

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

Virtual Public Meeting

February 8, 2021

To attend: <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

7:00 p.m.

To preregister for Public Comment (required):

[https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_3\\_oKJYv2QPqXDc1hPnloBQ](https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3_oKJYv2QPqXDc1hPnloBQ)

(pre-registration must be submitted 24 hours prior to the start of the meeting, see memo)

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Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Amy Krishnamurthy (7:10 pm), Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang  
Members Absent: Ginny Kremer, Nora Shine  
Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

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1. **Call to Order (7:00)**

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley.

She noted that the meeting was being conducted remotely via a Zoom webinar with the following members in attendance via zoom: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, John Petersen, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang and herself. Ginny Kremer and Nora Shine were absent. Amy Krishnamurthy would arrive shortly. Per Remote Participation policy, BEDJA, all votes were done by roll call. The Chair stated that the meeting was being recorded and would be posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.

In an ongoing effort to make meeting as secure as possible, members of the public were asked to view the meeting using acton tv's youtube channel (found at the top of the agenda). Those who wished to comment during the meeting, were asked to register 24 hours prior to the start of the meeting using the link also found at the top of the agenda.

a. **Chairperson's Welcome - Tessa McKinley**

i. Review of Suspension of Public Participation Policy BEDH

Because members voted to suspend this policy at the previous meeting, they were required to review it. There was consensus that the suspension continue.

**NEW:** Revised Public Participation process for this meeting (memo)

b. **ABRHS Student Rep Update** – next meeting

c. **Public Participation** -

Although 3 members of the public had registered, no one chose to speak.

Because 3 emails were received from the public via the process used at the

previous meeting for participation, Adam read each comment for up to 3 minutes.

d. **Superintendent's Update – Peter Light**

i. ABRHS Principal Finalists Memo

Three finalists for the Principal position were announced and hopefully a decision will be made by the end of the week. Special Education Director interviews are being planned. The search had been extended. Mr. Light confirmed that there will be no change to our one ABA PreK class. There will be an impact next year on the other PreK classes whose schedule is consistent with the elementary schools'. He wished all a Happy Lunar New Year!

2. **PRESENTATIONS**

a. **ABRHS Thespian Troupe 5552 (National Honor Society of Theatre)**

Jessica Harms and 3 students: Sabina Li, Ira Mukherjee and Halley Friedman shared the group's work and thanked the Committee for their continued support.

3. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

a. **Consent Agenda - VOTE - Tessa McKinley**

i. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 1/21/21 – **VOTE**

ii. Recommendation to Approve Gift of \$2,063.06 from Lifetouch National School Studios to the RJG Jr High School for student activities - **VOTE**  
Amy Krishnamurthy moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED by roll call**: to approve the consent agenda with gratitude.

YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Tso, Wang

b. **Superintendent's Recommended FY22 Budget - Peter Light, Dave Verdolino**

i. **FY21 Second Quarter Financial Report** (See \*OPEB material in FYI)

Dave reported a projected estimated budget surplus at the end of June 2021 of \$361,886. He noted that the \$500,000 contingency is built into this number and covers the revenue deficit. (See grand total on last page) Some additional FY21 covid relief came in after the materials were done. It will cover the minimum aid (\$160,000) that we did not get. A small amount might come from ESSR2. It is too early in the year to predict some of these numbers with any certainty.

ii. **FY22 Recommended Budget Presentation and Discussion**

1. Budget Subcommittee Update - *Adam Klein*

2. Acton Leadership Group Update -*J. Petersen/A. Krishnamurthy*

3. Boxborough Leadership Forum - *Tessa McKinley*

Mr. Light began by telling the Committee that the Administration is looking for their input on the adjustments made to the proposed budget leading up to their first vote on the Preliminary Budget scheduled for February 11<sup>th</sup>. The previous proposal included a 3.73% increase from the prior year, a 4.39% increase in the Acton assessment and a 5.97% increase in the Boxborough assessment. The revised budget for discussion includes a 3.17% increase and assessment changes of 3.46% and 5.02%.

Items discussed included: level-service budget, difference between the budget and the assessments, the financial impact of the school budget on the communities, and levers to moderate impact to the Towns (reduce budget vs. increase use of reserves). (slides 41 – 44)

Comments from the Committee included:

- Does the budget include no remote learning and doing pool testing? PL: correct but we know there will be some remote so with so many unknowns, we have to plan to pivot if needed.
- Will the remainder of the FY21-23 ESSER Two grant (\$319K) be applied to the FY23 budget? PL: Yes, but the summer program is still being finalized and the cost of pool testing this year.
- Why are we level funding E&D, just to lower the assessments? In the past it has been very targeted. Reserves policy DK is a target.
- If EDCO's termination will be costly to the District in FY23, we need to plan for it.
- Because a Remote Learning Program (RLP) shouldn't be needed in FY23, we should consider it a one-time expense and appropriate to fund with E&D.
- State and federal funding due to covid is a wild card.
- Acton Leadership Group (ALG) can manage a 3% increase or less in Acton's assessment, but anything more will be very difficult.
- Staffing should not be the first place we look to cut. Because we have funded OPEB so consistently, we should consider funding it less, or the Capital Plan.
- Another member agreed that a long term liability like OPEB could handle a reduction in funding better than a long term unknown risk like EDCO.
- Because we run such a highly efficient top district, it's very difficult to identify places to cut. Teachers should be the last place to consider.
- Our 13% OPEB funding is excellent and a reason for our AAA bond rating and the long term implications. Once you start decreasing funding, it is hard to go back.
- Several members agreed with a 3% increase or below for Acton.
- Due to Acton being at the levy limit, discussion needs to start with the assessments and be sure everyone understands that part.
- Students' social/emotional needs will be huge in the future due to the pandemic. Nothing should be done to hurt that, including educational staff cuts.

Mr. Light concluded that there is much agreement and the Administration will do their best with what they know are the needs and limits.

- c. ~~\*Pandemic School Planning – Update & Next Steps~~ – *next meeting*
- d. **EDCO Collaborative** - *Peter Light*

*Note: These two reports are posted with our January 21st meeting materials.*

- i. Recommendation to Request that the EDCO Board Initiate Termination Proceedings - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*

For the second consecutive year, the auditor noted substantial doubt that EDCO could continue based on ongoing financial concerns. The Administration recommended a vote for EDCO to initiate termination proceedings. As discussed in executive session at the previous meeting, last year's audit was concerning but most districts agreed to stay with the collaborative. There is no clear path forward at this time however because financial risks are mounting as time goes by. EDCO is meeting on Wednesday and termination proceedings should be considered but member districts need to vote. We currently have one student, a senior, in the program. It was a difficult decision given how many great programs and resources EDCO has offered over the past 50 years, but the situation is not improving. The proposed motions were reviewed by our district's counsel.

John Petersen moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED by roll call:** to request that the EDCO Board Initiate Termination Proceedings pursuant to Article IX of the EDCO Articles of Agreement. (YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Tso, Wang)

John Petersen moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED by roll call:** that the District will provide written notice to the EDCO Board of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District's intention to withdraw from the EDCO Collaborative effective July 1, 2022 pursuant to Article X of the EDCO Articles of Agreement. (YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Tso, Wang)

e. **Subcommittee and Member Reports**

- i. **Policy** - *Diane Baum (meeting on 1/27/21)*

1. Meal Charge Policy (new), File: EFD - First Read
2. Commitment to an Inclusive and Representative District Workforce (new), File: GBAA - First Read

Diane reviewed the two new policies and asked for comments by Friday prior to the next subcommittee meeting. Members were very appreciative of the time and thought that has gone into the Inclusive Workforce proposed policy as it was a year ago that it first was introduced. Marie Altieri and Dawn Bentley were thanked in particular for their efforts. Tessa thanked Diane for her part in moving this important new policy forward. Mr. Light agreed.

- ii. **Capital Improvement Subcommittee** - John Petersen – *next meeting*
- iii. **Health Insurance Trust** - John Petersen - *next meeting*
- iv. **Statement of Warrants & Recommendation to Approve – VOTE**

Adam Klein moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED by roll call:** See memo

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Tso, Wang)

f. **FYI**

4. **ADJOURN**

At 10:01 p.m. Kyra Cook moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED by roll call** to adjourn. (YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Tso, Wang)

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

**NEXT MEETINGS (via zoom):**

**ABRSC:** February 11 (Preliminary FY22 Budget VOTE) at 7:00 p.m.  
*Packet to be posted on Monday, February 8*  
March 4 (Comprehensive Budget & Program Presentations) at 7:00 p.m.

*Next Community Coffee with the Superintendent & ABRSC Chair via zoom:*  
March 3rd 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION (FYI)**

- a. **Thank You to Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories for \$100 gift to enrich math/science student programs at the Jr High**
- b. **FY22 Budget Schedule, voted 11/19/20**
- c. **Acton 2021 Annual Election Calendar**
- d. **Boxborough 2021 Annual Election Calendar & Candidate's Checklist**
- e. **FY21 ABRSC Operating Protocols, voted 1/21/21**
- f. **2021-2022 ABRSD School Calendar, voted 1/21/21**
- g. **CASE Collaborative Support and Resource Pages and Flyer (1/22/21)**
- h. **Suicide Prevention Training** - Click here [QPR Training Flyer](#) for details and to sign up online. Next one: Feb 24 at 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
- i. **EDCO Collaborative FY20 Annual Report and Audit Report**  
*(posted separately with ABRSC meeting materials for January 21, 2021)*
- j. [This Month in the Division of Open Government, January 2021](#)
- k. **Invitation from the Boys & Girls Club of Assabet Valley**
- l. **Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB) Annual Portfolio Review, Presentation of GASB 74/75 Results, Middlesex County Retirement System (MCRS) Actuarial Valuation and Review as of 1/1/20**