

**ACTON PUBLIC and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING Minutes** (approved 10/4/12)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

September 6, 2012
7:00 p.m. Joint School Committee Executive Session
7:30 p.m. Joint School Committee Open Meeting
followed by AB Regional School Committee Meeting

Members Present: Brigid Bieber (7:22), Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Paul Murphy, Kim McOsker, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan, Bruce Sabot (arrived at 8:00, resigned at 8:15)

Members Absent: None

Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee was called to order by Chairperson Xuan Kong and the Acton Public School Committee was called to order by Chairperson Kim McOsker at 7:02 p.m.

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:02 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED by role call: that the **Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee** go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

(YES - Bruce, Coppolino, Kong, McOsker, Murphy, Neyland, O'Sullivan)

Xuan Kong declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session after the executive session.

At 7:03 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED by role call: that the **Acton Public School Committee** go into Executive Session (Joint School Committee) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

(YES - Bruce, Coppolino, Kong, McOsker, Murphy, O'Sullivan)

Kim McOsker declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Board and the Committee would return to open session after the executive session.

At 7:55 p.m., the Committees were polled and voted to go out of Joint Executive Session.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Dr. Mills reported that the First Day of School had gone very smoothly. Xuan Kong complimented Dr. Mills on his opening day presentation and thanked the staff for their efforts toward a successful start.

APPROVAL of MINUTES and STATEMENT of WARRANT

The minutes of the 8/1/12 Joint/AB/APS School Committee meeting were approved by both Committees. Kim McOsker abstained from both votes due to her absence.

AB warrant #13-004 dated 8/9/12 in the amount of \$1,561,597.52, warrant #13-005 dated 8/23/12 in the amount of \$534,241.68, and warrant #13-006 dated 9/6/12 in the amount of \$3,366,013.53 were signed by the chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

APS warrant #201303 dated 8/7/12 in the amount of \$596,169.38, warrant #201304 dated 8/21/12 in the amount of \$84,037.97, and warrant #201305 dated 9/4/12 in the amount of \$237,632.01 were signed by the chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

5.1 ALG and Acton FinCom Reports

Kim McOsker reported that the ALG gathering of 8/9/12 was not actually a meeting because there was no quorum. Next meeting is 9/13/12. The suggested Calendar for Budget Planning for FY14 – DRAFT (ALG) will be reviewed later in the meeting.

5.2 BLF Report - Maria Neyland reported briefly.

5.3 OPEB Task Force Update

Dennis Bruce reported that the OPEB Task Force met on 8/29/12. Members are working toward a white paper that will be due to Acton FinCom at their first meeting in November.

5.4 Negotiations Subcommittee (NSC) Update on Legal Counsel

Kim reported on the Negotiations Subcom’s consideration of a change in legal counsel that is more cost effective. Identical process was used to interview five law firms, including the same questions asked by the same subcommittee member for each candidate. All five firms, recommended by Dr. Mills and Marie Altieri, had experience with regional school districts. Due diligence was done, including reference calls. The NSC recommended Mirick O’Connell. Their presentation, references and experience was excellent.

ABRSC VOTE:

Maria Neyland moved, Michael Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to retain the services of Mirick O’Connell of Worcester for contract negotiations, personnel matters and any other matters deemed necessary by the Administration and/or the School Committees.

APSC VOTE:

Dennis Bruce moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to retain the services of Mirick O’Connell of Worcester for contract negotiations, personnel matters and any other matters deemed necessary by the Administration and/or the School Committees.

Xuan thanked Ropes and Grey and Attorney Peter Ebb in particular, for their many years of excellent service.

2.2 Statement from Bruce Sabot

Boxborough member, Bruce Sabot, announced his resignation due to personal reasons at 8:15 p.m. Dr. Mills and the Committee members thanked Bruce for his eight years of valuable service and dedication to the students and families of Acton and Boxborough.

5.5 Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC) Presentation

RSDSC Co-chairs, Mac Reid and Peter Ashton stated that they had three goals for the meeting.

1. ABRSC VOTE

Mike Coppolino moved, Dennis Bruce seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to authorize the Chairperson to request a Reorganization Needs Conference from the DESE for the purpose of expanding the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District to include PreK to grade 6.

