

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

Virtual Public Meeting

April 1, 2021

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

6:30 p.m. Executive Session

7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

To preregister for Public Comment (required):

https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-js2tTk7RUesjX_qDz2Klw

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

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

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

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee was called to order at 6:34 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, Diane Baum, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, John Petersen, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang and herself. Kyra Cook attended via zoom. Amy Krishnamurthy was absent.

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.

2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Tessa stated the need for an executive session tonight 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 expected to return to the open meeting at approximately 7:00.

Adam Klein made the motion, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED by Roll Call: to enter the executive session.

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

3. The Committee RETURNED to OPEN MEETING at approximately 7:09 p.m.

Tessa thanked members of the public for joining the meeting. She repeated the 2 paragraphs under the Call to Order.

a. Chairperson's Welcome - Tessa McKinley

i. Results of Acton's Annual Election

Ben Blumenthal and Andrew Schwartz were welcomed as the new Committee members from Acton. They will be sworn in after Acton Town Meeting in June. At this time Adam Klein is the only one who has pulled papers in Boxborough.

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

Scott Smyers shared his concern regarding the possibility of now teaching more morals and not academics.

c. Superintendent's Update – Peter Light

Mr. Light updated members on the recent swastika graffiti found in a High School bathroom that they are investigating. Additional steps are being taken to work on hate incidents like this. Because accurate and timely reporting of these types of incidents is key, a new reporting method is being created making it easier for students to report anonymously if they wish. It includes live monitoring so action can be taken right away if needed. It will take a sustained community wide effort to address these issues.

When asked if students are given any training “to say no”, or what to say when inappropriate behavior takes place Dawn replied that there are elements of that in many of our programs. Digital tools also have a lot of focus on that as well. Next week 25 of our counselors will be trained as Active Bystanders and for the High School students later. “Upstanders” do what bystanders should do – they report an in appropriate incident.

4. ONGOING BUSINESS

a. Return to School Update - Peter Light see super update

i. Recommendation to Approve Spring Memorandum of Agreement between the Acton Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) and the ABRSC - VOTE - Tessa McKinley

Tessa explained that the earlier executive session was to review this Agreement. She thanked the teachers for all their work on this document, in addition to teaching. She presented the memorandum with “immense gratitude for their efforts”. The Negotiations subcommittee (Tessa, Amy Krishnamurthy and Ginny Kremer) have met weekly with Peter and Marie and the ABEA members to work through the issues.

John Petersen thanked Tessa, Ginny, Amy, the administration and the ABEA for working so hard on this. He added that having 16 points (in the document) means there was serious discussion.

Items of note in the MOA include:

- The DESE has now decided that remote learning will not count as a school day, but will be required to be made up at the end of the year.
- Quarantined students will now access their education via their teachers livestreaming from the classroom. This will happen at all levels. This does not apply if the quarantine is due to travel, because travel is an individual choice and the administration does not want to ask teachers to do that if parents choose to travel. This is similar to the homework policy. Tremendous gratitude was expressed for the teachers agreeing to do this. Special education services will also be livestreamed for students in quarantine.

John Petersen moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED by roll call**: to approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the ABEA and the ABRSC with the effective date of 4/1/21. An immense amount of gratitude was given to the teachers for working through this document.

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

b. **Approval of Meeting Minutes of 3/11/21 and 3/18/21 – VOTE - Tessa McKinley**

Adam Klein moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to approve both sets of minutes as amended.

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

c. **Recommendation to Approve the \$719.92 Donation from Conant PTO for Tables - VOTE - Peter Light**

John Petersen moved, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to approve this donation with gratitude.

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

d. **Budget Update – Peter Light (if needed)**

Because the FY22 budget was voted at the previous meeting, this was a chance to answer questions if there were any outstanding. There were none.

e. **Subcommittee and Member Reports**

i. **Building Committee - Adam Klein**

1. Screening Committee to Begin Naming Process per policy FF
Amy Krishnamurthy will chair this Committee and Diane Baum will be a member. They will begin to identify other members and bring feedback back to the School Committee.

ii. **Policy - Diane Baum**

1. Curriculum and Instructional Materials, File: IGA - *Third Read* – **VOTE**
 - a. FYI: Selection Criteria for Materials, File: IGA-R-1
 - b. FYI: Reconsideration of Instructional Resources, File: IGA-R-2
2. Adoption of New Programs and Courses of Study, File: IGD (new) - *Third Read* – **VOTE**

Discussion of IGA -

Diane explained changes made since the First Readings. The Subcommittee discussed the concern about the word “moral” in the first sentence of IGA-R-1, although it was in the procedures, not the policy. The intent was not to teach “morals” but to build critical thought, and foster a sense of responsibility to self and others within each student. “Moral” was replaced with this sentence.

