

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

Auditorium
Administration Building
15 Charter Road, Acton

November 5, 2019
7:00 p.m.
Followed by Executive Session (approx. 8:45)

Members Present:	Diane Baum, Adam Klein, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Angie Tso
Members Absent:	Michael Bo, Ginny Kremer, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Nora Shine
Others:	Marie Altieri, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley.
2. **OPEN MEETING - Welcome! Routine Business**
 - 2.1. **Chairperson's Opening Remarks**

Acton TV had a technical difficulty so the first 30 minutes of the meeting was not taped.
 - 2.2. **Public Participation - none**
 - 2.3. **High School Student Representatives Update - none**
 - 2.4. **Superintendent's Update**

Mr. Light thanked Deborah Bookis and Dawn Bentley for planning and executing an outstanding Professional Development Day that had just taken place for over 800 of our educators. AB spent the last two weeks celebrating STEAM. The second community coffee was a success and all are invited to the next one on November 15. The program review of our social emotional supports has begun with assistance from District Management Group (DMG).
3. **PRESENTATIONS**
 - 3.1. **October 1, 2019 Enrollment Projections – Marie Altieri**
 - 3.1.1. ABRSD Annual Enrollment Report, October 1, 2019
 - 3.1.2. Jr High and High School Class Size Reports
 - 3.1.3. NESDEC Projections

Marie Altieri reported that we are down 85 students in K-6, down 26 in the Jr High and down 26 in the High School from the projections. Kindergarten enrollment is down 40 students (12%) from the projections. None of the numbers include choice students. Interestingly, 4% of Acton students attend school in Boxborough, while 16% of Boxborough students attend school in Acton. Junior High enrollment has dropped steadily for the past 10 years, peaking in 2008 with 1,003 students. This year's enrollment is 860 students. High School enrollment peaked in 2010 with 1,994 students. Current enrollment is 1,814. Class size averages have improved at all levels as a result of decreased enrollment. The number of students who are economically disadvantaged continues to grow and is of concern.

In response to a question, Marie explained that because this is the second year of using only NESDEC for the projections, the data has been adjusted using only NESDEC for the charts to be consistent.

Class sizes were discussed including the number of elementary classes with 24 students. A member expressed concern about what would happen when those elementary students

get to the Jr High and High School. Also, in any given class, some students are coming and going during the year. In response to a question, Marie said that the 6th and 7th grade total number of students is about the same and it is a small percentage of drop from 7th to 9th grade. Demographically our kindergarten to grade 12 students have changed a lot, mainly in the socio economic area. The number of students receiving free lunch has gone from 2 ½% to 11% now. There has also been a large increase in the number of students receiving English Language instruction. Our racial make up has seen an increase in the number of Asian and African American students. This highlights the need for inclusion work in the district. Mr. Light noted that these trends are generally true statewide.

4. **NEW BUSINESS**

4.1. **FY21 School Calendar** – First Read - *Marie Altieri*

4.1.1. Memo and Proposed FY21 School Calendar

4.1.2. Acknowledging Religious Holidays, Policy ACD and School Ceremonies and Religious Holiday Observances, Policy IMD

FY21 is an easy year for the school calendar due to the way the holidays fall. The proposed calendar has no real changes from this year. The end of school would be between June 9 and 16 depending on snow days. It could go longer if more than 5 days are used. The Committee will be asked to vote on this at their meeting on November 21.

4.2. **Resolutions for MASC Annual Meeting on 11/8/19** – *Tessa McKinley*

Members were invited to share input regarding the resolutions so their voting delegate, Angie Tso, would have direction from the Committee. Diane Baum, who was the delegate last year, explained that Angie can vote the way she chooses but some consensus from the School Committee could be helpful.

John Petersen would like our Educator Diversity to reflect our student body. He is concerned about the licensure piece of that resolution and cultural bias. He feels strongly that there should be some independent assessment of expertise. He would not approve this resolution. Tessa McKinley added that many colleges are moving from the ACT and SAT tests for reasons that John mentioned, but tests have not been developed yet to measure skills that educators should have. She doesn't feel like it has much value to determine a good teacher. Adam Klein reminded members of their enrollment discussion of white and non-white students. He is in favor of anything that removes barriers to hiring the kinds of teachers we need. This resolution does not preclude us from doing something different in our own district. He is in favor of this because he would rather see a more diverse teaching staff, with the caveat that we do due diligence when hiring. Diane Baum added that MTEL establishes a baseline of knowledge but she needs more information. Overall she would support this resolution. Amy Krishnamurthy agrees with Diane on this.