This action was required under MGL 603 CMR 41.02, “For an existing regional school district expanding its grade level structure or enlarging its membership, the Regional School Committee shall submit the written request for the Reorganization Needs Conference.”

2. Peter reported that the three subgroups have been meeting since the end of June - Subgroup A: Construction/Capital/Ownership, Subgroup B: Operating Budgets/Assessments, Subgroup C: Transitional Issues. Mike Coppolino thanked the RSDSC for their tremendous document (5.5) He

agrees with the preliminary recommendations made so far. There is much disagreement on the potential make up of the future school committee. The new regional district of Harwich and Chatham is one example of one town that is a lot bigger than the other, yet they both have five school committee members. Mike favors having enough school committee reps to feel that Acton citizens are represented. Brigid Bieber asked if there would be a guarantee of getting a family's home school. Mac said that in general it should be yes but there would be a caveat for special education students to be assigned to a school with appropriate programs. All topics like this would go back to the School Committee for final decisions. Public forums will be held, including one sponsored by the League of Women Voters in late October. Reports will also be made at the Board of Selectmen meetings. The hope is that the DESE would give informal approval in February and a proposed agreement would be brought to simultaneous Acton and Boxborough Town Meetings in April or May. The RSDSC expects to learn a lot from public comment on their preliminary draft. Comments and questions from the public may be sent to rsd_study_comm@mail.ab.mec.edu. There is also a wealth of information at <https://sites.google.com/site/abregionalstudycmt/home>. Kim advocated for using the schools' communication networks for publicity.

3. Mac addressed "policy issues" that don't belong in a Regional Agreement. These include OPEB and the sharing of savings between the District and the Towns. The RSDSC supports that 100% of savings be given to the Towns, and understand that that may not be popular. These are mostly decisions that the future school committee would decide, but voters may feel they need to know some of the answers. It was suggested that the three school committee chairs and the two Administrations could work together on position statements on some of these issues. All school committee members were encouraged to provide input. The sense of the Committee was that this was a good idea.

Lastly, Peter asked the AB Regional School Committee to endorse the recommendation of an attorney, hopefully funded by a grant. Unbiased counsel is needed to help draft agreement language. Peter and Mac met with Ed Lenox last week. He has much experience including with regions and his billing rates are in line. The RSDSC voted to recommend hiring him.

ABRSC VOTE:

Brigid Bieber moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: that Mr. Edward Lenox of Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and LeHane be authorized to work directly with the Regional School District Study Committee in the development of a revised Regional Agreement for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District.

5.6 Policy Subcommittee Update

5.6.1 Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff, File: GBEB – **SECOND READING**

ABRSC VOTE:

Mike Coppolino moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the revised Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff Policy, File: GBEB as proposed.

APSC VOTE:

Dennis Bruce moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the revised Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff Policy, File: GBEB as proposed.

5.6.2 Student Fees, File: JQ – **SECOND READING**

Dennis Bruce asked if procedures have ever included the spending and accounting of fees. This has not been done in the past. Dr. Mills said that a conversation about revolving accounts will take place at the December meeting.

AB VOTE:

Brigid Bieber moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the revised Student Fees Policy, File: JQ as proposed.

APS VOTE:

Dennis Bruce moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the revised Student Fees Policy, File: JQ as proposed.

5.7 Presentation: *Strategies for the Prevention and Intervention of Adolescent Substance Use, A Community-Wide Approach*, Alixe Callen, Liza Huber and Steve Mills

Dr. Mills began by stating that no one is immune from the problem of young people experimenting with substance use. The issue requires everyone to be involved, not just the school system. He quoted the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) that almost 22% of our kids reported having had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (within a couple of hours) at least once in the last month. Dr. Mills noted that besides being illegal, “we have to talk about it”.

Dr. Mills introduced ABRHS Principal Dr. Alixe Callen, and Director of Pupil Services Liza Huber. Emphasizing that this is a community issue, Acton Board of Selectmen chairperson Pam Harting-Barrat and member John Sonner were recognized. They welcomed any suggestions that the BOS could help with. Former Acton Board of Selectmen chairperson Lauren Rosenzweig Morton introduced herself representing the AB United Way, as well as member parents Shelly Sherman and Carolyn Randolph. Many community members were in the audience.

