

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)  
APPROVED MINUTES

Auditorium  
Administration Building  
15 Charter Road, Acton

October 17, 2019  
7:00 p.m.

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Members Present: Diane Baum (7:05), Michael Bo (7:20 p.m.), Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin (7:02 p.m.), Paul Murphy, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso  
Members Absent: Amy Krishnamurthy  
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

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1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley.
2. **OPEN MEETING - Welcome! Routine Business**
  - 2.1. **Chairperson's Opening Remarks**
  - 2.2. **Public Participation - none**
  - 2.3. **High School Student Representatives Update**
    - 2.3.1. Caroline Browning reported that back to school night was held last week.
  - 2.4. **Superintendent's Update**
3. **GUESTS & PRESENTATIONS**
  - 3.1. **Presentation to Dr. Dawn Bentley of the Nancy A. Colfesh Distinguished Alumni Award – Peter Light**

University of Michigan Professor Dr. Madeline Mavrogordato presented Dr. Bentley with this prestigious award via video conference.
  - 3.2. **EDCO Collaborative – Nadine Ekstrom, Executive Director, <https://edcollab.org/>**
    - 3.2.1. **First Quarter Report**

Ms. Ekstrom gave an overview of EDCO's many programs and resources, as well as highlights from the First Quarter Report for FY20. Members commented on how valuable EDCO has been to them. The School Committee Roundtables were particularly helpful for new members. Deborah Bookis noted that they collaborated with EDCO on the MCAS results and worked together to bring the information back to the districts. Peter Light added that the Superintendent Roundtables are also very valuable.

Nadine was asked how the EDCO staff helps their students set goals and deal with stress. She said that they all work as a team with the student's sending district. They sit together and listen to each student and their families. Small advisory groups are held with the students. She stressed that you have to "work with wherever the child is at". Members were interested to hear about EDCO's new ABCD program regarding addiction. This was the overwhelming need for member districts when she talked with them all last year.
  - 3.3. **Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program – Joe Gibowicz, Early Childhood Coordinator**

Joe Gibowicz gave an overview of CHECP including the Program's philosophy and focus. In response to a question, Joe confirmed that if a pre-kindergarten student at Blanchard qualifies for extended school year, they have to transition to the other location for those summer services. He also said that there are no facilities in the current

administration building for a student who gets free or reduced lunch. The new school building would improve many aspects of the program. A member asked if parents were asked how they feel about combining the two current locations. It was pointed out that Mary Brolin hosted a preschool forum at Blanchard about the proposed new building and answered many questions. Blanchard classrooms are at a priority and need to be freed up for the older kids going forward. Members were reminded that the School Committee voted to combine the locations into one for the new building.

Joe explained that a lottery is used when more applications come in than there are seats. That is usually the case for typically developing children who desire the All Day program. Our fee is less than other local preschools. Committee members appreciated the play based program. There is currently no dyslexia screening tool for preschool children, but Joe suspects something will evolve soon. Early literacy initiatives are a focus and Reading specialist Sharon Ryan also works with the program. A member appreciated the statement that “Play is Foundational.” Joe concluded that, like EDCO, we need to “meet children where they’re at.”

### 3.4. **Challenge Success and Homework Survey Highlights** – *Deborah Bookis and Dawn Bentley*

Deborah and Dawn presented the key district level data themes from the Challenge Success and Homework surveys done last spring (2019). Principals have their school level data, and they will work with school-based teams to analyze their data and develop school-specific action plans, which will be shared with the School Committee when completed.

Members were very interested in the presentation. The preliminary district strategies were presented a few weeks ago, and the next step clearly is around engagement. Mr. Light added that he would love the district to look at engagement as a key indicator and really think about it. They would really look at the type of courses the kids are offered (STEAM related and relevant). They would also increase hands-on learning to help increase engagement.

There are two types of data sets to look at - quantitative (hard numbers) and qualitative (perceptions). Qualitative data is harder to measure but equally important. Start times were operational things we could change more easily. The amount of homework and workload can be changed, but the quality of it is harder and takes more time.

A member stated feeling optimistic hearing the Administration talk about engagement, noting there are real changes in the curriculum that can be made that will affect the students. She is excited to see that many of our kids are fully engaged. It was noted that extracurricular factors also exist. One member noted that it would be helpful if the slides included the number of respondents.

The homework policy continues to generate discussion. A member stated that the survey cannot grasp how we have improved the rigorous of our homework. She also addressed concerns about the gap of almost no homework in elementary schools followed by the transition to JH and HS with demanding homework. A parent spoke from the audience expressing concern about the homework load and her child’s stress. She considers it a question of equity and wellness. Another parent also spoke from the audience stating that she believes our policy is working very well, but how the different schools implement it is very different.

Due to a technical difficulty, the 2019 Teacher Homework Survey data was distributed and posted after the meeting.

#### 4. **NEW BUSINESS**

##### 4.1. **FY21 Draft Budget Process and Guidelines** – *Dave Verdolino*

It was the sense of the Committee that the proposed budget process was good and the guidelines were comprehensive. It was noted that the budget subcommittee has been very helpful.

##### 4.2. **Recommendation to Accept FY20 Gifts from Acton Elementary Schools' PTO/PTSOs to the ABRSD** – VOTE – *Peter Light*

Paul Murphy moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously, VOTED: to accept the FY20 Gifts from the Acton elementary schools' PTO/PTSOs.

##### 4.3. **Designation of an Official Voting Delegate, and Alternate Voting Delegate, for the MASC Annual Meeting on November 8, 2019** – VOTE – *Tessa McKinley*

###### 4.3.1. Delegate form

###### 4.3.2. Resolutions for the MASC Annual Meeting – *at next meeting on 11/5/19*

Diane Baum was the delegate last year. She described this as a great opportunity for advocacy. Angie Tso volunteered. Diane offered to be the alternate.

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

VOTED: that Angie Tso will be the ABRSC voting delegate and Diane Baum will be the alternate for the MASC Annual Meeting.

The resolutions will be discussed at the next meeting.

#### 5. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

##### 5.1. **Approval of Minutes of Meeting on 10/3/19** – VOTE – *Tessa McKinley*

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously, VOTED: to approve the minutes as amended. (Maya Minkin abstained.)

##### 5.2. **School Building Committee Update** – *Peter Light and Adam Klein*

###### 5.2.1. VOTE on Recommendation of School Building Project Warrant Articles for Special Town Meetings in Acton and Boxborough

###### 5.2.2. Memo Regarding Building Project Votes

###### 5.2.3. MSBA Project Budget Document (3011)

###### 5.2.4. Meeting Minutes & Current Flyer

Mr. Light explained that the Boxborough warrant deadline is November 4, the day before the next School Committee meeting, so the School Committee's recommendation must be voted tonight. If a vote is not unanimous, the dissenting opinion is usually explained in the Boxborough warrant for the public.

Ginny Kremer moved that we adopt the statement of support as proposed. Paul Murphy seconded. The Committee discussed several word changes and additions emphasizing various points such as the cost efficiency of the project, the financial responsibility of the proposal and the educational program that the building will support. Members agreed to many points, but they were also reminded that this was not the only information that the public would be receiving. A member stated that it was important to him to compromise on a particular point if it meant all members would support the statement.

Adam Klein made a friendly amendment to the motion to use the language that had just been proposed, which was seconded by Maya Minkin and agreed to by Ginny and Paul.

The motion was **VOTED** and the amended language was unanimously approved.

**5.3. Subcommittee Business**

5.3.1. Budget – *Diane Baum*

5.3.1.1. Possible VOTE to approve revised charge of the subcommittee  
Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,  
**VOTED**: to approve the Budget Subcommittee’s revised charge as presented.

**5.4. School Committee Liaison Reports**

5.4.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) –Tri-Board Meeting, Tues, Nov 12 – no report

5.4.2. Acton Finance Committee Report

John Petersen report on the meeting of Oct 8, 2019. The ALG spreadsheet was reviewed. Steve Noone noted that the placeholder for the school bond, \$2M, was not consistent with the current loan projections. A planned update of the ALG spreadsheet for the Oct 10 ALG meeting resolved this concern. Paul Campbell Town Engineer presented the status of the West Acton Sewer Project. The estimated \$15 million project would be funded by government contributions, \$3.5 million, and user betterment charges of \$11.5 million. The new school is designed with a septic system because the school project cannot be contingent on the proposed West Acton Sewer project. The approved MSBA cost for the septic system is \$550K. If the new school and the West Acton Sewer system are both approved at the Special Town Meeting in December, the Project Manager is expected to exercise the option to transfer the septic system cost, \$550K, to the Sewer Project. The cost of the school project does not change if the sewer option is exercised. The schools and town have discussed the logistics of sewer installation relative to the school building project. So that the sewer would not impact the school building project, the sewer line and pump house would be installed by July 2020 as Phase I of the sewer project.

**5.5. Statement of Warrants - Tessa McKinley**

The Chair read the warrants into the record and members signed the documents.

**6. FYI**

It was moved by John Petersen, seconded by Nora Shine and the ABRSC was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda with list of documents