

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

Virtual Public Meeting

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

March 11, 2021

7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

8:30 p.m. Executive Session

To preregister for Public Comment (required):

https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_szz-FOrmTgKoCNySfZotiQ

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

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum (arrived 8:06 p.m.), Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley (left 8:26 p.m.), John Petersen, Nora Shine (left at 7:52 p.m.), Angie Tso, Yebin Wang

Members Absent: none

Others: Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley.

She stated that the meeting was being conducted remotely via Zoom per Remote Participation policy, BEDJA. The following members were in attendance in the auditorium: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, John Petersen, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang and herself, AND the following are attending via zoom: Amy Krishnamurthy, Nora Shine, Kyra Cook. Diane Baum would be coming to the auditorium soon.

In an ongoing effort to make meetings as secure as possible, members of the public were instructed 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. These procedures are now posted with our Public Participation policy BEDH. This meeting was recorded and posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org. Per our remote policy, all votes will be done by roll call.

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

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

- i. The current procedures have been added to the posted Public Participation Policy BEDH-R on the website.
- ii. Tessa welcomed the Committee back to meeting in person!

b. **Public Participation** - *Please see note in the heading above*

Adam Klein read an emailed comment from the public regarding MCAS testing. A parent spoke in favor of the MCAS letter that was read. She also requested that the state waive the MCAS graduation requirement for the Classes of '22, '23 and '24.

Stressing that it is a state, not federal, requirement, she invited volunteers to help with this effort. Ginny Kremer will draft a resolution for consideration. Another parent who is also an educator spoke about how draining the year has been, and that it is nowhere near over. She felt her occupation as an educator has been disrespected by people and they have had to “hide our true feelings from others and while it’s professional, it’s not good emotionally”. She wanted to express a small piece of what she was feeling.

c. **Superintendent’s Update – Peter Light**

It was one year ago that we shut down our schools and sent all kids and staff home. Mr. Light thanked all of the educators, staff, families and students. Everyone has gone to extraordinary lengths to help out this year.

Marie Altieri updated members on the three searches. Ms. Joanie Dean will be replacing Larry Dorey at the High School. Larry is retiring after many years at AB. The Director of Special Education search committee just announced two finalists who visited this week. Last night was the community forum. Mr. Light will finalize that decision and will come to the School Committee next week for their vote to appoint on the recommendation of the Superintendent. Two finalists were announced today, for the McCarthy-Towne principal. They will visit next week. The three search committees’ members were thanked for all their work during this busy time.

2. **PRESENTATION**

a. **Hybrid to Full In-Person Learning Planning - Peter Light**

Highlighting that our elementary schools have had zero cases for several weeks now, and no in school transmission, Mr. Light outlined the plan for bringing students and staff back into the buildings. Grades 1-6 will return on April 5th. Junior High students return on April 28th. Pool testing will begin at Gates and by the end of March, all elementary schools will be participating in this free, voluntary effort.

Comments and questions included:

- Why don’t we label swabs in the beginning of pool testing? This would be cost prohibitive given how few positives we expect.
- Do we think our educators will be vaccinated by April 11? We hope so and at least a large portion of staff should. The issue is that we do not have control over how many vaccines are available and where.
- Regarding equity, as a community of privilege, how do you feel about working to full vaccination? The Administration struggles with this and has been frustrated because they had a plan to vaccinate 400 people through our school site, but it won’t happen. A number of local communities have applied to be a mass vaccination region and they are not expecting to be approved. Things seem to be happening more at state level now to reach communities of color and other minority groups.
- Space is insufficient in “home school” classrooms to fully satisfy requests, which exceed capacity by 52 students. This will be figured out.
- We don’t want to have kids return to a building to a teacher they don’t know. Some changes may need to be made to make this happen because it is so important. Families may request a change per DESE, but we may need to plan

based on the first responses so they may have to wait 4-6 weeks to make it happen. We need to prepare people for this.

- There is a need for keeping kids better engaged if they are quarantined.
- The Administration gets pushback re international travel however our goal is always to keep as many students and staff as safe as possible. The Board of Health, medical professionals, etc. support our 14 day quarantine for international travel.
- A parent stated that it is disheartening that it is taking this long to get students back in and we are waiting for the state to force us to do it.
- Survey results were received this morning so the Administration is just looking at them and will provide answers to specific questions soon.
- Will the High School return fully in person soon, especially the seniors? Mr. Light responded that he has no news on that yet. Kids need to be in a learning environment, “not just in a tent” when they return. There is a special risk around lunch time when masks come off so that needs to be thought through. Several parents urged the Administration to be creative and bring the older students back asap.
- Amanda Bailey from the Special Education Parent Advisory Council thanked the Administration for their efforts in what has been a “logistical nightmare”. She noted that some kids will have trauma response when they return, especially younger children. The staff will need to be prepared to deal with this.

3. ONGOING BUSINESS

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

- i. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 2/8/21, and 2/11/21, (*Minutes of 3/4/21 will be at the next meeting*) – **VOTE**
- i. Recommendation to Approve \$865.49 Donation from O’Connor Studios to the Gates School to Support Students’ Activities - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to approve the consent agenda.

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

b. **Budget Update - Peter Light, Dave Verdolino**

- i. ALG Update

Because the meeting last week was totally dedicated to the FY22 Budget there was no presentation or new budget information. The Annual Budget Hearing is next Thursday night at 7:05 p.m. At the end of the Hearing, after questions are answered, the Committee will vote on the Final FY22 Budget which will then be presented to voters at the Town Meetings in May and June. There were no questions from the Committee or the public. BLF will meet on March 16th. ALG will meet next Wednesday morning, in time for the Budget Hearing the next night.

c. **EDCO Update - Peter Light**

Mr. Light briefly reviewed some of the significant numbers given that the Collaborative has voted to dissolve by mid-2022 due to insurmountable financial barriers. EDCO is working with a number of different organizations to figure out how

and where programs can be relocated. When asked where we would charge the large assessment we will receive, Dave replied that we did not budget for it directly but we did set up the contingency fund for unforeseen expenses so that would be appropriate.

d. **Subcommittee and Members' Reports**

i. **Building Committee - Adam Klein**

Chairperson Mary Brolin has asked that the community start planning to name the new building. Referring to policy FF, Naming District Facilities, Adam explained that a screening committee needs to be formed for handling nominations. School Committee members should let Tessa know if they are interested in participating. It is hoped that a name is chosen by the end of 2021.

Mr. Light informed members that there is significant ledge at the bus loop area that all of the underground utilities have to go under. Blasting in the area is needed and will affect the bus loop until the end of September. Construction on the boardwalk starts in May.

ii. **Policy - Diane Baum**

1. Meal Charge, File: EFD (new) - *Second Read* – **VOTE**

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

VOTED by roll call: to approved new policy EFD.

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

2. Commitment to an Inclusive and Representative Educator Workforce, File: GBAA (new) - *Second Read* – **VOTE**

Diane explained the feedback that was included in this version. A member asked if we know the LGBQ percentage of our staff. We do not because we cannot ask that question, but have a general sense. The member asked how we will know if they are appropriately represented if we cannot measure. Dawn Bentley explained that it is deeper than having data, it's more of a statement. How do we make it so that anyone who applies to our district feels like they belong regardless of anything? We want them to feel loved and valued. After a year of reflecting and talking about this policy, this is more of a statement for us. Sexual orientation is only one piece of LGBQ+. The term also includes many other pieces. Angie asked for more time before voting on this policy. Adam and Diane said that ample time had been devoted to discussion of this policy given that it had been in front of the Committee twice before, including one year ago.

Ginny Kremer moved, John Petersen seconded, and it was

VOTED by roll call: To approve new policy GBAA as amended with gratitude.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, Petersen, Wang NO: Tso)

After voting had started, Angie Tso had more questions but the voting motion had been made. She felt that after the First Read, there was not much time for feedback, and the Second Read had only two days to consider. She thanked the Committee for putting this policy together and stated that this was an important policy and she would like the community to have an opportunity to preview it or provide feedback. She asked to make a motion to postpone to the next time. Acting Chairperson, Adam Klein explained that a motion had been made and seconded so the vote would continue and a new motion could be made if it failed.

3. Curriculum and Instructional Materials, File: IGA (*with procedures*) - *First Read*

Diane Baum thanked Deb Bookis and Dawn Bentley for working so hard on this, along with the subcommittee members. Several other districts' IGD policies were reviewed including Cambridge and Newton. They wanted to be sure the policy includes the library association because many library policies involve curriculum. As a result, this revision involved a combination of our policies that needed some "real thinking".

4. Adoption of New Courses & Programs, File: IGD (new) - *First Read*

Deb Bookis explained that it is the school's responsibility along with the curriculum coordinators to support the teachers so they can review the materials in place and consider new ones. There are now mechanisms in place to assure quality and requirements such as copyrights. The community also has a role to play as mentioned in paragraph 1 of IGA as well as other places in the policy and procedures. Diane asked for feedback prior to the next policy subcommittee on March 26th.

iii. Health Insurance Trust (HIT) - *John Petersen*

e. FYI

- Mr. Light thanked Dunkin of Acton operated by the Pesce Family for their donation of 300 KN-95 masks.
- Kyra Cook thanked the "small army" of parent volunteers of the AB School Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Family Advisory Group and the co-chairs Lucienne Schmidt and Dawn Bentley for their many hours of excellent work.
- Congratulations were also extended to Kyra Cook and Evelyn Abayaah Issah on both receiving the Black Excellence on Beacon Hill Award from the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus last month.

4. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:10 p.m., Adam stated the need for an executive session pursuant to 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. She said that the Committee would not return to Open Session.

John Petersen moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to enter executive session for the reasons given.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda