

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING Approved Minutes

Administration Building Auditorium

15 Charter Road, Acton

To view only: <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

September 8, 2022

6:30 p.m. Business meeting

7:15 p.m. Workshop

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Kyra Cook, Liz Fowlks, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Tessa McKinley, Yebin Wang, Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent: Ben Bloomenthal, Amy Krishnamurthy, Andrew Schwartz

Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino, Dr. Kathleen A. Dawson (Superintendent-Director of Minuteman High School), Pam Nourse (Chairperson of the Minuteman School Committee), Andrew Patenaude (Minuteman at RJ Grey Teacher)

1. **Call to Order (6:30)**

Chairperson Kyra Cook called the ABRSC to order at 6:35 p.m.

She stated that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org. She explained that the second half of the meeting would be a workshop to align the members' identity as a committee and work on goals for the academic year, as well as to consider the relationship members have with each other and the work.

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

a. **Public Participation**

John Petersen urged the School Committee to change the Regional Agreement by reducing the size of the Committee to nine members and making each of the future elections two seats in Acton (six total) and one seat in Boxborough (three total). He noted that last spring's elections in Acton and Boxborough were uncontested resulting in no debates or real campaigning, an important part of community education and School Committee member experience. He urged community members to consider running for School Committee next spring.

Martin Benson expressed concern about the Committee Chairperson's reactions to his comments made at meetings on May 19th and June 9th and which in his opinion, may be a violation of the First Amendment. He noted this amendment includes the right "to petition the Government for a redress of grievances". His comments were submitted for the public record.

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

Regarding recent audio visual issues during School Committee meetings, Mr. Light is working with Acton TV to prevent this in the future.

Mr. Light thanked all of the staff for a successful school opening. He gave a special shout out to our Transportation Department for a remarkable job with the challenges of the new school building. A Grand Opening of the Boardwalk Campus will be held on October 15 to welcome our broader community to our new building! Community coffee dates will be going out soon.

3. **Guests & Presentations**

a. AB Revolution logo design – Peter Light

Mr. Light shared the new AB Revolution logo: “The fight for positive change and equity never ends; it is the voice of the people: a Revolution. It acknowledges our past, but speaks to our future. We are innovators, barrier breakers, and difference makers. A Revolution represents a show of ingenious strength, challenging, outsmarting, and overwhelming the status quo.” Members were impressed with the thought and effort that resulted in the new logo. In response to a question from the public, Mr. Light said that the total cost to date of this change has been \$7,500. In addition some athletic uniforms that were scheduled to be replaced will have the new logo. The School Store will also offer some new items but they will be purchased by staff and students. Some things will be changed digitally at no cost.

4. **New Business**

a. Discussion of Assuming Responsibility and Oversight for the Planning and Development of the Junior High School Technology Education Program

Mr. Light outlined the proposal to take over ownership of these two very popular programs currently run for us by Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School at R.J. Grey. He noted that the two teachers, Brian Crossman and Andrew Patenaude are terrific.

Comments from the Committee included:

- It’s ok to withdraw as long as the instructors are kept but the concern is that AB is “so far away from how Minuteman approaches STEAM, and other classes”. Worry was expressed that it will just become another AB class. How Minuteman teaches is really unique and it is the kind of education that some kids really need based on how they learn. Mr. Light agreed with much of this comment adding that AB’s goal is not to occupy the same niche as Minuteman, but a space in between.
- The community’s recent outpouring on this topic was acknowledged. “It is important that we keep these beloved educators.”
- The number of kids who consider these educators a lifeline for in the 7th and 8th grade is significant. Some say these classes got them through Junior High. It speaks to a broader need for what is missing for some kids with the small amount of time that they’re getting in these classes at the Junior High. What more could we do about this?
- A child who loved the program but couldn’t get into Minuteman didn’t get the same experience when they went to ABRHS. Kids need to be told

about nontraditional experiences that they could experience at AB that may be similar to Minuteman's approach.

- Could the district have the new classes ready by the end of this year? Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Deborah Bookis and Mr. Light have discussed how to design these courses, and R&D time is built into our program. Typically when new courses are introduced, the Administration starts in the fall so this timing would be ok.
- What do we want to achieve? The Administration has been working toward coherence of programming for students through the curriculum, Elementary through the High School. Curriculum has to be planned for all grades to align. It is agreed that there is currently a gap in the Junior High curriculum regarding STEAM.

The Committee will be asked to vote on this decision at their next meeting.

5. ONGOING BUSINESS

a. Consent Agenda/Action Items

- i. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 08/25/22 - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*
- ii. Recommendation to Approve Grants from Eastern Bank of \$2,000 and United Way of \$7,000 to A-B Community Education - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*
- iii. Recommendation to Approve new RJ Grey Junior High Student Activity Club - **VOTE** - *Kyra Cook*

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the consent agenda.

b. Subcommittee and Member Reports

- i. Pool Renaming - *Peter Light*

The first subcommittee meeting is scheduled. Members would like to add a swim coach. After the process, a recommendation will be brought to the School Committee for consideration. A member of the public asked why the naming process is being applied so strictly to this request, compared to, in the speaker's opinion, the decision about a new school mascot. Mr. Light responded that the speaker's previous comments regarding the mascot process have been considered and applied to this process.

c. Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - **VOTE** – *K. Cook*

Adam Klein moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED**: to approve the warrants (see memo).

6. FYI

- a. ABRSC FY23 Subcommittees and Assignments
- b. Division of Open Government August 2022-Confidentiality of Executive Session Discussions and Recent Open Meeting Law Determination Highlights

Mr. Light highlighted the monthly Division of Open Government's newsletter and training opportunities. Kyra invited everyone to the Kelley's Corner Block Party on Saturday.

NEXT MEETINGS:

September 15 at 6:30 - executive session in the Boardwalk Campus Building
September 22 & October 6 - regular meetings at 7:00 p.m. in the Admin Auditorium

7. Adjourn

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED to adjourn the ABRSC at 7:25 p.m. and move on to the workshop.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: Agenda, Agenda Item Summary Pages, Statements read by John Petersen and Martin Benson during Public Participation, AB Rev Logo Slides, STEAM-Related Planning and Middle School Programming memo (P. Light 9/2/22), Intergovernmental Agreement between the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School District Committee and the ABRSC (12/13/16), Presentation slides, Draft minutes of ABRSC meeting on 8/25/22, Grant checks from Eastern Bank and United Way of Acton-Boxborough, New JH Club: Science Fair Project Club memo and form (J. Marcotte 9/1/22), Warrant memo (D. Verdolino, 9/2/22), This Month in the Division of Open Government – Aug 2022, FY23 ABRSC Subcommittees and Assignments (voted 8/25/22)

ABRSC WORKSHOP

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Kyra Cook, Liz Fowlks, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Tessa McKinley, Yebin Wang, Rebeccah Wilson
Members Absent: Ben Bloomenthal, Amy Krishnamurthy, Andrew Schwartz
Others: Marie Altieri, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dorothy Presser (Field Director for the MA Association for School Committees)

Chairperson Kyra Cook called the ABRSC Workshop to order at 7:38 p.m. She stated that because it was a workshop, the rest of the evening was not being recorded.

MASC School Committee Goals Workshop with Dorothy Presser

Mr. Light welcomed Dorothy Presser back to AB as she has done workshops in the past.

Members were asked about something that they are proud that they participated in last year.

Comments included:

- Supporting each other through some difficult times including covid
- Changing the mascot because they kept supporting what the students wanted to do

- Approving a comprehensive set of goals last year, after starts and stops because it affects everything they do
- Adding more holidays to our school calendar and being more reflective of our diversity and inclusive
- Continuing all of the DEI work
- Knowing that we can't keep everyone happy, we continue moving forward

Dorothy led a discussion of roles and responsibilities for School Committee members, and what it means to be a highly effective committee. Effective School Committees usually have: a student achievement focus, goals, monitoring, self-governance, and do some professional development. They have a vision for high expectations, accountability, relationships (among themselves and community and stakeholders), data (knowing the important ones to focus on), collaboration, trust, and respect. Dorothy noted that it is easy to find information about the School Committee on our website, including the goals, and that lets people know members are working on self-government. Committee responsibilities include: goals, policy, budget and some personnel.

There was a discussion of "vision" and how members define the Committee's role as part of the community. Comments included:

- The term community is very large so our goals are those of the district. Community members without school children are another group. The Committee should be a bridge between them and this requires a lot of communication. A story should be created and members should say it consistently over and over to address the gap between groups.
- Some of the lack of understanding is due to changes in the towns. The schools are very different than they were a few years ago. Many people have stayed here or returned to the community. We need opportunities to talk with people outside of meetings.
- We need to tell stories and explain everything we do. There's a fear about things changing. A community dialogue is needed.
- There is no shared vision even between Acton and Boxborough. This also comes out in discussions about taxes.
- There are generational gaps and expectations about what "school" is. School Committee is about what school is now.
- Gaps are not all generational. There are students in our schools now who feel the Committee is wrong. There's a resistance to change that is the issue.
- School Committees everywhere have to deal with social media and how information is transmitted. Some people are really opposed to what is happening in the government, environment, economy. etc. Schools are sources of information. There are small but loud factions that speak up.
- If we as a committee don't always agree on what school is or should look like, how can we tell the community? A member suggested that they can sit around the table and have a respectful informed conversation and come to an agreement. People in the community often live in a bubble and don't have the opportunities members have to discuss things.
- Our School Committee protocols allow members to have strong dissenting opinions but then we come to a decision, maybe not unanimously, but the majority decides.

What is the Committee's role in the Community? How do you define it?

- We build trust in the committee.

- Some feel we need more transparency in the community but this is challenging because of the Open Meeting Laws and members cannot respond. “We can’t move at the speed of facebook.” It is helpful to have the Superintendent respond sometimes.
- Including a link to a document that can be read can be helpful for staying neutral.
- Anything on social media is not public because it is a closed group. It’s one thing to have a public place where anyone can go, that is ok, but a list is not open.
- A community engagement subcommittee can be helpful.

Thinking of the year and challenges ahead, what goals do you want in place? What do you need to work on?

- Have clearer communication so we can spend energy on important issues
- Be more proactive in communications using viable/legal communication structures
- Focus on the budget specifically this year. We need active support from the school community and beyond on this. This also ties into the cultural issues.
- Goals provide leadership. They also support a strong story to tell, especially around the budget if you tie the goals and budget together in the narrative. Some budget presentations don’t have a lot of numbers, instead they are all about what is being done and needed.
- In the past, we haven’t done much outreach prior to the Town Meetings, but we should. Great job was done with the School Building campaigns regarding outreach.
- A couple of budget forums should be done in each town, beyond school parents.
- Nothing is more important than the budget because it guides what we can spend.

It was agreed that time must be spent discussing the goals and refining them. Clearer communication, proactive communication, and a communication infrastructure will be particularly helpful to the Budget Process and Trust Building.

Members agreed to send one objective to Kyra and she will summarize them. This will give the School Committee a plan to achieve what they want to accomplish.

Adam Klein moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to adjourn the ABRSC workshop at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
 Beth Petr

List of Documents Used; Agenda, Presentation Slides from D. Presser