

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
Approved MINUTES

Auditorium
Administration Building
15 Charter Road, Acton

November 21, 2019
6:00 p.m. Executive Session
Followed by Open Meeting at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum (7:00 p.m.), Michael Bo (7:00 p.m.), Amy Krishnamurthy, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (6:06 p.m.), Maya Minkin (7:00 p.m.), Paul Murphy, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso
Members Absent: Tessa McKinley
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley (7:00 p.m.), Deborah Bookis (7:00 p.m.), Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino (7:00 p.m.)

Vice Chairperson Adam Klein called the ABRSC to order at 6:01 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to enter **EXECUTIVE SESSION under:**

MGL Ch 30A, sec. 21(a) purpose (3): to discuss strategy with respect to litigation because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating 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 October 3, 2019. (YES: Krishnamurthy, Klein, Murphy, Petersen, Shine, Tso)

Adam stated that the Committee would return to Open Meeting at approximately 7:00 p.m..

The Committee returned to OPEN MEETING at 7:00 p.m.

1. **Welcome!** – Vice Chair Adam Klein welcomed everyone in Tessa’s absence.
 - 1.1. **Chairperson’s Opening Remarks**
 - 1.2. **Public Participation - none**
 - 1.3. **High School Student Representatives Update**
 - 1.4. **Superintendent’s Update**

Mr. Light highlighted the new interactive Capital website and Building Project website as valuable resources for the public.
2. **GUESTS and PRESENTATIONS**
 - 2.1. **All Day Kindergarten (ADK) Follow-up Discussion – Marie Altieri**

The decision regarding how many All Day Kindergarten sections for next year will need to be made when the Superintendent presents the FY21 budget on December 19th. It would be a \$1M addition to the budget if universal ADK was offered. The presentation focused on the educational and economic factors as a follow-up to the presentation at the School Committee meeting on September 19th.

Research on ADK is mixed. More than half of our kindergarten teachers (8 of 13) would like to go to ADK as soon as possible. More than half of our First Grade teachers (7 of 10) would like to go to ADK as soon as possible.

A recommendation was made to gradually reduce ADK tuition for September 2020 and again for September 2021 using E&D to cover some of the costs. In addition, the new Student Opportunity Act and AB's Chapter 70 Hold Harmless would be analyzed to see when ADK might be funded through Chapter 70 Aid. Tuition would be gradually reduced or eliminated in year 3, 4 or 5 depending on state aid and budgetary impacts. If E&D was used, it could be added to the next year's budget creating a gradual shift into the operating budget that might make it manageable. John Petersen felt strongly that there is no reason to distinguish the use of E&D from the assessment. In his opinion, it is fine to use E&D to reduce the assessment to member towns but this use should be tied to the general budget request, not to any specific program.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that there is scholarship funding for children to attend our ADK if they qualify. Amy Krishnamurthy felt strongly that if ADK is best for students educationally, then we should do it, especially if 92% of parents are asking for it. She does not want to gradually cut the cost for it. Some concern was expressed about moving to an All Day curriculum because trying to fit everything in in the morning so that kids who attend half day get everything done could be stressful. It might be that they have to miss out on music and PE for example.

Marie explained that using the survey data, 80% of families requested ADK in March when they registered, but when families were polled and asked how they would feel if it were free, 92% would choose ADK.

The Committee discussed possible options for families that would like to stick with the half day program. Parents could pick their children up early if they wanted to. If there was a small group in one location, we could offer a half day K program to those who wanted it. The issue would remain though, what gets scheduled in the morning vs afternoon when some children might not be there. Members agreed that the outcomes are not clear, and there would be a significant cost. Although it is too soon to tell, the Student Opportunity Act may provide some assistance. Dave will present more on this at a future meeting but any benefit might take 4-6 years to receive. One member was disappointed that there is not a clearer educational benefit. He felt that family circumstances have changed making ADK an economic need. Members discussed children's anxiety in trying to do too much during a half-day session. One member felt our district is "10 years late" on the decision to move to ADK. Another expressed concern about "the pace of education for these 5 year old Kindergartners" and feels protective of the half-day option. Another member added that we don't know what happens when students spend the other half day outside of school. It could be far more, or less, valuable than ADK. He asked, "which represents the best educational value for us?" Deborah Bookis agreed that there are some wonderful models that they would like to look at regarding the value of play.

Amy Krishnamurthy stated that if the Committee agrees that ADK is educationally important, then we should not be charging for it. Michael Bo added that although some say the District is behind in our kindergarten program, we are ahead in addressing mental health issues because that is a higher priority for the District than ADK at this time.

