

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

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

May 23, 2019
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Michael Bo (8:00 p.m.), Adam Klein, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin (7:22 p.m), Paul Murphy, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso
Members Absent: Ginny Kremer
Others: Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. **Welcome! Call to Order and Routine Business – Diane Baum**

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Baum.

She reported on the Annual Boxborough Election and welcomed new member Nora Shine. Diane thanked all who attended Boxborough Town Meeting and supported the budget and warrant articles.

a. Public Participation

ABRHS senior Alex Condes has been interning for the Acton Town Manager. She encouraged people to subscribe to some of the new town social media resources including facebook and twitter at <http://www.acton-ma.gov/>

b. Student Representatives Update

Michael Cheng reported that graduation is June 7th and sophomores just took the math MCAS.

c. Superintendent's Update – *Peter Light*

Many celebrations are happening this time of year. Mr. Light thanked all of the volunteers for their efforts this year and highlighted the current need for volunteers for Project Graduation and ABPIP STEM. On a different note, he mentioned the number of recent speakers the schools have hosted to talk about issues such as bias, race and bullying. Several of these have been very powerful events including Rita Finder who is one of the last survivors of Schindler's List. He noted that a threat was recently posted in a high school bathroom, but described it as not a credible threat to anyone's safety. A communication will be coming out. A Superintendent's Task Force will be created with our community to discuss race, bias and hate and try to address what is happening in our community.

2. **New Business – Reports**

a. Banning Plastic Bags – ABRHS Student Presentation

Isabella Harshbarger and Paige Kelley successfully presented their proposal at Acton Town Meeting on April 2 to reduce the use of plastic shopping bags. This began when they took the senior project class and involved extensive work leading up to the vote. Senator James Eldridge, who is working to ban these bags in the state, was very helpful. They learned a lot about the political process and how to create a bylaw. Instead of switching to paper bags, which also have consequences, they encourage using reusable bags and received a grant to provide them to those who cannot afford reusable ones.

b. School Improvement Plan Update – R.J. Grey Junior High School, *Principal Andrew Shen*

Principal Shen shared his Goals Review including highlights from 2018-2019 and next steps for 2019-2020. Regarding equity, the Committee discussed the difficulties faced by some families for whom English is not their home language. Some come in person to register their children if they don't have use of a computer or language difficulties. More translation capability is being added to our website. Members and Mr. Shen discussed how students who are introverts are being

affirmed in the classroom. Group projects often require an extrovert approach. Using technology can help because it gives students a chance to think before responding, unlike participating out loud in class. Assessing class participation needs to be considered. The extension of the step program was applauded by several members.

- c. School Wellness Advisory Committee Annual Update – *Assistant Superintendent Dawn Bentley*
Dr. Bentley reported that the Committee and its three subcommittees achieved all of their requirements this year.
 - 1. School Start Time Subcommittee –
Survey results overwhelmingly support the later start time. They recommend that the Jr High and High School have the same schedule (8:00 – 2:36). Concerns still exist around early sports dismissals, bus ridership and traffic on Charter Road.
 - 2. Device/Screen Time Subcommittee –
Various actions were piloted to support the three strategies for healthy, balanced use. Students educating other students led to the most success, as seen when High Schoolers visited Conant 6th graders and really engaged the younger kids.
 - 3. Wellness Procedures and Website -
School nurses, counselors and principals were surveyed. The school wellness policy and procedures are being reviewed and updated. Inconsistencies among the school buildings regarding the policy and procedures were noted.

Angie Tso commented that many parents think that the successful student involves both school and family. Wellness signs can sometimes be missed by parents. Families can learn how to recognize wellness warning signs as a result of the schools’ efforts. Regarding screen time, John Petersen advocated for doing nothing, meditation, playtime or family downtime away from devices and screens. Challenge Success also encourages this kind of thing. Maya Minkin asked if specific schools would be asked to reinforce their awareness of the wellness policy and procedures, particularly around food and students’ allergies. It was agreed that there is a need to creatively publicize the wellness procedures. Giving them out at Back to School Night was one suggestion.

Members discussed the need for parents to easily find information on the website when they have concerns. The student services website and the communication map are visible and full of resources. When in doubt, parents should contact their child’s counselor. Mr. Light added that the website is currently being updated to be more easily accessible, starting with the Building Project section of abschools.org.

3. Ongoing Business

- a. Policy
 - i. FY20 ABR High School Handbook (per policy CHCA) – First Read/Possible **VOTE** –
Principal Larry Dorey

Mr. Light reviewed the School Committee’s purview regarding the handbook, noting that authority for the development of the student handbook rests with the school principal. The Committee approves the handbooks to ensure they are “in compliance with the broad disciplinary and educational policies and goals of the district”. Principal Dorey reviewed the 14 proposed changes and then asked for questions.

In response to a request for a major review and revision to the handbook due to parts of it being very dated, Mr. Dorey agreed that it had been a long time since that was done. It should include how it relates to the program guide and incorporate the right tone regarding how we value things like community service and extracurricular activities. Mr. Dorey explained that the handbook is a historical document but it really is reactive. When something needs to change or be updated, they

do it. It contains the rules they live by at the High School and those are the elements that need to be in there. He considered a thorough review a “good recommendation”.

Michael Bo asked how the Committee would decide whether to vote on the handbook changes at the meeting, or wait until the next meeting for a second read and then vote. Mr. Light stated that if a committee member makes a motion to vote at the meeting, they will consider the motion and then vote. There is no requirement that there be two readings. Michael disagreed with the process saying he needed more time before voting. Two other members said they were ready to vote.

Members discussed how grades would be calculated without a midterm and a final, the school logo (no cost to change it), and how students’ financial hardships are handled given our fees and waiver policies. Per the policy, fees are distributed annually in the handbook, on the website and via email to students. The change to the eligibility language for athletics is needed for clarification because there were some courses that did not count toward eligibility.

Tessa McKinley moved to approve the 2019-2020 ABRHS student handbook with changes as presented. Adam Klein seconded.

In response to a further question about the eligibility language for athletics, Mr. Dorey said that it is required by the MIAA (the District’s insurance company) and most of our courses meet the MIAA requirement. Eligibility is based on final report cards for the fall sports. This puts us in line with other schools’ requirements. These changes will be in the handout at the start of the school year.

The Committee **VOTED** and the handbook with the proposed changes was approved.
(YES: Baum, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso
NO: Michael Bo)

- b. Effective School Solutions FY20 Junior High School Program Proposal –~~VOTE~~– Dawn Bentley
Peter Light explained that the possible implementation of this new program was getting rushed and they had decided that it was better not to move forward with the proposal. This was especially true given that the timing was outside of the normal budget cycle and a number of logistical issues had come up. They would not have been able to sign a contract before July and that was not an appropriate timeline to set up such a significant new program.

Dawn Bentley explained that the District would also need to go out to bid for another group to step forward. It is also a good chance to engage in conversations with others that the District is currently working with like Riverside. The administration will continue to reach out to other districts and also learn from the first one that uses ESS in MA. Assabet Valley Services has been approved to address some of these needs for next year. Mr. Light said that he feels the District is not being clear about the continuum of services that we offer. He and Dawn Bentley will work on this and present the topic again. Members appreciated that this proposal was brought forward as it was, and agreed with the decision.

- c. Recommendation to Appropriate FY19 Funds to the Capital Stabilization Fund – **VOTE** – Peter Light
Dave Verdolino stated that this vote is the culmination of something that the Committee has been talking about since the beginning of the budget season. Both towns have now voted to establish the Stabilization Fund with the purpose to help augment funding the Capital Improvement Plan.

Paul Murphy moved that the School Committee vote to transfer from E&D Reserve the sum of \$1,000,000 to the Capital Stabilization Fund. Amy Krishnamurthy seconded.

In response to a question, Dave Verdolino confirmed that after transferring these funds, he expects upon DOR certification, that the district will still maintain an E&D Reserve balance (before adjustments) of over 4% as of July 1, 2019. This is in keeping with the proposed new reserves policy.

The Committee **VOTED** unanimously to support the motion.

This vote needs to be communicated to both Select Boards within 7 days. Dave explained that the Boards have 45 days to call a Special Town Meeting if they wish to nullify this transfer. This presents a dilemma because that would be July 7, after FY19 ends. We have been advised to request a letter from the two Select Boards asking them to waive the 45 day period when we send them the notification announcement.

d. End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Timeline & Report: Superintendent – *Diane Baum*

Note: Committee and community members' input is due May 28th.

Diane reminded everyone about the deadline and to back up statements with evidence.

e. School Building Committee Update –

Mr. Light reported that the District hosted the MSBA at the Parker Damon Building last week to show that our two distinct programs (McCarthy-Towne and Merriam) have been sustained since 2004. Positive feedback was that they indicated that the floor plans for the building have evolved significantly. June 5 will be the Facilities Assessment Subcommittee meeting. A redesign of the Project website is underway. Two preschool community forums were held recently. The intent is now to move the preschool into the new consolidated building. We are being very clear to the MSBA that we are keeping two school programs, Gates and Douglas, separate in the consolidated building.

f. Updates: Acton Leadership Group (ALG) /Blanchard Leadership Forum (BLF)

Diane reported that at ALG last week the Charter and ground rules were reviewed. She suggested that the Committee appoint whomever will be the ALG liaisons now and not wait until the summer workshop because the two groups are on different cycles.

g. ABRSC Meeting Draft Schedule and Venue for 2019-2020 – *Diane Baum*

Diane reported that a meeting was added back in April and in June for next year to help make meetings shorter. The July workshop is from 5:00 – 9:00 as a working dinner with a leader.

4. **Statement of Warrants**

The Chair read the warrant and the Committee signed the documents. It was noted that members received copies of the warrants the day before for review. They did not see them for the first time as they signed.

5. **CONSENT AGENDA – VOTE**

Diane Baum read the items in the consent agenda. The minutes and policy BDA were held by John Petersen.

a. Minutes of 5/9/19 School Committee Meeting - **HOLD**

b. Policy (Second Read)

i. (NEW) Reserves, File: DK

ii. (NEW) Capital Stabilization Fund, File: DP

iii. School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting, File: BDA - **HOLD**

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the consent agenda as amended.

Beth Petr reported several proposed changes to the meeting minutes of 5/9/19.

Paul Murphy moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the minutes as amended.

Regarding the School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting policy BDA, John Petersen held this item because he felt that a new member should not be asked to vote new officers at their very first meeting particularly when it falls only days after an election. He proposed that the election be at the June 13th meeting. The Committee discussed whether a few more weeks would be that helpful to a new member. They agreed that new members should feel included, and could abstain if they chose to. Members liked the transition period and approving the policy now would provide 3 weeks of it. When it was pointed out that this is Section 1F of the Regional Agreement, it was agreed that that was important to acknowledge.

Members discussed the control of the summer workshop and several felt that the incoming and outgoing chairs should plan it together. Adam Klein explained that the policy subcommittee discussed whether this item should be in the policy and decided to keep the workshop planning unspecified. It was agreed that calling it a transitional period was enough detail for the policy.

Because this is a transition year from an Acton Chairperson to a Boxborough Chairperson, Michael Bo did not feel it was fair to create the transition period in the policy. Tessa McKinley disagreed completely adding that the committee as a whole is very collaborative and a transition period makes sense to work together. Diane Baum said that School Committees handle this issue in many different ways.

Tessa McKinley moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was

VOTED: to approve policy BDA as presented.

(YES: Baum, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso NO: Bo)

6. **ABRSC Annual Organizational Meeting**

a. Election of Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Officers for FY20 – **VOTES**

i. Chairperson – **VOTE** – *Peter Light*

The Superintendent asked for nominations for Chairperson for FY20.

John Petersen nominated Tessa McKinley. Paul Murphy seconded. There were no other nominations.

The School Committee then unanimously

VOTED: that Tessa McKinley be the FY20 ABRSC Chairperson.

ii. Vice Chairperson(s) – **VOTE** – *New Chair*

Nominations were opened for the Vice Chairperson from Acton.

- Maya Minkin nominated Diane Baum. Tessa McKinley seconded.
- John Petersen nominated Angie Tso. Adam Klein seconded.
- Paul Murphy nominated Amy Krishnamurthy. Tessa McKinley seconded.

Robert's Rules for voting when there is more than one nomination were explained. The Committee votes on each nominee in the order that they were nominated. The first to receive majority approval is elected. Tessa McKinley invited the nominees to say a few words and the members to comment if they wished. Amy Krishnamurthy respectfully declined the nomination. Members spoke in favor of Diane's valuable experience, as well as the need to give newer members like Angie a chance to grow. Angie thanked Diane for all of her efforts this past year as chair.

The Committee voted on Nominee #1 Diane Baum and by majority it was,

VOTED: that Diane Baum be the FY20 Vice Chairperson from Acton.

(YES: Baum, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso ABSTAIN: Bo)

Nominations were opened for the Vice Chairperson from Boxborough.

- Angie Tso nominated Adam Klein. Paul Murphy seconded.

There were no other nominations.

The School Committee then unanimously

VOTED: that Adam Klein be the FY20 Vice Chairperson from Boxborough.

iii. Executive Secretary – **VOTE** – *New Chair*

Nominations were opened for the Executive Secretary.

- Paul Murphy nominated Beth Petr. Amy Krishnamurthy seconded.

There were no other nominations.

The School Committee then unanimously

VOTED: that Beth Petr be the FY20 Executive Secretary.

- b. FYI: School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting Policy, File: BDA and School Committee Officers Policy, File: BDB

7. **FYI**

- a. Suicide Prevention Training: Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), *AB Cares*, May 30 at 10 am in the Acton Library
- b. Invitation for the ABRSC: Annual Retirement Celebration, May 30th at 3:15
- c. Dismissal Times for Last Day of School on Wed, June 19th
- d. Danny's Place Youth Services Newsletter
- e. Distinguished Alumni Award from Michigan State University to Dr. Dawn Bentley

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: warrants, see agenda with documents used

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Agenda with List of Documents Used

- a. **Welcome! Call to Order and Routine Business** – *Diane Baum (7:00)*
 - b. Chairperson’s Opening Remarks
 - c. Annual Boxborough Election and Town Meeting Update
Welcome to Nora Shine from Boxborough
 - d. Public Participation
Per policy BEDH, members of the public may speak for up to 2 minutes on items not included on this agenda. Comments regarding items on the agenda should be made during that part of the meeting. Typically, the Committee/Administration will not respond to comments during public participation.
 - e. Student Representatives Update
 - f. Superintendent’s Update – *Peter Light (brought to meeting)*
1. **New Business – Reports (7:10)**
 - a. Banning Plastic Bags – ABRHS Student Presentation: *Isabella Harshbarger & Paige Kelley*
 - b. School Improvement Plan Update – R.J. Grey Junior High School, *Principal Andrew Shen*
 - c. School Wellness Advisory Committee Annual Update – *Assistant Superintendent Dawn Bentley*
 2. **Ongoing Business (8:00)**
 - a. Policy
 - i. FY20 ABR High School Handbook (per policy CHCA) – First Read/Possible **VOTE** – *Principal Larry Dore, Dean of Students Fred Hohn*
 - b. Effective School Solutions FY20 Junior High School Program Proposal – ~~**VOTE**~~ – *Dawn Bentley*
 - c. Recommendation to Appropriate FY19 Funds to the Capital Stabilization Fund – **VOTE** – *Peter Light*
 - d. End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Timeline & Report: Superintendent – *Diane Baum*
Note: Committee and community members’ input is due May 28th.
 - e. School Building Committee Update – *Mary Brolin (oral)*
 - f. Updates: Acton Leadership Group (ALG) /Blanchard Leadership Forum (BLF)
 - g. ABRSC Meeting Draft Schedule and Venue for 2019-2020 – *Diane Baum*
 3. **Statement of Warrants (8:55)**
 4. **CONSENT AGENDA – VOTE**
 - a. Minutes of 5/9/19 School Committee Meeting
 - b. Policy (Second Read)
 - i. (NEW) Reserves, File: DK
 - ii. (NEW) Capital Stabilization Fund, File: DP
 - iii. School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting, File: BDA
 5. **ABRSC Annual Organizational Meeting (9:00) -**

At ABRSD, our mission is to develop engaged, well-balanced learners through collaborative, caring relationships.
WELLNESS - EQUITY - ENGAGEMENT

- a. Election of Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Officers for FY20 – **VOTES** - *Peter Light*
 - i. Chairperson – **VOTE** – *Peter Light*
 - ii. Vice Chairperson(s) – **VOTE** – *New Chair*
 - iii. Executive Secretary – **VOTE** – *New Chair*
- b. FYI: School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting Policy, File: BDA and School Committee Officers Policy, File: BDB

6. **FYI**

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- e. Distinguished Alumni Award from Michigan State University to Dr. Dawn Bentley

7. **Adjourn** (9:15)

NEXT MEETING:

- **ABRSC Meeting, June 13** at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library