

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

Virtual Public Zoom Webinar Meeting

November 5, 2020

To attend open meeting: <https://abschools.zoom.us/j/91780237839>

7:00 p.m. Open Meeting

To call in: 301 715 8592

8:15 p.m. Executive Session

Live streaming: <http://actontv.org/on-demand/livestream/government>

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (left 8:05 p.m.), Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang

Members Absent: none

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

1. **Call to Order**

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley. She noted that the meeting was being conducted both in person and remotely via a Zoom webinar and that members Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Kyra Cook, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Angie Tso and Yebin Wang would be participating via zoom. The following members were in the auditorium with Tessa: Diane Baum, Adam Klein, John Petersen, and Nora Shine. Per Remote Participation policy, BEDJA, all votes were done by roll call. The meeting was taped by Acton TV.

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

3. **Public Participation**

Martin Benson AB2006 alum spoke for a group of students, alumni, teachers and community members who disagreed with the Committee's 10/15/20 decision to retire the school mascot and the speed at which the decision was made. He stated that they felt a fair and equitable process had not been used and a robust records request had been submitted earlier that day. Mr. Benson said that many people for whom he was speaking were scared to speak publicly. Mr. Benson referenced a student survey that he felt had not been thorough enough and criticized those who wanted to retire the Colonial for their lack of historical knowledge. Although Chairperson McKinley agreed to allow an extra 6 minutes of speaking time, after 9 minutes, time was up.

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

After 27 years as a counselor and administrator at the High School, Principal Larry Dorey will be retiring at the end of this school year. Information about the search process will be shared soon. Other updates included information on digital resources and curriculum news for families, travel restrictions and public health, and an assessment of the first 8 weeks of school. A flyer is posted for upcoming free Question, Persuade, Refer Suicide Prevention Training Opportunities. See [QPR Training Flyer](#).

5. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

- a. **Approval of Meeting Minutes of 10/15/20 – VOTE – Tessa McKinley**
John Petersen moved, Diane Baum seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED by roll call: to approve the minutes as written.
(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy,
McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

b. **Budget Update - Dave Verdolino**

- i. FY20 Financial Wrap-up and FY21 First Quarter Financial Report
- ii. FY22 Budget Guidelines and Timeline - **VOTE** - Tessa McKinley
- iii. Certified E&D (*next meeting*)
- iv. **FYI**: FY20 Financial Audit Reports (Financial Statements, Federal Awards, Management Letter) and Regional Fraud Risk Assessment

Dave Verdolino described the current budget process as having “lots of moving parts - nothing like a normal year”. Our FY20 E&D reserves are at 3.71%, which is under the School Committee policy so that is good. Reserves are used when times are tight. It remains to be seen if that be FY22. Significant budget drivers for FY22 are: known fixed costs (debt, pension, OPEB), known cost escalators (COLAs, insurance), enrollment based staffing changes, program budgets, added special education staff, State Aid; Federal Relief; Fee/Tuition-based Programs, and how much of District/Town reserves will be used to lower assessments.

Members discussed Covid related uncertainties including:

- Will the buildings be occupied? How much will it cost to heat, light, secure and clean? What is the impact of the systems operating 24-7 to recirculate air, especially with cold weather coming?
- What will the impact be regarding transportation?
- What materials might be needed that are unforeseen, including the need to hire people to facilitate teaching methods in a new environment?
- How will special education needs and costs be affected?
- How can testing be done? The least expensive programs are still in the \$1M range, but sewage testing and other options are being reviewed.

Dave reported that financially the district did well in terms of the operating budget once we closed last year (no buses, utilities, substitutes). Going fully remote would replenish the fund balance, but educationally, it would not be good.

Gary Kushner spoke from the public asking how the proposed new Budget Calendar dates would correspond with Boxborough’s budget calendar. Tessa shared the AB dates at the last BLF and understood that Boxborough had not adjusted their dates yet. Ryan Ferrara and Jennifer Barrett would be talking to Peter Light about coordinating the dates. It was agreed not to vote on the District budget timeline until after that happened.