2.2. Charter Road Planning Update – JD Head and Carolyn Radisch, GPI Representative

The District is planning to redesign elements of Charter Road in order to increase pedestrian safety as part of its FY21 Capital Plan Implementation. JD Head and Ms. Radisch reviewed slides on this progress. This is the third year of a large scale three year campus development plan. Bus route timing has been improved, but there are still some safety concerns being worked on. JD spoke about making the pedestrian the priority. Raised intersections and crosswalks slow traffic down. Bike paths and outside social gathering areas are desirable.

Drone footage has been used to watch the traffic patterns. Additional sidewalks at the bottom of the Junior High stairs would be good, as well as a covered bike rack. JD welcomed feedback and questions. He will also share the presentation with the Capital Subcommittee and Senior Leadership.

Comments from the Committee included:

- Happy to see these changes to the campus. Has combining the two parking lots in some manner been considered? JD will put that on his list.
- The traffic calming measures are much better than speed bumps. Maybe include some LED flashing beacons as well.
- Please don't remove any more trees on the campus.
- Drone shots of the McT dismissal show a large bunch of younger children in one area. That might be investigated.
- Love the outdoor High School gathering area and opening of Leary Field.
- The Blanchard drive outside the gym is an area that needs attention.
- Why do we not have speed bumps along the entrance to Charter Road?
- The skateboard area near the tennis court is concerning, as well as the paths.
- A walking path at the bottom of the hill near McT might be helpful.

2.3. **District & Superintendent FY20 Goals** – First Read – *Peter Light*

The Superintendent presented his FY20 Goals noting that the district-wide strategy is in transition and will be further developed as the school year progresses. (See 9/11/19 draft) The Building Project has taken a significant amount of time that would have otherwise been spent on the district goals. Mr. Light would like this to be a five year strategy that would include a set of key equity indicators developed with Dr. Bentley and his senior leadership team. The goals are part of the Superintendent's evaluation and how Committee members will provide feedback to Peter.

Mr. Light welcomed comments and questions on the presentation. Members would be asked to vote on his goals at the next meeting. Comments included:

- The goals look really good. Regarding Professional Practice Goal #2, Complete District Strategy, Mr. Light was encouraged to "bring the Committee along" with this even if it means another workshop. It is a collaborative process with staff members and School Committee members.
- There can only be one number 1 priority, which was correctly the Building Project this year.
- This is about looking at our students and how to make them successful. Goals need to be measurable, but also keeping in mind the tangible elements of a deep appreciation for things, like reading, is important.
- Be careful if you attempt to pool girls and boys. There are some dimensions where data should not be aggregated by boys and girls; it's much more sub group related.
- These goals are written in a more holistic way which makes the evaluation hard to process, assessment and evidence are not included with a holistic approach.
- What is the process used to identify the screening tools? How will you measure the outcome? There are many questions and I understand it is a work in progress.
- Overall I'm so happy with the vision and excited about the direction. I like how you are trying to bring more to Social Emotional learning into the elementary schools, and then let the Junior High and High School build on it.
- I like that literacy is taking a position of focus. So much is coming out in research now on literacy and being thoughtful about it.

- I am curious about the differentiation between the lower and upper grades' approaches regarding social emotional well-being and evaluations. How is the approach by evaluators differentiated?
- What do you take off your plate so you can address some new things?
- This is exciting and aligning the School Improvement Plans is interesting. It is challenging to see how they line up with the strategy as a whole. School Councils are developing them now. (Mr. Light responded that a big step forward will be seen this year, and again next year. We don't want the schools to be doing the same thing at the same time. We are saying we have a general direction and when a key initiative happens for your school, that is progress.)
- Why are professional evaluations on growth and development and how teachers will be part of the process? (Mr. Light responded that we are not trying to look at the whole system. We are focused on the student learning goals and the conversations that happen between evaluators and educators - focusing on the dialogue. One of the initial things he did when he came here was look at lots of evaluations and wanted to increase the consistency. The other thing that stood out was that we had an opportunity of changing dynamic between what a teacher does and the impact it has on students. That is what we want to focus on in this shift. This is important work. In a large district, it is important to have a level of consistency in our educators. This is about looking at what's happening in classrooms between educators and kids.
- These goals are not measurable in the classic sense, but looking at the graphic, this member doesn't think the acronym SMART goals should drive Mr. Light's goals. These are what the district needs, this type of infrastructure.

Regarding the Educator Growth and Development Initiative, Mr. Light agreed that Standard 2 is our overall focus as a team, but it is so granular. There is a place for SMART goals but sometimes you lose the value of the goal. He wants the focus on students but the process is through the faculty. He wrote this knowing it would probably be a 3-5 year process.