Regarding caregivers’ roles in curriculum selection, Deborah Bookis said that one of the DEI subcommittees drafted a “phenomenal” survey of families about the materials that we use. Our thinking is that it will be done on an annual or biannual basis. This will help us do a better job of communicating and being more responsive. The School Councils would also have a chance to get involved. When there are substantial changes to curriculum they will be brought to the School Committee and communicated out at the school level. There are various reasons why changes might be made – framework changes, creating of new material. This is done on an ongoing basis.

John Petersen stressed that these policies are not compliance driven. There is no state law that we are trying to satisfy. Our internal and public communities are our focus. He felt that the policy was difficult to read and suggested it be simplified for people that do not have an educational background. Tessa felt the policies and procedures were a tremendous step forward and had been written very carefully based on many School Committee discussions. She thanked policy sub members for being so thorough. Diane thanked Dawn Bentley and Deborah Bookis for their extensive work on the documents.

Corinne Hogseth spoke from the public stating that she has seen changes in curriculum over time and in her opinion, parents have been “completely unaware”. She asked the administration to be more forthcoming with families because they have a right to know when changes are made.

Discussion of IGD –

It was explained that the subcommittee was careful not to create unintended consequences when adding specifics to the policies. For example, in IGD, there was a request to add language regarding remote learning at the High School. Subcommittee members discussed a range of ways to teach and did not feel they should prioritize remote learning specifically to the exclusion of other models.

Angie Tso asked where in the IGA-R-2 procedures student government and the community are involved. How transparent is this process? Can they engage at an earlier stage? Deborah explained that this section was taken from the previous policy IJL Library Materials Selection and Adoption. It was noted that the last sentence of the first paragraph of the IGA policy does include gathering input from parents/guardians/caregivers, and our community.

Adam Klein moved, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by Roll Call: to approve policy IGA, with gratitude.
(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

Nora Shine moved to approve policy IGD. Ginny Kremer seconded.

John Petersen stated that he was going to vote no because in terms of the implementation this is the appropriate work of the administrators but it lacks a preamble or an invitation to the community for input. When the chinese language program was introduced at the high school it was done successfully in that manner.

The motion was **VOTED by roll call** and passed 11.5 to 7.5.
(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Klein, Kremer, McKinley, Shine, Wang 3 Acton x 2.5 = 7.5 plus 4 Boxborough = 11.5
NO: Cook, Petersen, Tso 3 Acton x 2.5 = 7.5)

iii. **Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve - VOTE -**
Tessa McKinley

John Petersen moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: see memo

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

a. **FYI**

Mr. Light noted that at the next meeting on April 15 the Administration will bring a proposal for a tiered system of support for students that will not affect the budget. Also on May 6 there will be a workshop meeting to discuss our District Strategy.

5. Adjourn –

Diane Baum moved, Nora Shine seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED by roll call: to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.

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

FOR YOUR INFORMATION (FYI)

- a. **Acton Town Meeting is June 21. Boxborough Town Meeting is June 12.**
- b. **Boxborough 2021 Annual Election Calendar is May 18 & Candidate's Checklist**
- c. **This Month in the Division of Open Government, *March 2021***
- d. **ABRSD Annual Education Report, July 2019 - June 2020**
- e. **2020-2021 District Calendar with revised ABRHS Graduation Date**
- f. **Suicide Prevention Training** - Click here [QPR Training Flyer](#) for details and to sign up online. Next one: April 26 from 10 - 12.
- g. Emerson Hospital is conducting a **community health needs survey**. We are seeking input from residents, health care providers, and social service workers in the cities and towns served by Emerson. **Anyone who lives or works in the region can participate**. Please consider [taking the survey](#) and sharing the link broadly. Thank you for your assistance as we seek to improve the health and well-being of our communities.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda