



Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

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www.abschools.org

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting

August 24, 2023 Open Meeting 7:00 p.m.

Administration Building Auditorium To view only: <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

APPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Ben Bloomenthal, Tori Campbell, Liz Fowlks, Lakshmi Kaja, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Yanxin Schmidt, Andrew Schwartz, Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent: Vikram Parikh, Leela Ramachandran

Others: Peter Light, Sherri Matthews, Beth Petr, Andrew Shen

1. **CALL TO ORDER (7:00)**

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Adam Klein.

Members of the public who wished to watch the meeting online were invited to use Acton tv's youtube channel. Adam noted that the meeting was being recorded and posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.

2. **CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME - Adam Klein**

Adam welcomed everyone to the first business meeting of the new school year.

a. Public Participation

Several abutters to the Boardwalk Campus school expressed concern about excessive noise from the proposed battery storage. A report from the acoustic consultant was questioned because noise was measured from the front door of homes, not the back where homeowners would usually be. Another person was concerned about fire hazards of the system in the proposed location. The Committee was asked to have open forums with the abutters before a permitting decision is made. Adam invited members of the public to email him.

On behalf of the Kulanu Initiative of Congregation Beth Elohim, the Committee was asked to support a Walk Against Hate on October 15th in an effort to come together to stand against hate and all forms of bigotry. AB United Way is a Co-sponsor and the temple is actively reaching out to other religious, student and civic organizations to join them in this event. Members were asked to stand as one against those that would degrade our community with hateful speech and actions. Mr. Light appreciated the invitation. As a partner with Congregation Beth Elohim, the Schools will be a primary sponsor of similar events during this school year. As a member of the Jewish community, Ben Bloomenthal urged the Committee to join in the October 15th walk.

b. Superintendent's Update - Peter Light

Mr. Light updated members on: First Days for Staff and for Students, Universal Free Meals, Coming Soon! - Parent Square, AB Family Resource Center, ESY Update, Community Education & Extended Day, Human Resources Update, and Facilities Updates on the Conant Asbestos Abatement, Charter Road, Telephone System Upgrades, Blanchard Kitchen Floor, Blanchard Exterior Painting, Central Office Department Relocation and the Boardwalk Campus.

In response to a question about the jurisdiction of the School Committee regarding health and safety concerns around the battery storage proposal, Mr. Light said that the School Committee owns the contract with Nexamp because they signed it. The proposal is now going through the approval process.

3. **NEW BUSINESS** (7:15)

a. FY24 Assignments and Liaisons - **VOTE** - *Adam Klein*

Adam reviewed the proposed list. If members cannot make their meeting time they should speak to him. Most subcommittees have 4 members for a quorum of 3. If necessary, a subcommittee could have only 3 members for a quorum of 2.

Ben Bloomenthal moved, Andrew Schwartz seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the FY24 assignments and subcommittees.

i. Approval of Change of Members of the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund Board of Advisors - **VOTE** - *Adam Klein*

Dave Verdolino is replaced by Sheri Matthews. Kyra Cook is replaced by Adam Klein. Steve Noone and Gary Kushner are continuing.

Ginny Kremer moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED**: to approve the change of members of the OPEB Board.

b. FY23 Finance Update - *Sheri Matthews*

i. FY23 EOY Budget Update

a. Revolving Accounts and Reserves

The Finance Department is finishing their audit to complete the year's close out process. Sheri shared a detailed summary of FY23 operating fund activities (revenue and expenditures, budget vs. actual), a preliminary estimate of E&D reserves as of July 1, 2023, a summary of other reserves and revolving accounts, an update on federal grants (including covid/stimulus awards), and a look forward to FY24. There is a net revenue budget to actual variance of \$954,347 for FY23. There is a net expenditure variance of \$163,622. The School Lunch, All Day Kindergarten, Circuit Breaker, Community Education, OPEB accounts were summarized. Turn back amounts were briefly discussed. Mr. Light commented that having a budget running very close to zero and providing all the services needed will be a real challenge in the future. Unexpected costs often occur at the end of the year. Regarding the district

reserve accounts, it is important to understand what the reserves are used for and what they are not. Some are restricted to certain expenditures.

- ii. FY24 Budget Update - Sheri
The vacancy factor was erroneously double counted due to the way it was identified in the budget preparation process. (slide 2). The vacancy factor was explained. Members were reminded that because this is a change in the appropriated budget, we are changing the base for FY25. Using more funds also has an impact because this won't be money available to turn back next year. Notification is required by the School Committee to the Selectboards of both towns to formally tell them of this change within 7 days of the new vote. Because the Town Meetings vote on the assessment, not the total budget, there is nothing more for the Town Meetings to do. The School Committee will vote on this at the next meeting.
- iii. Recommendation to Set the Imprest Balance of the Student Activity Checking Accounts for FY24 - **VOTE** - *Adam Klein*
Sheri Matthews reviewed the annual proposed vote.
Ben Bloomenthal moved, Andrew Schwartz seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to set the imprest balance of the Student Activity Checking Accounts for the 2023-2024 school year, consistent with the prior year, as follows: Senior High School = \$35,000 Junior High School = \$25,000 Blanchard Elementary = \$5,000.

4. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

- a. Consent Agenda/Action Items - **VOTE** - *Adam Klein*
Adam requested that the Operating Protocols be held from the Consent Agenda and considered first.
 - i. ABRSC FY24 Operating Protocols - **VOTE** - *Adam Klein*
Protocols were discussed at the two workshops this summer, including a significant amount of time spent on the Superintendent's Goals and an overarching goal for the School Committee. Community Engagement and Communication was a big part of the discussion. The goal should include actions that members can consider and each find something that they would be comfortable doing in support of the goal.

Adam proposed the following ABRSC Goal for FY23:

"Cultivating a Unified Educational Community Through Collaborative Engagement"

This goal focuses on the role of the school committee in fostering a sense of unity and collaboration within the educational community. It highlights the importance of working together with parents,

students, and community members to enhance student achievement, build trust, address challenges, and promote a positive public perception of the school system.

Actions that individual members of the school committee could take to help achieve the goal of cultivating a unified educational community through collaborative engagement:

1. Regular Communication and Outreach:

- Initiate regular communication with parents, students, and the community about committee decisions and upcoming initiatives.
- Attend local community events and engage in conversations to understand concerns and ideas firsthand.

2. Open Listening Sessions and Workshops:

- Organize open forums where committee members actively listen to feedback and suggestions from parents, students, and community members.

3. Participation in School Events and Visits:

- Attend school events, performances, and activities to show support for students and demonstrate the committee's involvement.

4. Transparency and Decision Rationale:

- Communicate the reasons behind committee decisions clearly and transparently to foster understanding and trust within the community.

These actions focus on building direct connections with the community, actively engaging in dialogue, and demonstrating commitment to collaborative decision-making for the betterment of the educational community.

Members should consider how they might participate in one of these four actions and tell Adam individually so the actions can be organized at the next meeting. There will be no deliberation regarding the items due to Open Meeting Law. Members should focus on listening and taking in feedback during the community events as they represent the Committee, being cautious about Open Meeting Law requirements. When asked if anything should be added regarding how the Committee will have a unified voice, Adam replied that members are still learning and figuring out how to do this. He added that they are trying not to create more work for the Central Office. There will be times when something is urgent and it is the Chair's responsibility to respond. Engagement is not just about putting information out. It is also bringing information in. People with

additional “education” language skills could also be a helpful resource in this outreach.

Andrew Schwartz moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the ABRSD FY24 Operating Protocols.

Remaining items on the Consent Agenda were:

- ii. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 7/19/23
- iii. Recommendation to Approve energy fees-Boardwalk Campus
- iv. Recommendation to Approve grant received from Eastern Bank to Summer Day Program
- v. Recommendation to Approve the Merriam PTO budget

Liz Fowlks moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the Consent Agenda.

- b. Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - **VOTE** - *Adam Klein*
Rebeccah Wilson moved, Tori Campbell seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the warrants (see memo language).

FYI

- ABSAF Support for FY24 - Mr. Light thanked the members of ABSAF for their generous support and dedication to our schools.

5. ADJOURN

Tori Campbell moved, Yanxin Schmidt seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to adjourn the ABRSC at 8:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: Agenda, Agenda Item Summary Pages, Proposed ABRSC Assignments and Subcommittees, Proposed Change to Members of the Board of Advisors to the OPEB Trust Fund memo from B. Petr, Financial Report on FY23 Closeout memo from S. Matthews 8/24/23, Presentation Slides from S. Matthews, FY24 Budget Memo from S. Matthews 8/22/23, Student Activities Account Funds Annual Reorganization Memo from S. Matthews 8/24/23, ABRSC Proposed FY24 Operating Protocols, Draft Minutes of ABRSC Meeting on 7/19/23 B. Petr, Energy Fees Boardwalk Campus Memo from E. Bettez 8/9/23, Eastern Bank Grant memo, Merriam PTO FY24 Projected Spending/Donations, Statement of Warrants memo from S. Matthews 8/21/23, ABSAF Support for FY24 memo from P. Light to ABSAF Board 8/18/23

NEXT MEETINGS: September 7 & September 21 at ABRSC at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building Auditorium