The other resolutions are also important and Amy would support them. John considered the Universal Pre-K Access and Poverty & Children resolutions important, saying that people have tried a lot of educational interventions and poverty has a real effect on learning. He would vote no on Pre-K because he wants that money put into the poverty issue. Amy: disagreed because Universal Pre-K has a profound impact on students' ability to learn throughout their whole career. Diane agreed with Amy.

5. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

5.1. **Approval of Minutes of Meeting on 10/17/19 – VOTE** – *Tessa McKinley*

Amy Krishnamurthy moved to approve the minutes. Angie Tso had edits that will be brought to the next meeting for a vote of approval at that time.

5.2. FY20 First Quarter Financial Report and E&D Certification – Dave Verdolino

5.2.1. FYI: FY21 Budget Guidelines and Timeline

The annual audit has been completed and final statements will be distributed at the next meeting. A report will be given later in the year on OPEB. A member reminded the Committee that now is the time in the new budget process to ask questions and discuss requests as a committee. The administrators have all had their budget packets for a month and Dave is putting them together. Mr. Light added that a different approach was used this year with the budget guidelines going through the budget subcommittee first, and then to the School Committee. This way the Committee knows that some discussion and guidance took place before they are presented with them. He hopes this process was helpful. Tessa agreed saying that the guidelines really represent the School Committee's purview about what they have input on, including the All Day Kindergarten discussion that will happen at the next meeting.

5.3. School Building Committee Update – Peter Light and Adam Klein

5.3.1. Official ABRSC VOTE to Appropriate Funds for the Design and Construction of a New CT Douglas/Paul Gates Elementary School and Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program into a Single Facility on the Gates School Site

Mr. Light introduced the official vote that the Committee needed to take. The motion language was vetted by many attorneys, including the school district's attorney, district bond counsel, both towns' attorneys, and the MSBA.

Adam Klein moved,

VOTED: That the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee (the "District") hereby appropriates the amount of \$116,028,519.00 for the purpose of paying costs for the design and construction of a new CT Douglas/Paul Gates Elementary School and Carol Huebner Early Childhood Program into a single facility on the Gates School Site located at 75 Spruce St, Acton, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto (the "Project"), which school facility shall have an anticipated useful life as an educational facility for the instruction of school children of at least 50 years, and for which the District may be eligible for a school construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA") said amount to be expended at the direction of the District's School Building Committee. To meet this appropriation, the District is authorized to borrow said amount, under and pursuant to Chapter 71, 16(d) of the General Laws and the Agreement for a Regional School District for the Towns of Acton and Boxborough, Massachusetts (the "Regional Agreement", As revised effective July 1, 2014), or pursuant to any other enabling authority. Any premium received upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this vote, less any such premium applied to the payment of the costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with M.G.L. c. 44 § 20, thereby reducing the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs by a like amount. The District acknowledges that the MSBA's grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any Project costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District; provided further that any grant that the District may receive from the MSBA shall not exceed the lesser of (1) forty nine point seven percent (49.7%) of eligible, approved Project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA, and that the amount of borrowing authorized pursuant to this vote shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Project Funding Agreement that may be executed between the District and MSBA.

FURTHER VOTED: That within seven days from the date on which this vote is adopted, the Secretary be and hereby instructed to notify the Board of Selectmen of each of the member towns of this District as to the amount and general purposes of the debt herein authorized, as required by the aforementioned Regional Agreement and by Chapter 71, Section 16(d) of the General Laws.

John Petersen seconded the motion.

Discussion: The Superintendent was asked to share some of the MSBA letter information, particularly around the contingency fee. He explained that essentially this letter is a project funding agreement about the maximum reimbursement. At the end there will be an audit and the MSBA reserves the right to not reimburse something based on the audit. This triggers 120 days to secure funding from both towns via four votes – the two Special Town Meetings and elections in both towns. The debt exclusion language in the Town Meeting votes triggers the need for the ballot elections.

The ABRSC unanimously VOTED to approve the motion.

5.3.2. MSBA Board Action Letter Approving the ABRSD Building Project

5.3.3. Meeting Minutes & Current Flyer

Mr. Light reported that the tour and forum at Douglas last night went well. The video is now posted on our website. He thanked Acton TV for assisting in this effort.

Regarding the Special Town Meetings, John Petersen will introduce the warrant article in Acton and then Peter Light will present. In Boxborough, Tessa McKinley will introduce it and Mary Brolin will do the presentation.

5.4. Subcommittee Business

5.4.1. Policy – *Amy Krishnamurthy*

5.4.1.1. Tutoring for Pay, File: GCRD, First Read - *Marie Altieri*

Due to the updated Ethics guidelines and rules that have changed over time, our tutoring policy is not consistent with them now. We used to allow teachers to use classrooms, but the guidelines do not allow that any more. The proposed draft has been developed by the policy subcommittee. They would like it to be sent out to all families inviting their input and then bring that feedback to the policy subcommittee. After considering revisions, the subcommittee would then bring it back to the Committee for another read and vote on Dec 5. Implementation is planned for February 1. The staff has been notified and invited to share feedback as well.

Mr. Light acknowledged that this will be a significant change for some families and tutors and he prefers not to make a change without a solution. The District needs to have equitable access to all programs, including tutoring. Consequently, tutoring drop in centers will be established at the Jr High and High School for students who would like to use them.

The tutor list will be revised and posted on the website with some information about tutors' qualifications. Teachers cannot advertise in the schools, or tell their students. They cannot use school resources to publicize. When asked if a teacher may tutor for free, Mr. Light stated that offering extra help is actually part of their job. The ethics laws apply when tutors are paid and using some of the school facilities that are not open to all tutors.

Members discussed the concern that some students might not have access to the services that they need. That is one reason why the new drop-in centers are being developed. There are many ways to expand one's education and one member hoped that this can be part of a "larger education discussion with families".

5.4.2. Budget – *Diane Baum*

The subcommittee met Oct 22 and reviewed the First Quarter update, as well as the guidelines and timeline. The budget hearings were discussed. The updated Subcommittee Charge was included in the materials.

5.4.3. Health Insurance Trust Update

John Petersen reported that on October 31, the draft audit for FY19 was reviewed. For the year, operating expenses were \$17.6 million and unrestricted assets of the Trust were \$6.9 million on June 30th. Cash flow through first quarter is consistent with an approximate loss of \$1 million for FY20. For the preparation of FY21 budgets, a rate increase of 4% is being discussed. This will be decided in December. A "packet" approach for the distribution of documents pre-meeting (like the SC packet) will be tried. Karen Coll will provide staff support, Todd Vickstrom will continue to serve as recording secretary. The Health Insurance Trust now has a web page on the Boards and Committees page of the Town of Acton web site.

5.5. School Committee Liaison Reports

5.5.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG)

The Tri-Board Meeting will be Nov 12 at 6:30 p.m. in the Administration Building Auditorium. Each group will present their part of the upcoming warrant articles. The bonding of the MinuteMan Tech building project will not be on the warrant, but will be on the ballot.

5.6. CONSENT AGENDA

The Committee agreed to vote the two items separately.

5.6.1. **Recommendation to Approve New Digital Photography Club at the Jr High –**

VOTE – *Peter Light*

A question was asked whether students who don't have a smart phone could participate in this new club. Mr. Light responded that the Junior High always finds a way if a student cannot access something. The Committee votes annually on activity funds for clubs but if there is no funding, members do not vote on it.

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, John Petersen seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the new Digital Photography Club at the Jr High.

5.6.2. **Recommendation to Accept Donations from Amazon, Insulet Corp., Northern Bank & Trust and Solidworks to AB PIP STEM – VOTE – *Peter Light***

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the donations to the AB PIP STEM.

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

Dave Verdolino explained that the two invoices for Pcard are because for the first 3 months we used a different bank account and have now changed to a regular account.

Tessa read the warrants into the record.

1. FYI

1.1. Coffee with the Superintendent and School Committee Chair – Nov 15 at 8:00 a.m. in the Administration Building auditorium

1.2. Acton & Boxborough Special Town Meetings on December 10, 2019

1.3. Building Project Public Forums on:

1.3.1. Monday, November 4 at 6:30 p.m. at Douglas (tour followed by forum)

1.3.2. Thursday, November 14 at 7:00 p.m. at the Boxborough Grange Hall

1.3.3.Monday, December 2 at 6:30 p.m. at Douglas (tour followed by forum)

2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 8:45 p.m., Adam Klein moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED by roll call:** to convene an executive session under:

MGL Ch 30A, sec. 21(a) purpose 3: to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee, and

MGL Ch 30A, sec. 21(a) purpose 7: to comply with or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements - MGL Ch 30A, section 22(f) to consider approval of executive session minutes of the meeting on September 9, 2019.

(YES: Baum, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Tso)

The Chair stated that the Committee would return to open meeting for the sole purpose of adjourning.

The ABRSC returned to Open Meeting and was adjourned at 10:00 p.m. (moved by John Petersen, seconded by Angie Tso).

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda with documents used

Next Meetings:

ABRSC, November 21 at 6:00 pm (executive session), followed by open meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building Auditorium

ABRSC, December 5 at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building Auditorium