

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

Virtual Public Zoom Webinar Meeting
To attend: <https://abschools.zoom.us/j/95248771505>
To call in: 312 626 6799
Live streaming: <https://youtu.be/VNjvpgqdo98>

June 4, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley (off-line 7:21 – 7:26 p.m.), Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Dawn Bentley, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino, Amy Bisiewicz,

1. Call to Order

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley.

Due to the schools being closed as a result of the coronavirus, the meeting was being conducted remotely via a Zoom webinar by all 11 of the School Committee members, per Remote Participation policy, BEDJA. Public participation was possible via the zoom link or call in phone number. The open meeting was also recorded and being live streamed on youtube. Meetings are posted on Acton TV's website at <http://actontv.org/on-demand/government>. Per the remote policy, all votes were done by roll call with each member stating their vote after the Chairperson called their name.

2. OPEN MEETING

2.1. Chairman's Welcome

2.1.1. Annual Spring Town Elections Results

- The Committee welcomed their newest member – Evelyn Abayaah-Issah from Boxborough. Tessa McKinley was also congratulated on being re-elected for another term. Tessa shared how meaningful their swearing in at Boxborough Town Hall earlier that day had been and thanked everyone for allowing her to continue to serve our community. Members will recognize and thank outgoing member, Michael Bo at the next meeting. Congratulations were also given to the new Acton members, Kyra Cook and Yebin Wang. They will not be sworn in and take office until after Acton Town Meeting ends at the end of June.
- Boxborough Annual Town Meeting will be June 22. Acton Town Meeting will be June 29.

In response to the death of George Floyd on May 25th and the current protests and events, many people asked if the Committee would have a response. The Superintendent read the AB Leadership Statement Regarding Racial Protests, 6/2/20 found in the packet. Diane Baum read a statement from the MASC members that called upon,

“..... our colleagues and constituents at every level of government and in every school district to use their positions as leaders, educators and mentors to the current and future generations to speak out and use their classrooms, schools and their voices as instruments for securing social and economic justice for our students, their families, and their communities and their nation. We must move with purpose to ensure that we, as a people, act deliberately to demonstrate to all Americans that prejudice and hate will not be tolerated and will be challenged at every turn.”

John Petersen encouraged members to exemplify love in their meetings for each other and their work. Ginny Kremer appreciated the protest done in West Acton that was organized by and for the students. She congratulated them for standing up. Evelyn Abayaah-Issah thanked Diane for the beautiful statement adding that it spoke for people of color that what happened recently shows that people in this community recognize that there is a problem and they are ready and want to make a change together.

Paul Murphy moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to support the statement as read by Diane.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

2.2. Public Participation – *none*

2.3. High School Student Representatives Update – none

3. PRESENTATIONS

3.1. Acton-Boxborough Student Activities Fund (ABSAF) Donation of \$60,000 – **VOTE** – Marie Altieri

Marie introduced the four ABSAF board members: student Anya Mittal, student Sophie Zhang, Brian O’Connor and Jim Kirkman. Anya gave a brief background of ABSAF. They have donated well over \$1M over the years to the District to support athletics from the Junior High to varsity level, the performing arts, and Community Service at the Junior High and High School. Sophie spoke about the 22 students and adults on the Board. This amount represents the past year of fundraising.

Adam Klein moved, Angie Tso seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to accept this generous donation from ABSAF.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

Tessa thanked the board members for speaking about ABSAF and expressed her gratitude for the donation.

3.2. School Closure Update – Peter Light

Congratulations to our New Retirees!

Marie Altieri welcomed many of the retirees and principals who were in the audience. Because of the pandemic, the traditional district retirement party had to be replaced by virtual celebrations in each of the schools. Marie introduced each retiree and their principal delivered a brief tribute. The Committee appreciated the chance to also thank everyone. The 24 retirees represent 373 years of service.

Mr. Light invited everyone to attend the Graduation Rolling Rally parade on June 5th to help the Class of 2020 celebrate commencement. He thanked all of the organizations who helped support this new version of graduation – both towns’ health departments, administrators, the elected and town officials, High School staff, the PTSO and Project Graduation volunteers.

Mr. Light reported that the planning process for reopening school that was discussed at the previous meeting is now in progress. All of the groups have met and two steering committee meetings have been held. They will be reaching out to many stakeholders very soon via a survey.

4. NEW BUSINESS

4.1. Policy Subcommittee – Amy Krishnamurthy (6/1)

4.1.1. Graduation Requirements, File: IKF, **Third Read – VOTE**

Diane Baum appreciated that the revision included some of her comments from the May meeting, but asked about the two tenants of the MA Core that were left out. Marie Altieri explained that the Administrators did not want the requirements to increase participation in AP classes. There was a discussion of who the 3% of students are who are not already meeting these requirements and how they will be supported. Some may receive waivers (for the World Language requirement, for instance, if they are learning english). The 97% of students already meeting these requirements includes students with

disabilities. Some students don't have enough diversity of choices after they take a certain class, particularly in science and math, and that is what the district needs to provide for. The goal is to increase choices of courses. Angie Tso asked if the district could avoid setting limits in terms of classes with the virtual classrooms being used now, and if virtual classes would be included in the future. Mr. Light said that it is too early to speculate what the district will want to do virtually compared to in person.

Diane Baum moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was

VOTED by roll call: to approve the policy IKF.

(YES: Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso
ABSTAINED: Abayaah-Issah)

4.1.2. **Second Reads – VOTE – Amy Krishnamurthy**

4.1.2.1. Use of Facilities, File: KF

John Petersen moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was

VOTED by roll call: to approve the policy KF.

(YES: Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso
ABSTAINED: Abayaah-Issah)

4.1.2.2. Policy Development, File: BG

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

VOTED by roll call: to approve the policy BG.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy,
Petersen, Shine, Tso)

4.1.2.3. Annual Organizational Meeting, File: BDA

4.1.2.3.1. NEW: Annual Organizational Meeting procedures, File: BDA-R- **VOTE**

The Policy Subcommittee met to develop procedures to go with this policy to make the election process clearer prior to their annual organizational meeting on July 1st. Although the Committee does not usually write or vote procedures, because these are specifically for the Committee's process, it was agreed that a vote would be appropriate. Members discussed whether a second reading of the procedures was needed. Tessa explained that second readings are important when more discussion is needed, but there was significant discussion at the previous meeting. Most members felt they were ready to vote. Given that the next meeting will be a full one, Tessa asked members to vote. An edit was made to the definition of "majority vote" to insert "of the weighted votes" to "of those voting" in the last sentence.

Adam Klein moved, John Petersen seconded and it was

VOTED by roll call: to approve the policy BDA

(YES: Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen,
Shine, Tso ABSTAINED: Abayaah-Issah)

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was

VOTED by roll call: to approve the procedures dated 6/4/20, File: BDA-R

(YES: Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen,
Shine ABSTAINED: Abayaah-Issah, Tso)

5. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

5.1. **Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 5/21/2020**

John Petersen moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was,

VOTED by roll call: to approve the minutes of May 21, 2020.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso
ABSTAINED: Baum)

5.2. **EDCO Collaborative Financial Update – VOTE- Peter Light**

Referring to his memo, Mr. Light summarized EDCO's financial situation and the position of several member districts. At that day's Board of Directors meeting, Lexington withdrew their motion to termination the organization, although they still plan to withdraw. Mr. Light recommends staying as members. He believes in the strength of the organization and pragmatically it is more beneficial to help turn EDCO around and be part of that process. In his opinion, Dr. Ekstrom is providing the right direction and she has offered to work with a former director.

At the last meeting, Mr. Light mentioned a \$20,000 assessment for FY20 to solve their budget deficit. He confirmed that FY21's assessment will return to \$14,000 because the deficit was only in FY20. Diane Baum spoke in strong support of EDCO's Professional Leadership roundtables which have been invaluable to her as a School Committee member. She encouraged members to make more use of EDCO's great programs. She asked why AB does not use EDCO's ABCD program for 6-12 graders with substance abuse issues. Mr. Light replied that many of these programs are relatively new, and it has to be the right student with the right profile at the right time to make a proper placement. EDCO is going to provide us with an extended summer learning program. Several members spoke in favor of the collaborative and the importance of committing to it.

Adam Klein moved: that the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee reaffirm our commitment to the remaining members of the EDCO collaborative. Ginny Kremer seconded the motion. John Petersen offered an amendment to add: "recognizing the value that EDCO provides to our school community and the Commonwealth" to the end of the motion. Adam accepted the amendment. Paul Murphy seconded the amendment.

