

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Virtual Public Zoom Webinar Meeting

August 27, 2020

To attend the open meeting: <https://abschools.zoom.us/j/95248771505>

7:00 p.m.

To call in: 312 626 6799

Live streaming: <http://actontv.org/on-demand/livestream/government>

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Yebin Wang

Members Absent: Angie Tso

Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. Call to Order

The ABRSC was called to order by Chairperson Tessa McKinley at 7:02 p.m. She noted that the meeting was being conducted both in person and remotely via a Zoom webinar and that members Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum, Kyra Cook and Yebin Wang were participating via zoom. Angie Tso was absent and the remaining 6 School Committee members were in the auditorium. Per our Remote Participation policy, BEDJA, all votes were done by roll call. The meeting was being taped by Acton TV.

2. Chairperson's Welcome

Tessa shared some of the opening remarks to staff from the previous day. She asked everyone to be patient with each other because we are having to do things during this pandemic that have never been done before. Many things are uncertain and constantly changing and it means that we sometimes have to wait for information.

2.1. Public Participation - none

3. ONGOING BUSINESS (7:10)

3.1. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 7/23/2020 & 8/5/20 (next meeting) – VOTE – Tessa McKinley

John Petersen moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to approve the minutes of 7/23/20 as written.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Wang)

3.2. School Opening Update – Peter Light

Mr. Light echoed the Chairperson's comments. Everyone is working incredibly hard right and we have to "appreciate everyone's bubble". He encouraged everyone to "act with

grace” as we approach the upcoming weeks because people come at things with different emotions. We need to meet people where they are at.

Mr. Light shared his update, which will go to families tomorrow. He was very grateful to Dawn Bentley and the Nurse Leaders who have met all summer in preparation for school to open. All of the information is on the Transition to School website, the Return to School Flow Charts are very helpful. The District has also developed community health metrics with our local Health Departments. These will be updated on our website every Thursday. The fastest way to get accurate answers is by referring to the updated [Family Communication Map](#) found on the website.

3.2.1. Recommendation to Approve ABRHS FY21 Handbook – **VOTE** –
Peter Light (Reference [FY20 Handbook here](#))

The Handbook is developed by the High School and changes are voted annually by the School Committee. Associate High School Principal, Maurin O’Grady explained the three changes – Late Transportation, Physical Education Make-Up Procedures, and our Technology Acceptable Use Policy. Ed Tech Director Amy Bisiewicz assisted with the policy. The School Committee level policy states that parents must sign off on the Junior High and High School policy in the handbook. Also, the Title IX language found in the new Harassment policy tonight will be included in the Handbook, once the School Committee votes the revised policy.

A member reminded the Committee that during the handbook discussion last year, it was agreed that it was time for a total handbook review and new look so it sends the right message and tone. (It has been the same for the last 20 years.) It was understood why this year was not the time to take on such a significant project, but hopefully next year will be.

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED by roll call: to approve the changes as proposed for the FY21 ABRHS Student Handbook.
(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Wang)

A member asked about cameras being used by students being turned on remotely. It was noted that our students’ chromebooks don’t have cameras. Teaching remotely can be difficult for some, when students’ faces cannot be seen. Legally we cannot require students to turn their cameras on. Other ways will be found to ensure that students are engaged.

- 3.2.2. Budget Update – *Dave Verdolino*
- 3.2.2.1. FY20 End of Year Update
 - 3.2.2.2. FY21 Update

This is a preliminary report because the audit is underway so technically it is not final. The next School Committee meeting, will have a report in more depth on some of these areas. Dave concluded that the only sure thing about the FY22 budget process is that it will be different.

Comments from the Committee:

- It was shocking to see the revolving fund balances fall like they did, but it was good that it ended positively. Kirsten Nelson and her team's effort to feed the community was praised again.
- Regarding the total FY20 covid costs, Dave is not ready to commit to a number given all the changes still taking place. At this point, we are not allowed to use covid relief money for revenue replacement. If there was an opportunity to restore the Food Services or Community Education balances appropriately with federal funds, Dave would recommend that. We are very fortunate to be in pretty good financial shape.
- Although E&D is below the policy rate of 4%, in budget subcommittee members were generally comfortable because it was close and was mainly due to change in the denominator due to the debt service. Because Dave just stated that there will be no turnback this year, we may need to revisit the policy.

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

This annual vote updates members of the OPEB Advisory Board per our Trust Agreement. The Trust specifies that the members are the Director of Finance, School Committee Chair and a representative from the Acton Finance Committee and the Boxborough Finance Committee.

Adam Klein moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED by roll call**: that the ABRSC approve the following members of the OPEB Trust Fund Board of Advisors for FY21: David Verdolino, Steve Noone (Acton Finance Committee), Gary Kushner (Boxborough Finance Committee) and Tessa McKinley (ABRSC Chairperson).

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Wang)

3.3. Subcommittee and Member Reports

3.3.1. Approval of FY21 EDCO Board Member, Advisory Member and SC Leadership Liaison/Round Table Representatives – **VOTE** – *Tessa McKinley*

Adam Klein moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: that the ABRSC approve the following: EDCO Board Member (voting) - Peter Light, EDCO Advisory Member (non-voting) - Tessa McKinley, and EDCO School Committee Leadership Liaison/Round Table Members - Nora Shine & Angie Tso.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Wang)

Mr. Light has volunteered to be on the Executive Finance Committee for EDCO this year.

3.3.2. Policy – *Diane Baum (met on 8/20/20)*

3.3.2.1. Recommendation to Revise Prohibition of Harassment, File: ACAB/JBA/GBA - First Read

This revision is required to align the policy with the new Title IX regulations effective August 14th. The proposal has been reviewed by our attorneys due to the amount of required legal text. Members asked if the policy could be shorter and more readable by moving some information to procedures.

Counsel advised that some material could be separated out but all of it has to be in the Student Handbook. A question was asked about adding under Hearings on page 7, that a complainant should, or even must, have an attorney during the grievance process, not just an advisor. A member was concerned that there may be times when a class issue is involved and a complainant brings a friend as an advisor, when they really would benefit from an attorney. Mr. Light added that there may be times when someone really would prefer to bring a friend. Dawn Bentley noted that surrogate parents who often assist students receiving special education services go through extensive training any may be the best advisor in some cases. This policy covers all kinds of incidents, large and small. She will work with the staff and ask counsel about the role of the advisor. Dawn noted that much of this policy is written for colleges and universities, which are more complicated than elementary schools in terms of this topic.

A few years ago, the District had a harassment policy for students, one for employees and one for sexual harassment issues. It was found that when something happens to someone, people didn't know where to look for the policy so they have been combined into one policy that is rather long. The new Title IX language adds to this. The subcommittee can go back and try to make it more readable. Legally the policy must contain the contact information for whom to address a complaint to. Comments should be sent to Diane Baum before the policy sub meeting next week.

3.3.2.2. Recommendation to Establish Masks/Face Coverings (new), File: EBCFA - First Read, procedures EBCFA-R included FYI

Eventhough our School Reopening Plan is considered policy, Diane explained that the subcommittee felt a separate policy was also needed. The proposed policy was vetted by legal counsel.

Members discussed accommodations regarding the different kinds of masks and what would happen for students who were not able to wear them. Dawn is working on this as part of the procedures. Members felt the language at the bottom of the first page (from MASC) sounded punitive and questioned if it was necessary. Mr. Light said that this language allows the district to enforce mask wearing. He has been hearing a lot from families and staff about this, in light of the lack of clear scientific evidence. Many districts are doing First Reads of their policy this week. Some districts are having educators talk with their students about why and how to wear a mask. The balance between needing kids to understand the importance of wearing a mask and also needing a mask break was discussed by the subcommittee. Language could be added to educate without being punitive. Members liked this comment. A member added that it could be explicitly stated that the policy will expire on June 3, 2021 if it is not extended.

These two policies are expected to be on the agenda for the September 3 School Committee meeting for a Second Read and VOTE.

Other Updates:

Nora Shine attended the Boxborough Fincom meeting. Members wanted to encourage students to consider applying for options, such as Nashoba Tech, in addition to Minuteman Tech High School. The Boxborough Fincom is not certain that the chromebooks purchased for the High School are reimbursable from the CARES money. They are asking for clarification.

Adam Klein reported that Budget Subcommittee met and reviewed Dave's presentation. They will be changing their meeting time to Monday at 11:00.

Diane Baum reported that the Acton Selectmen is doing some good work regarding Racial Equity. Special Town Meeting will be September 8 with 9 articles on the warrant. Kyra Cook reported that the deadline to express interest for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Commission September 4. Members will be announced at the following Selectmen's meeting.

Tessa and Kyra are organizing the Joint PTOs group. A virtual meeting will be held soon.

Kyra reported that the DEI Advisory will meet on Monday for the first time.

3.3.3. School Building Committee Update –*Peter Light*

At last night's meeting it was reported that paving has just been finished and the modulars are installed so Gates is ready for students. Hiring Consigli Construction was a great decision, as they have been very accommodating.

4. **Recommendation to Approve Gifts – VOTE – *Peter Light***

4.1. AB United Way Grant to Community Education (\$2,500)

4.2. Award to ABRHS STEM Program from the Society for Science and the Public and Regeneron (\$4,000)

Adam Klein moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: To approve these two gifts with gratitude.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Wang)

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

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

VOTED by roll call: See motion on warrant memo.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Wang)

6. **FYI**

6.1. FY21 Subcommittee and Liaison Assignments (*added A. Tso as Fincom Liaison*)

6.2 FY21 School Calendar, voted 8/5/20

Mr. Light mentioned that a heat index will be used when it's very hot in the buildings, and school cannot be held and will go remote. The same can also happen with snow days.

Lastly, Mr. Light continues to express gratitude to all of the educators for balancing their fears and knowing that their students need them to learn.

7. **Adjourn**

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

VOTED by roll call: to adjourn the ABRSC at 8:48 p.m.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Wang)

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of documents used: see agenda

NEXT MEETING: September 3 – 7:00 p.m.