Adam Klein moved, Diane Baum seconded the motion: **to approve the FY22 budget guidelines as shown in the packet this evening.**

A question was asked about E&D and the current Reserves policy (DK) that recommends a target reserve level between 4 – 4.5% of the following year’s operating expenses. The maximum is 5%.

Angie Tso asked if air purifiers are being purchased for each room. She has been told that some students cannot concentrate due to the noise they make. Mr. Light replied that the District is purchasing the quietest ones that are appropriate and they are being used to keep the proper ventilation amount with windows still open as much as possible. These are eligible for state reimbursement and we have also filed for rebates from Eversource. John Petersen asked if there should be numerical guidelines for the budget as discussed at budget subcommittee.

The Committee **VOTED by roll call** on the motion and it was unanimously approved. (YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

c. **Subcommittee and Member Reports**

i. Policy – *Diane Baum (met on 11/04/20)*

Members approved nonsubstantive changes to policy JKAA so the revision will not be brought to the full committee but will be noted as “reviewed and revised”. The new “Commitment to an Inclusive and Representative District Workforce” policy GBAA, was discussed at length. This first came before the Committee last spring. It will now go to the DEI Advisory Group and then to the community for feedback. After another review by this subcommittee, it will be brought to the School Committee for discussion and a vote. A good discussion was had regarding how members want to review policies using a Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (DEI) lens. The subcommittee agreed that rather than writing a statement or requiring more DEI training, they hope that DEI will become organically embedded in School Committee policies as time goes forward.

ii. Budget - Adam Klein (*met on 10/19/20*)

Dave Verdolino covered most of this meeting’s discussion.

iii. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) - *John Petersen, Amy Krishnamurthy*

1. Spreadsheet from 10/29/20 and Minutes

Acton Fincom is still refining their Point of View document. There will be continued pressure to not be at the tax levy in Acton.

iv. Building Committee Update - *Peter Light*

Bid packages are out now. Footings and foundations are being poured at Gates. Good progress is being made.

v. Boxborough Fincom – *Nora Shine*

The CARES Act funding, how applications are being made and how some money is still available that the District could apply for was discussed.

d. **MASC Annual Meeting Resolutions for 11/7/20 – Tessa McKinley**

Delegate Amy Krishnamurthy or Alternate Adam Klein will vote for the ABRSC.

Tessa asked if members wanted to give Amy any specific guidance on the resolutions. No one brought anything up prior to the meeting. Diane Baum asked

about the MCAS resolution rejecting the call for students who missed their 10th grade MCAS testing to be required to make it up during FY21. She asked Mr. Light if there was much attention being given to using MCAS results not for accountability this year, but just to measure regression of learning. Of all our assessments to measure regression, Mr. Light feels that MCAS is one of our less valuable ones. MCAS is tied up at the federal level and there does not appear to be a lot of interest in changing its use. The Superintendent's biggest concern is that we are looking at 6-9 days to spend testing and that is a lot of time when students are out so much now. Although the graduation requirement is a state requirement, it is tied to No Child Left Behind. Last year's sophomores do have to be tested this year to graduate. There was consensus from the Committee that Amy should support all of the resolutions. Amy can use her discretion to decide whether to support any amendments made at the meeting on 11/7.

6. **Statement of Warrants and Recommendation to Approve – VOTE – Tessa McKinley**

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

VOTED by roll call: see motion on memo

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

7. **FYI**

8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Tessa stated the need for an EXECUTIVE SESSION - to be convened under MGL Ch 30A, sec. 21(a) purpose (2): to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or/and to conduct contract negotiations with non-union personnel. She stated that the Committee would return to open meeting for the sole purpose of adjourning.

At 8:18 p.m. Adam Klein moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED by roll call:** to enter executive session convened under MGL Ch 30A, sec. 21(a) purpose (2): to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or/and to conduct contract negotiations with non-union personnel. (YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

At 10:14 p.m., the Committee returned to open meeting.

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

VOTED by roll call: to adjourn the ABRSC.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda