

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
Approved Minutes

Auditorium
Administration Building
15 Charter Road, Acton

January 9, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum (7:10 p.m.), Michael Bo (7:20 p.m.), Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley.
2. **OPEN MEETING - Welcome!**

Acton TV was thanked for taping the meeting and providing it on their website.

 - 2.1. **Chairperson's Opening Remarks**
 - 2.2. **Public Participation - none**
 - 2.3. **High School Student Representatives Update**
 - 2.3.1. Rishi Girish gave an update on the midyears and change to the summative exams this year. He feels this has really benefited the students and has helped to reduce stress especially for kids who are taking additional exams like the APs because now they don't have to study during the holiday break. Because there is no rule on when or how often teachers give their exams, planning when to study can be tough.
 - 2.4. **Superintendent's Update**

Members were updated on progress regarding the District's next strategy for improvement including District Management Group's study of our Social Emotional programs and student supports. The Kindergarten orientation meeting went well for the incoming Class of 2033 families. The next Community Coffee is January 21st at 7 p.m.
3. **ONGOING BUSINESS**
 - 3.1. **Approval of Minutes of Meetings on 12/19/19 and 12/5/19 – VOTE** – Tessa McKinley
Paul Murphy moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED:** to approve the meeting minutes as amended.
In response to a question from Angie Tso regarding the 12/19/19 meeting, Mr. Light said that a presentation would be done in the spring on the new mathematics trial.
 - 3.2. **FY21 Budget Update – Peter Light**
 - 3.2.1. Update Memo
 - 3.2.2. Budget Projection by Admin Responsibility Summary and Character Code Summary
 - 3.2.3. FY21 Recommended Budget Assessments (Table 6)
Mr. Light reported a \$100,000 increase in finalized personnel costs that is offset by a similar amount of transportation reimbursement. There is no change to the assessments. Dave's December budget memo included a variance that was requested, although it has changed slightly since then. The line item detail is included in this packet as fyi and will be part of the Budget Saturday discussion.

3.2.4. OPEB Annual Board Meeting and Retirement Report – *Dave Verdolino*

Three increasingly significant budget drivers are Retiree Health Insurance, Middlesex County Retirement System (MCRS) Assessment and OPEB Trust Contributions. Members discussed how decisions are made on these topics based on actuarial advice and assumptions that are made over the long term. In response to a question, Dave will find out if there is a statutory requirement for our District's Retirement Liability to be fully funded by 2035. An updated longevity table, accounting for people living longer, is used in the calculations of the actuarial liability on slide 5.

The Annual meeting of our OPEB Trust Advisory Board was held last month to review the investments as required. Dave reported that we are among the best in the state as far as our financial situation regarding funding our OPEB liability.

Regarding slide 11, Dave explained that this information is not a recommendation or proposal. It is FYI for the Committee. There is no guarantee that Middlesex Retirement will be fully funded. Changing how much items are funded each year will change the results. If this is generally understood, we need to look each year and see how the numbers are going and if the needle has moved and assumptions are still correct. If they are not, adjustments may be needed. We cannot rely on waiting to see how the numbers turn out. Dave described it as a "political decision" every year about how much to fund. Dave was complimented on the clarity of the presentation.

3.2.5. Capital Planning – *JD Head, Peter Light, Dave Verdolino*

The FY21 proposed budget allocation for Capital Planning is \$1.25M and is level funded with FY20. Additional projects are proposed to be funded according to the 13 year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and the \$7.5M bond issue that would kick start the projects.

This amount will not cover all of the planned projects, but it was what was in the proposal and requested at the Town Meetings. The Capital Stabilization Fund was created last year for two reasons – emergencies that come up during the year, and we know that toward the end of the CIP that we could slow some of the years' work and put some of the bond payments into the Stabilization Fund to save for the bigger projects later. Dave noted that a \$7.5M bond that did not require a debt exclusion vote is very unusual for a community and we should be proud of it. Members appreciated the detailed new capital progress website and how it increases transparency.

With all of the significant projects being planned, JD Head was asked if he feels comfortable with all of the oversight it will take to manage these projects on top of the day to day facilities operation. JD "feels great" about the future plans and he appreciates how much thought and advance planning has been done to address issues. Challenges will be related to scheduling, programming and fitting the mechanical work in behind the scenes so as not to interfere with programming. Our new Project Manager Chuck Flagg has been a great addition, as well as the Capital Improvement Subcommittee.

Some work on the Conant School has been done using FY20 discretionary money. This includes refreshing the Conant and Parker Damon Building libraries in conjunction with the new Building Project architect. Also at Conant a heating issue

and pavement repairs due to a water main break will be fixed. Mr. Light added that the Administration does not want to invest extensive funding into the Conant building until we know what will happen with it in the future.

3.2.6. Budget Memos: Food Services, Athletics

Members appreciated the use of memos instead of full presentations from these departments that have not had significant concerns this year or for next year.

3.3. **Subcommittee Business**

3.3.1. **Policy** – *Amy Krishnamurthy*

3.3.1.1. Public Participation, File:BEDH - Second Read - **VOTE**

Adam Klein moved, Paul Murphy seconded, and it was unanimously, **VOTED:** to approve the policy as proposed.

3.3.1.2. Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care, File: JFABF – First Read

Adding the word “preschool” was the only change as requested by the Coordinated Program Review.

3.3.1.3. Residency and Student Enrollment, File: JF – First Read

This policy needs to be updated to align with current case law. Our attorney has reviewed it and provided edits. In addition, a bullet regarding children in foster care needs to be added per the Coordinated Program Review. If a family has specific questions about enrollment, they should contact the Registrar who would consult with Marie Altieri if needed.

3.3.1.4. Combining: Acknowledging Religious Holidays, File: ACD and School Ceremonies and Religious Holiday Observances, File: IMD – First Read

It is proposed that these two policies be combined and the title changed to be more inclusive. The definition of “recognized holidays” was discussed. This is generally the list on the back of the school calendar but teachers also have been given a long list of holidays that require no homework. For other holidays, celebrated by fewer students, they have up to two weeks to make up the school work missed. It was suggested that “recognized holidays” be defined in the policy.

A member asked if the School/Parent Relations Goals Policy, File: KBA could be reviewed by the policy subcommittee as he feels it insufficiently addresses the District’s expectations and it was last reviewed in 2014.

3.3.2. **School Building Committee**– *Peter Light*

3.3.2.1. Conant SOI Status Letter

3.3.2.2. Meeting Minutes of 12/18/19

Three sets of cost estimates are being done to ensure accuracy. Early work will be done over the February vacation to begin drilling some of the geothermal well tests to help get a handle on those costs. Foundations will be done in the summer through fall, and steel is expected to begin going up next winter. The Board of Health and DEP have approved the design of the septic system. A meeting is scheduled to discuss issuing both of the bonds (building project and CIP) at once due to the current favorable financial environment. Consigli has a communications division and we will post monthly updates on our website. This will also be helpful for abutters.

3.4. School Committee Liaison Reports

- 3.4.1. Acton Fincom/Selectmen Municipal Budget Review, 1/8/2020
Middlesex Retirement was discussed. The Town plans to issue a note for a new fire engine.
- 3.4.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum Update
Their budget meeting is Saturday.
Tessa reported on the recent SEPAC meeting including a dyslexia meeting coming up.

3.5. Consent Agenda

- 3.5.1. Recommendation to Approve \$2,000 Donation from Mark Lawrence Photographers, Inc. to the R.J. Grey JH Student Activities – **VOTE** – *Peter Light*
- 3.5.2. Recommendation to Approve \$16,000 Donation from the Friends of the Acton Libraries – **VOTE** – *Peter Light*
- 3.5.3. *Recommendation to Approve Revised FY21 School Calendar – **VOTE** – *Peter Light (This was a correction to the last day of school.)*
Adam moved, Ginny seconded, and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the consent agenda as proposed with gratitude.

3.6. Statement of Warrants - Tessa McKinley

Tessa read the warrants into the record and members signed the documents.

Tessa McKinley reminded the public about the upcoming local elections and asked current members whose term was expiring if they knew their plans. Paul Murphy and Maya Minkin from Acton stated that they would not be running again. Amy Krishnamurthy from Acton and Tessa McKinley and Michael Bo from Boxborough announced that they would run again.

4. FYI –

- 4.1. Community Coffees with the Superintendent and School Committee Chairperson
 - 4.1.1. Tuesday, Jan 21 at 7:00 p.m. (*all in the Administration Building Auditorium*)
 - 4.1.2. Friday, Feb 7 at 8:00 a.m.
 - 4.1.3. Tuesday, Mar 10 at 7:00 p.m.
- 4.2. “Raising Tech Healthy Families Together”, Janell Burley Hofmann, January 14th at 7pm in the ABRHS auditorium, sponsored by the ABRSD

Mr. Light said that Budget Saturday on the 25th will be structured a bit differently this year. Small presentations were intentionally held throughout the year and then were not included on the agenda. Saturday will focus on overview information. The main panel presentation will be on special education because some big changes are being made in that area. The meeting is intended to feel more like a workshop and is planned to end at lunch time. Extensive material will be in the Budget Binder, as usual, and will be available on January 17th.

The ABRSC adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda with list