up unexpectedly. There should only be a couple of major items per agenda. They liked the idea of a mid-year review of what has been accomplished and what is coming up for the rest of the year. This is also helpful for the subcommittees to be prepared. Ms. Presser stated that the time to think about planning for the year is after the goals are set. Where are the actions and bench marks that need to be addressed? This also gives staff that will be presenting a heads up.

Committee members should read the packet and be prepared for meetings, although “Preparing is no small feat if you are new”. Ask questions before the meeting. Do not talk among each other during the meeting. Keep the addendum to a minimum. Presentations have been too long. Members felt that slides were not needed prior to the meeting if there was a report or memo with the information already provided. Mentoring is key to getting everyone up to speed for good discussions and decision-making.

The constraints of the library meeting room, and the lack of available meeting space, were discussed. The tables and chairs are not always comfortable. Meetings/deliberations are often too long and presenters and committee members need to be more concise. Members need to listen to each other and not repeat points.

Public input and handling it consistently can be problematic. A timer could be used. It is uncomfortable when a member of the public brings up an item not on the agenda, and they are often anxious. One member stated that although the Committee cannot discuss something if it is not on the agenda, the speaker should be acknowledged and thanked and possibly be added to the next agenda. Another member disagreed saying that the public should have their concerns addressed, although sometimes it is not in the School Committee’s purview. In that case, someone in Central Office could get back to the speaker. Brigid Bieber noted that there sometimes a misperception by the public that they can come in and say whatever they like during public participation. The Committee does not have to respond when they are peppered with questions.

Sometimes members talk about their own children, or their particular school, too much, making their comments/concerns too personal. Ms. Presser said that this gives the impression that a member has only one viewpoint.

The Committee talked about subcommittees - how they are formed and the expectations for serving on them. Some members have devoted many hours to subcommittees and some have not. This may be due somewhat to unclear expectations. They may consider adding a policy per the MASC samples (Subcommittees, File: BDE and Advisory Committees, File: BDF) Charges must be defined for each subcommittee. A member stated that she cannot commit to a subcommittee without knowing first when they will meet.

Diane Baum spoke highly of the Board and Administrator publication. The July edition addresses how a group can harness social media as a positive force for being a bridge. Members agreed on the importance of understanding how to appropriately and effectively use social media. The Building Committee now has Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Marie Altieri is a huge believer in professional learning and there are resources that the School Committee can take advantage of. The annual November MASC/MASS conference is excellent and there is a budgetary line item for Committee members to attend. This would require moving the November 2 School Committee meeting.

A member requested that a protocol be added to have a statement read (in a member's absence) during a meeting. She recently learned that it had to go to the chair first.

In order to function as a body, several members stressed that once an agreement is reached by the Committee, all members must support it in public.

Members discussed what they need to start doing, stop doing, and continue doing.

Ms. Presser suggested that members watch a School Committee meeting tape and observe how it progresses. There is a lot of repetition and not moving the meeting along that could be improved. She suggested everyone make a personal list of what they will work on.

-----

7.2. Subcommittee Structure and Assignments – *(vote at future meeting)*

7.2.1. 2016-2017 Subcommittees and Members

Some changes were suggested. It will be reviewed and voted on at next meeting.

7.3. Discussion of Potential School District / School Committee Areas of Focus for 2017 – 2018 – Due to the hour, this item will be taken up at the meeting on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

7.3.1. Superintendent Search

7.3.2. School Building Projects

7.3.3. School Start Times

7.3.4. High School and Jr High Schedules

7.3.5. Updated Homework Policy/Forum

7.3.6. Challenge Success/Wellness Committee

7.3.7. MTSS

7.3.8. Culture and Climate Survey

7.3.9. Consolidation of Before/After School Funding

7.3.10. New: Long-term Sustainability of Salaries

7.4. Open Meeting Law Q and A at <http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/open-meeting-law-mgl-c-30a-18-25.html>

8. **FYI**

The ABRSC adjourned at 11:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda