

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

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School
16 Charter Road, Acton, MA

February 13, 2019
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Mary Brolin, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (7:02 p.m.), Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Angie Tso, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: Michael Bo
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Baum.
2. **Chairman's Introduction**
 - 2.1. Annual Spring Town Elections
 - Acton Election is March 26
 - Boxborough deadline to submit papers is April 2 for Election on May 21
3. **Public Participation - none**
4. **Student Reps Update**

Arnav Mehra reported that there have been a lot of assessments lately for students. After break, teachers will start recommending students for classes next year. This can be a great or stressful process. Student Council has been selling carnations for Valentine's Day. Singing Valentines were also sent today.
5. **Statement of Warrant & Approval of Minutes**
 - 5.1. Meeting Minutes of 2/7/19
Mary Brolin moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the amended minutes of 2/7/19.
 - 5.2 The warrants were reviewed and signed by the Committee. See listing.
6. **Superintendent's Update – Peter Light**

The Superintendent reported that Mr. Dorey figured out a way to have the High School and Junior High both start at 8:00 in the morning and preserve the High School lunch time for next year. Bus times will not change. Mr. Light attended last weekend's Lunar New Year and he thanked Angie Tso and Eileen Zhang for welcoming him to the celebration. At the annual Clergy Lunch, he shared some of his entry findings. An interesting discussion was held with the interfaith group about what failure means, and whether it is a skill or an outcome. Mr. Light highlighted the MTA Forum on March 1st saying that there is significant public pressure for the state to start funding schools based on recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission. This could affect circuit breaker reimbursement and is not just an AB issue.
7. **Presentation: Kelley's Corner Infrastructure Project – John Mangiaratti, Acton Town Manager, Kristen Guichard, Acton Senior Town Planner**
 - 7.1. Public Hearing on March 5th at 7PM in Acton Town Hall
The Town Manager introduced the presentation and Kristen Guichard. This project was set as a #1 goal for the Selectmen in Acton. The Acton 2020 group started talking about it many years ago. If successful, construction would begin in 2022.

Safety and walkability is of concern to the School Committee. Comments included:

- Safe sidewalks and crosswalks are essential.
- Kids need places to go and this provides some nice spaces for that.
- The proposed trees are wonderful, but will need maintenance.
- Effective signage is very important and tenants should be responsible for it.
- It is important to coordinate traffic lights to avoid back ups.
- The Town asked the Dept of Transportation (DOT) about the danger of route 27 at the Acton Medical driveway where the kids cross. DOT asked the Town to “keep their pulse on it” at this time. There will be additional opportunities to provide comments if this is important.

The Committee agreed that due to the benefit this project would bring for students and safety, they would consider a statement of support at their next meeting.

Comments from the Public:

Danny Factor spoke from Green Acton, a citizens’ group focused on environmental sustainability. They have been studying the Kelley’s Corner plan for a long time but have not taken a position for or against the proposal yet. They are looking for more walkability, accessibility, safety, slower traffic, lower carbon footprint and more green space. They are concerned about overdevelopment in the town. Terra Friedrichs also spoke as a member of Green Acton and agreed with Danny but wants to wait a year on the proposal so more questions can be asked.

Jon Benson spoke as a member of the Acton Select Board, stating that Ms. Guichard’s presentation is a result of 38-40 community meetings held between 2014 and 2016. The Steering Committee studied 3 approaches. One was minimalist with few sidewalks, bikes lanes and turning lanes. Another approach was the opposite, and the concept that resulted was what was presented. The initial design funding of \$756,000 resulted in this stage. If funding is not successful at Acton Town Meeting, it may fall off the track for state funding.

Maureen Ryan spoke from the audience, asking if the school community was aware of the affordable housing for seniors located across from the tennis courts. She has dropped information off at the schools.

8. **Budget Updates** – *Dave Verdolino*

8.1. FY19 2nd Quarter Financial Update

The estimated FY19 budgetary surplus is \$1,389,672 at this time, due to higher expected revenues and lower expected expenditures. Dave reviewed the timetable for the new Stabilization Fund. Votes of approval are required at both towns’ Town Meetings. The Committee appreciated that this allows the District to set funds aside for future needs.

John Petersen spoke from the audience stressing that the School Committee has policies for reserves that are in line with the policies of the towns of Acton and Boxborough. The taxpayers are funding all of them and need to be coordinated. Diane Baum responded that there are directives from the state about why stabilization funds exist, and that will be taken into account when the School Committee discusses this new fund.

9. **Superintendent Mid Cycle Goal Review**

9.1. Process Overview – *Diane Baum*

Diane Baum delivered a Powerpoint presentation giving an overview and explanation of the evaluation process. She described the School Committee members as a bridge between the community and the Superintendent.

9.2. Goals Update – *Peter Light*

The Superintendent provided his original Goals memo with inserted text to show the mid-year update material. Mr. Light discussed progress on the student learning goal referencing the many stakeholder group meetings he attended, school visits he did and the ongoing progress he reported in his Superintendent

Updates. He has been actively participating in the New Superintendent Induction Program (NSIP) per his professional practice goal. Regarding his 3 District Goals, Mr. Light connects the ongoing work of the District to these goals at every School Committee meeting.

Questions from the Committee:

The Committee discussed the Challenge Success survey data that was shared with the Data Inquiry Team (DIT), and asked why it was not shared with the community in general. Angie Tso said that it is hard to find on the website. Mr. Light explained that the Challenge Success staff at Stanford recommend that data be shared when a specific topic is being considered. For example, when we were reviewing our homework policy, we pulled that data and discussed it, sharing it in context when we discussed that topic. Challenge Success leadership discourages sharing survey data in a broad way with the public as it can be misinterpreted. The Superintendent acknowledged that the administration needs to reconcile the comments from the public. In response to a question regarding data transparency, he shared the website links about the DIT and SWAT teams. Members asked if more surveying, specific to our changes, will/can be done on the areas that the District has addressed (homework, start times). It was explained that the Challenge Success survey is to identify the key concerns for your community. That was done and is being used to decide what to implement.

Regarding diversifying our educator workforce, Marie Altieri reported that one of the big issues is a lack of teachers in the pipeline and their availability to be hired. AB belongs to a regional group, similar to EDCO, that sponsors a diversity job fair that is very well attended. We are really brainstorming about our ability to hire. Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers, out of New York is another group that AB joined a few years ago. It starts by identifying 8th graders who want to be teachers, but we did not get a single student to take advantage of this opportunity. Mr. Light added that this was a topic in his superintendent group. The advice was to make the job offer immediately for very highly qualified candidates of color, because if you require multiple visits, etc., they will accept another offer by the time you are ready. Just about every school district in this geographical region has this same problem. It may be that teachers cannot afford to live in this area. It was suggested that perhaps we could go to Asia or India to find qualified candidates there, given our community's diversity. Mr. Light agreed and said we are thinking about this as well. Mary Brolin shared her experience as a Brandeis staff member. She reported that every hiring team has to go through bias training because as large numbers of applications are being reviewed, and interviews are held quickly, this could be helpful. Mary will share some of her resources.

Diane reminded members that for this formative assessment, members should give the Superintendent feedback now. The mid-year evaluation is typically a discussion and not written. The written evaluation is in May. If members have any concerns, they should speak up now.

Members will have an opportunity to provide additional, targeted feedback on the Supt.'s Entry Plan Findings at the March 25th workshop.

Several members stated that Peter has done an "outstanding job, in almost every way". Comments included:

- He is going beyond expectations.
- Everything is so thoughtfully done and transparent.
- His Entry Plan and the new Capital Plan are "perfect examples" of the very high level of his work.
- He thinks ahead as seen in his bonding to fund the CIP.

Mr. Light appreciated the comments, but stressed that the work is really done by the team behind the scenes. He talks about it and coordinates it, but much of these efforts were started before he arrived and all is the result of a lot of people's efforts. One member really appreciated that, again, as a good leader, Mr. Light lets the team do their work.

10. School Building Project Update – Mary Brolin

10.1. Recommendation to Approve Revised C.T. Douglas Elementary School Educational Plan – **VOTE** (posted separately after the packet)

Members felt that the revision was a much improved document. In response to a question, Marie Altieri explained that a description of each of the schools was added at the MSBA's direct request. A lot of what the MSBA asked about had to do with consolidating schools compared to having twin schools. We are describing our project as a consolidated school building with twin programs. Another town tried to do this and it did not pass. In some towns where that happened, redistricting was involved. As a result, MSBA wants to know more about our schools. Mary Brolin added that this highlights why we have different programs and that there is a strong commitment to these different programs in our community.

Paul Murphy moved, Adam Klein seconded, and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the revised Douglas Educational Program.

Adam Klein described a meeting where they set an energy target unit and how they would engage the community that lives and works in that space. This will affect the rest of the architecture process. JD Head and Kate Crosby were involved. A net zero is attainable, if desired, but there will be costs associated, including educational costs as well. How we use and work in the space will have an effect.

10.2. Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) Submission Update (*oral*)

The Building Committee will decide tomorrow night if the project should have one phase or two phases. An issue has been raised about whether or not to include the preschool in the project due to wetlands as well as space and cost considerations. If the preschool is not included, there has to be a new plan for it.

11. Recommendation to Approve \$7,500 in Grants from the AB PTSO to the High School for afternoon Library Coverage, Community Service Program and Leadership Workshops – VOTE – Peter Light

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the grants from the AB PTSO with gratitude.

12. Recommendation to Approve \$2,000 Donation from the Teenage Anxiety & Depression Solutions Organization (TADS) to the High School to Promote Mental Health – VOTE – Peter Light

Tessa McKinley moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously
VOTED: to approve the donation from TADS with gratitude.

13. Subcommittee and Member Reports

13.1. Policy –

Amy Krishnamurthy reported that Eileen Zhang has offered to step down, making this a five member committee and easier to get a quorum for meetings. Eileen will be missed.

13.2. Budget – *Amy Krishnamurthy* - none

13.3. Capital Improvement - *Adam Klein* - none

13.4. Acton Leadership Group Update (ALG) – *Paul Murphy* - none

13.5. Boxborough Leadership Forum Update (BLF) – *Tessa McKinley*- none

13.6. Others –

Ginny Kremer reported as the Legislative Liaison that she met with Representative Jennifer Benson regarding the current funding structure for public schools. Wealthier districts are often not taken care of in the first round so it can take a very long time for communities like AB to get assistance. Rep. Benson is coming to the March 21st School Committee meeting to present. Her background as a School Committee member, is also valuable regarding the discussion of moving to universal Kindergarten.

14. FYI

14.1. Lower Fields Committee Annual Meeting Memo

Mary Brolin asked what the annual income from the fields use is because it would be helpful to know for planning purposes. This will be responded to at a future meeting.

14.2. Monthly Student Enrollment, 2/1/19

14.3. Acton and Boxborough 2019 Election Calendars

Ginny Kremer moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and the ABRSC adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, list of warrants

NEXT MEETINGS:

- March 7 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library
- March 21 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building Auditorium
- New: Monday, March 25 – ABRSC Workshop at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library
- Acton Town Meeting begins on Monday, April 1
- Boxborough Town Meeting begins on Monday, May 13