

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

Administration Building Auditorium
15 Charter Road, Acton
To view only: <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

August 25, 2022
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Ben Bloomenthal, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Kyra Cook, Liz Fowlks, Adam Klein, Andrew Schwartz, Yebin Wang, Rebeccah Wilson
Members Absent: Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Kyra Cook.

2. **Chairperson's Welcome - Kyra Cook**

The Chairperson stated that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org. She described it as an honor to serve as the School Committee's new Chairperson, and a privilege to address the staff and faculty at the Opening Ceremony this morning.

a. **Public Participation**

Per School Committee Policy BEDH, members of the public were invited to speak for up to 3 minutes regarding items that were not on the agenda. For items on the agenda, the public was asked to wait for that item. The committee does not typically respond to comments during public participation.

Mike Balulescu, Acton parent and President of the Acton Boxborough Education Association (ABEA), introduced teacher Leah Lally. Leah's new role on the Executive Board is as the Observer/Liason to the School Committee.

b. **Superintendent's Welcome - Peter Light**

i. *Operations Update*

Mr. Light welcomed all of the educators and staff back, noting that it was the first time in three years that an in-person assembly with all district staff could be held again. Everyone is very excited to get the school year started, especially with the move into the new building. The Preschool, Douglas and Gates teachers and staff worked extremely hard to get the new campus ready for students. Lastly, Mr. Light congratulated JD Head on his new job opportunity. He is thinking about how to reorganize the Operations Department leadership. Dave Verdolino will act as the Director of Finance and Operations for this school year.

3. **Guests & Presentations**

a. **Boardwalk Campus Opening Update - Mary Brolin, Peter Light**

Mary Brolin, Chairperson of the School Building Committee, gave an update on next week's opening of the new Boardwalk Campus. Although it is still an active construction site, it is a wonderful achievement that will provide outstanding educational opportunities for our children. "Huge thanks" were given to Acton and Boxborough taxpayers, the MSBA our community members, and the building team of Consigli, Arrowstreet, and Skanska. Mary thanked the members of School Building Committee and the Administration for all of their support throughout the seven year process. It began with a Feasibility Study, than a Visioning Process that resulted in five different possibilities. These options were brought to multiple community forums and recorded versions were posted on the website so people could learn more. Surveys were done and public input was gathered. The results led to the idea of another twin school, then evolved to include the Preschool Program. Building on the success of the Parker Damon Building, that two distinct schools could be in one building, the community considered the savings of time and money. Including the Preschool was beneficial because it allowed that expense to be partially funded as well, even though a preschool program is not usually reimbursable. Regarding the siting of the campus, the large amount of wetlands had a significant effect on the location of the building. Many Douglas parents were strongly in favor of a school they could still walk to.

Mr. Light shared slides of the new campus. Parking and access to the site will be tight until the Gates and Douglas buildings are taken down and permanent parking is done. The building will be triple net zero and one of the most sustainable buildings in the Commonwealth. It is very accessible with many inclusive spaces. Two CASE classrooms will be included.

The project is on budget and still has a fair amount in contingencies. A lot of this may be used over the next year including dealing with asbestos in the two old schools. Timing is still a challenge due to covid for some items like electronics. Mary noted that the project came in \$2.4M less than what the community voted. Some work had to be delayed due to parking issues, so completion will be Aug/Sept 2023 which was the original schedule. Consigli has done an amazing job keeping things moving as issues have come up.

A new [website](#) was created by Andrew Shen that includes Frequently Asked Questions. A Grand Opening for the community is scheduled for October 15th.

b. **Staffing Update** - Marie Altieri

Marie Altieri outlined the new school year staffing changes. At this time, 43 new teachers have been hired with only one opening. Nine new administrators have been hired. Eight new educators of color, including four new administrators were hired. This year, 10% of our teachers are new which is fairly typical. Seven of our eight Principals are in the first or second year of their Principal position. Hiring substitutes and part time staff continues to be a source of concern.

Comments from the Committee included:

- Good job on attracting teachers of color, it will be important to keep them.
- The video last year was great to attract this group. What are next steps? Affinity groups for our staff are growing and successful. Social events for teachers of color. We tried to make our overall teacher package more fair/attractive, and it showed that we attracted people beyond those right out of school. Several have taught in other countries.
- We want to attract educators who really believe in our values, that we want working with others in our district. We want a wide range of educators.
- SEED training has been expanded for everyone.
- We have to dignify staff members and give them respect. If they don't feel respected, they will not stay.

4. New Business

a. **FY23 Assignments and Liaisons - VOTE - *Kyra Cook***

Per School Committee policy, Kyra proposed the list of Assignments and Liaisons for FY23 based on members' schedules and requests.

Adam Klein moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded, and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the FY23 Subcommittee Assignments and Liaisons.

b. **Building Committee new member - VOTE - *Peter Light***

Due to JD Head's departure from the District for a new job opportunity, Mr. Light proposed that Dave Verdolino replace JD on this Committee.

Adam Klein moved, Liz Fowlks seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the change of members to the School Building Committee as presented in the packet.

c. **Discussion of Process to Update Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for School Resource Officer (SRO) Program - *Peter Light***

Due to recent changes in the state law, Mr. Light informed the Committee that updates to the School Resource Officer MOU with the police department are now required. He requested members' feedback regarding the process the Committee wants to use to finalize the new MOU. Memos from the Superintendent, District's legal counsel, DEI Director Jen Faber and a draft MOU based on the required state template were reviewed. This template provides a minimum standard that the district must adopt. A district cannot eliminate or change any of the template wording, although additions can be made to it, but they cannot contradict the state's text.