When asked about the relationship between the strategic initiative and the goal, he explained that we tried to pick some areas across multiple domains so we are continuing to make progress in all areas. Mr. Light said that some of these connections will become more explicit as we go through the year.

3. ONGOING BUSINESS

3.1. Approval of Minutes of Meetings on 10/17/19, 11/05/19 and 11/12/19 – VOTE –

Maya Minkin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the 10/17/19 meeting as amended.

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

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the 11/5/19 meeting as written.

(Nora Shine abstained.)

Ginny Kremer moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the 11/12/19 TriBoard meeting as amended.

3.2. FY21 School Calendar – Second Read – **VOTE** - Marie Altieri

The policy subcommittee will be reviewing the religious holidays policies (File ACD and IMD) to consider including Chinese New Year and Diwali at Michael Bo's request.

John Petersen moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY21 school calendar as presented.

3.3. Receipt of FY19 Financial Audit Reports – Dave Verdolino

Dave reported that all three of these reports are required by law to be given to the School Committee every year. He was happy to report that there were no findings. The auditor asked a question about the district having a cash policy. We will communicate to him that we do have one. Dave reported that we are running at about 4% of employee reimbursements compared to last year so the new procedures (P-card) are working well.

3.4. **School Building Committee Update** – *Peter Light, Adam Klein*

Many forums have been held these past few weeks. The Acton Fincom and Board of Selectmen both voted unanimously to support the project. Their support is very much appreciated. They might try to do a “live” forum on facebook and are working on the technology. The Superintendent thanked everyone on the Building Committee for their tremendous efforts to get to this point.

3.4.1. Acton Tri-Board Meeting 11/12/19

3.5. **Subcommittee Business**

3.5.1. Policy – *Amy Krishnamurthy*

3.5.1.1. ~~Public Participation, File: BEDH, First Read~~ (next meeting)

3.5.1.2. Tutoring for Pay, File: GCRD Update (oral, to be voted 12/19/19)

Policy met earlier this week. The Tutoring draft was brought to the last meeting and now staff and families are being asked for comments by Monday. The updated draft will be shared again at the meeting on Dec 5, and then again for a vote on Dec 19. Mr. Light added that we know this is a big shift in our district but we are working on establishing free math and reading support centers at the Junior High and High School for students to drop in. The district is trying to provide multiple solutions.

3.5.2. Budget – *Diane Baum*

Members discussed the audit, projecting budget variances, the capital spreadsheet, OPEB and the use of E&D at their recent meeting.

3.6. **School Committee Liaison Reports**

3.6.1. MASC/MASS Conference Recap (Nov 6-9)

Nine Committee members attended this year which was significant. Most reported that it was very valuable to spend time with fellow members and talk about how to move our district forward. Adam noted that AB was recognized for already working on many of the topics presented. John appreciated learning more about the MSBA’s perspective on square foot reimbursement for new buildings. They know that their top reimbursement rate is well below current construction rates. Their rate is set to strike a balance between helping to make projects “affordable” for communities and funding an appropriate number of projects.

3.6.2. Acton Finance Committee

John Petersen reported that in addition to supporting the School project, the Fincom also unanimously voted to support the North Acton Fire Station. David Martin presented an update to the sewer project. After significant discussion, the Finance Committee voted 4-3 to recommend the article. Generally the Finance Committee has significant concerns about the large increase in tax bills that will occur as the result of these capital investments. Through Q1, Acton municipal finances and enterprise funds are tracking expected results.

3.7. **CONSENT AGENDA – VOTE**

3.7.1. Acceptance of Donation from Littleton Electric Light & Water to Blanchard

3.7.2. Acceptance of Donation from ABR PTSO to the Jr High for the 8th Grade Dance

3.7.3. Acceptance of Donation from the Acton Debate Institute to the ABRHS Speech & Debate Team

3.7.4. Acceptance of \$1,217.10 Anonymous Donation to Pay for Outstanding Jr High Student Lunch Balances

Given no holds on the consent agenda,

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

VOTED: to approve the consent agenda.

The Superintendent thanked all of the generous donors.

3.8. Statement of Warrants

Adam Klein read the warrants into the record and members signed the documents.

The ABRSC was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda with documents used

Next Meetings:

ABRSC, December 5 at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building Auditorium (packet posted MONDAY, 12/2/19)

ABRSC, December 19 at 7:00 pm in the Administration Building Auditorium (packet posted 12/13/19)