Members unanimously,

VOTED by roll call to accept the amendment.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

Members unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee reaffirm our commitment to the remaining members of the EDCO collaborative, recognizing the value that EDCO provides to our school community and the Commonwealth.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

5.3. **Budget Update** – *Dave Verdolino*

5.3.1. FY21 Budget Update and Town Meeting Prep (*oral*)

FY21 will open in the accounting system next week so orders can be placed. The resources reopening team is creating guidelines regarding appropriate purchases. Regarding the "big picture", no state guidelines are expected until next month. Guidance about federal grant programs is trickling in but there is no clear instructions yet as to how funds can be accessed. Submissions are being prepared for the FEMA grant, ESSER funds, and the CARES Act money. CARES is the significant source. The superintendent, Marie and Dave had a preliminary discussion with Town Manager John Mangiaretta and Town Administrator Ryan Ferrara about CARES and how the regional district funds are handled. We will have eligible costs for their CARES Act funding lists.

5.4. **Subcommittee and Member Reports**

5.4.1. School Building Committee Update – *Peter Light*

5.4.1.1. Approval of the Project Funding Agreement for the Douglas-Gates Elementary School Project – **VOTE**

The first test drills of the project will soon be started as well as demolition of two of the Gates classrooms. Construction fencing will be going up. The public is invited to sign up for weekly updates from the Project Manager by going to the Building Project website. School Committee members have been signed up. Noting that the document is a standard MSBA template, Mr. Light asked the Committee to vote the Project Funding Agreement.

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to approve the Project Funding Agreement for the Douglas Gates Project.
(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

When members realized that the motion was not complete, Maya Minkin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the ABRSC approve the Project Funding Agreement as issued by the MSBA and authorize the Superintendent of Schools to execute the agreement.
(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

5.4.1.2. Minutes of meeting on 5/13/20

5.4.2. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) –*Diane Baum (6/4)*

Plans are underway for Acton Town Meeting with accommodations for safety – 20 warrant articles, limiting discussion as appropriate, including background information in the warrant and overflow rooms with possible outdoor seating. As we head to the fall, Diane repeated the Acton Finance Committee’s emphasis that FY22 is expected to have “huge deficits” and reserves will need to be used. Everyone needs a plan for how the towns and schools will get through it.

5.4.3. Acton Finance Committee – *(5/28)*

Mr. Light attended and they voted unanimously to support the School budget w one abstention.

5.4.4. Budget Subcommittee – *Tessa McKinley (6/2)*

Additional information might be recorded for Town Meeting so people can view it and keep Town Meeting focused on discussion instead of spending time on presentations.

5.4.5. Health Insurance Trust – *John Petersen (5/28)*

At the meeting on May 28, expenses through ten months were \$14.8 million against income of \$13.6 million for a loss of \$1.2 million not including expected reinsurance recoveries of \$0.23 million. April showed a favorable variance of \$209K related to reduction in services for members including elective procedures. This favorability is expected for May and June with the revised expectation that the Trust will lose between \$0.5 million and 1.0 million in FY20. The unrestricted assets of the Trust are expected to be about \$5 million at yearend which is equivalent to about 25% of annual expenses. The Trustees discussed the merits of establishing a policy to govern the level of Trust unrestricted assets and a policy to govern investment of Trust assets. Members were generally supportive of establishing formal policies. Members are doing research which will be reviewed at a future meeting.

6. **Recommendation to Accept Anonymous Donation of Personal Coverage Material to the ABRSD –**

VOTE – *Peter Light*

Diane Baum moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to accept this generous gift of masks to the district.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

7. **Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve – VOTE** – *Tessa McKinley*

Tessa McKinley moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to approve:

Payroll warrant(s) as follows – Number P2024 dated 5/21/20 in the amount of \$2,790,548.89;

Payroll deduction warrant(s) as follows – Number 20-024PR dated 5/21/20
in the amount of \$1,127,634.01;

Vendor warrant(s) as follows – Number 20-024 dated 5/28/20 in the amount of \$1,572,589.29

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum , Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

8. **FYI** – Congratulations to our AB student who created the MA Foreign Language Association winning poster.

9. **Adjourn**

Dr. Ekstrom thanked the Committee for their support of EDCO. Angie noted that today was the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and that “the pursuit of liberty and justice never ends”.

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to adjourn at 9:05 p.m.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum , Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of documents used: see agenda