Members discussed whether to

- have the Policy subcommittee review and discuss the requirements, then draft a proposed MOU for the School Committee to review for a First Read followed by a Second Read and then a vote, OR
- have the full School Committee handle the entire process directly instead of the subcommittee.

Mr. Light recommended involving the policy subcommittee but stated that this is a School Committee decision.

Members' comments included:

- Has the district done an analysis of how the SROs have been involved in the past? This information is needed before we decide how to proceed. (Mr. Light asked what information is needed so it could be provided.)
- What is the timeline? It sounds urgent. Is there a placeholder until the new MOU is final? (Our current MOU would remain in effect but it has been the same for many years.) It was agreed that the MOU should be done carefully and not rushed.
- A member was concerned that because she is not on the policy subcommittee that she would not be part of the discussion. She was assured that the subcommittee meetings are open public meetings that she could attend. When the proposal goes to the School Committee for the two (at least) readings, all members and the public can comment.
- Developing this MOU is too much for all 11 Committee members to go through. It's best to have a smaller group put together the "guard rails", then all can provide input, and/or attend policy sub. This is an important and very detailed document. The state will define it and tell us what to do.
- Are we assuming that we are keeping the SRO, or are we discussing not keeping this position? That decision needs to be made before we talk about the process. A second member agreed. Mr. Light stated that what was presented to the School Committee is that the District continues to have an SRO program, however it is a School Committee decision.
- Let's continue to keep the current MOU in place, and get input from the School Committee and the public about whether to keep this program.
- We don't want to get in trouble with the state, but let's make a decision in School Committee and then have the policy subcommittee work on it.
- Are there penalties for not complying and having this MOU in place? Mr. Light was not sure but he would keep members informed.
- A member of the public stated that before the start of school every year, the MOU is supposed to be reviewed and DESE has not enforced that. He also stated that a district has the ability to withdraw at any time, but in his opinion that should be decided by the whole School Committee.

Kyra Cook summarized that the Committee would like more information from the Administration about our current program, and the Committee would like to discuss whether or not to continue having an SRO Program. Members would like data from the community and a clear definition of the program before making a decision about it. What are the pros and cons? Mr. Light will gather the information that exists, including the ABSEJ survey data and will bring a timeline and framework back to the Committee.

5. ONGOING BUSINESS

a. Consent Agenda/Action Items

- i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 6/16/22 - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*

- ii. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 7/21/22 - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*
- iii. Recommendation to Set the Imprest Balance of the Student Activity Checking Accounts for FY23 - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*
- iv. Approval of Change of Members of the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund Board of Advisors - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*
- v. Recommendation to Approve PTSO donation check of \$3200 to RJ Grey for 8th Grade EOY field trip - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*
- vi. Recommendation to Approve PTSO donation to McCarthy-Towne School - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*

Ben Bloomenthal moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED**: to approve the consent agenda as proposed.

b. Subcommittee and Member Reports

- i. School Building – see report above
- ii. Pool Renaming
Peter acknowledged that members hoped to have a recommendation for the School Committee to consider by the fall, but with JD Head transitioning from the district, the Subcommittee has not been able to meet. Peter looks forward to getting started.

Andrew Schwartz moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded, and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to Appoint Peter Light as a staff representative to the Pool Renaming Subcommittee.

- c. Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - VOTE** – *K. Cook*
Adam Klein moved, Liz Fowlks seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the warrants (see memo).

Dave clarified that there are two cycles to this warrant, so HJ is correct.

6. FYI

a. ABRSC FY23 Meetings and Members

Kyra noted that even though today was opening day for staff, cars have been in the school parking lots all week. Everyone is obviously working hard.

7. Adjourn

Andrew Klein moved, Rebeccah Wilson seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to adjourn the ABRSC at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used:

Agenda, Agenda Item Cover Pages, Boardwalk Campus FAQ'S and Presentation Slides, Staffing Report 2022-2023 from M. Altieri (8/19/22) including New Professional Staff List, Staffing Changes and New Certified Staff Descriptions, ABRSC 2022-2023 Proposed Subcommittees & Assignments, AB School Building Committee Members (pending ABRSC vote), Required Updates to School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding memo from P. Light (8/22/22), Memorandum of Understanding for School Resource Officers memo from Atty Colby Brunt (8/17/22), Summary of the DEI Family Advisory findings memo from J. Faber (8/16/22), 2022 School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding Between the ABRSD and Acton Police Department, Draft Minutes of ABRSC meetings on 6/16/22 and 7/21/22, Student Activity Account Funds; required annual reauthorization memo from D. Verdolino (8/28/22), Proposed Change to Members of the Board of Advisors of the OPEB Trust Fund memo from E. Petr (8/26/22), Donation from RJGJHS, Request for Approval of Donations Valued over \$1,000 from C. Nealon/McT (8/18/22), School Committee Agenda – Warrants memo from D. Verdolino (8/18/22), ABRSC Members 2022-2023, ABRSC Meetings 2022-2023

NEXT MEETINGS:

September 8 & 22 ABRSC at 7:00 p.m. in the Admin Building Auditorium