Dr. Mills stated that as outlined in the Long Range Strategic Plan, the Districts’ highest priority is the social and emotional health of our young people. He described the presentation as the beginning of a conversation, a chance to listen to everyone’s ideas and hear about their resources. He takes full responsibility for what is his responsibility as Superintendent, but he believes that balance is fundamentally the family’s responsibility. He stated that one of the police chiefs described the community’s substance abuse issues as an “epidemic”.

Liza Huber introduced Todd Chicko, Regional School District Counseling and Psychological Services Chairperson, Youth Resource Officer Keith Campbell and Julie Towell from Pupil Services who is a liaison to many resource groups and who works on the YRBS.

Alixe Callen suggested that, “We need another story line.” to let kids know there are other things to do. More publicity is needed about activities, directed to young people and parents. She emphasized the need for appropriate supervision for these gatherings and that there is a cost in dollars and people’s time for much of this.

Detective Keith Campbell stated that the problem has been growing since he arrived in 2004. The amount of information and concerns that he brings to the High School staff, including on weekends and non school hours, and how they handle it is invaluable. He thinks there is a need to take some of this burden off the school due to the time and severity involved. He said that parents often ask him how they can recognize that a child might have issues and intervene sooner. The police can help with this education piece. Det. Campbell agreed that unsupervised home parties where alcohol is served is a common problem in our community.

Xuan Kong thanked everyone for their participation and concern. Mike Coppolino stated that he is proud that people are coming forward in such a proactive and public manner, but it is unfortunate that a tragedy made it happen. He also appreciates that the presentation is not just about the schools. Dennis Bruce highly recommended a presentation featuring athlete Chris Herron that will be shown soon.

Brigid Bieber was encouraged by so many diverse groups from the community coming together. She was emphatic that .2 of a drug/alcohol counselor is just not enough for our High School, and encouraged the School Committee to “put our money where our mouths are with this issue.” It was suggested that more campus monitors who are trained to look for issues are needed. Students should be permitted to use the sports fields and gyms during free periods during the day because there are not enough monitors. If some

young adults in recovery came in to speak to the kids, this may be easier for them to relate to. Turnback days for unused prescription drugs are important to prevent young people from taking them. The police now have a 24 hour bin for this. Website resources should be in a more prominent place so people can easily find them. Committee members advocated for consistent consequences for athletics and activities, including “holding the line” on parents who disagree with the Administration.

Paul Murphy supported Brigid’s comments and encouraged the Committee to pay for additional counselor time. Dennis Bruce hopes that people in the community realize that this problem didn’t develop overnight and consequently, it cannot be addressed overnight, even with all of this collaboration. When asked about the consequences in athletics and the student perspective, Dr. Callen explained the chemical health policy. Det. Campbell explained the Restorative Justice Program that has been successful. Xuan thanked all for attending the meeting and being an important part of our community.

5.8 APS/ABRSD School Committee Proposed Budget Planning Timeline – *Xuan Kong*

Xuan Kong emphasized the need for a budget timeline and referred to his proposal. Dennis Bruce asked how realistic it is for the Administration and staff to generate this type of information in this accelerated way. Steve and Don discussed this and they will do their best. Steve cautioned that every year different issues become the focus and sometimes the timing is out of their control. Next year Deb Bookis will have priorities for professional development. Many numbers are not known until later in the year and educated guesswork is involved. Steve appreciated Xuan’s effort to begin the discussion ahead of ALG. The Committees will discuss the .2 High School drug/alcohol position and perhaps how to get that increased. Most priorities that were not met last year will be the top ones this year.

Mike emphasized that when ALG asks for School Committees’ opinion, they must be ready to provide it. FinCom wants everyone to think about the long term consequences of decisions as they go forward. This is why the long term financial forecasts are important. Mike stated that the Fincom had not received a response from the School Committees after several requests, and it needed to be addressed. Kim McOsker agreed. The School Committee was in agreement that the Chair should respond to FinCom’s request.

Xuan referred to the December 2012 item on the Timeline about student fee changes and revolving account reviews. Brigid asked if the Committee could review the different athletics fees and the expenses per sport and where it shows up. The Committee agreed that that would be valuable information.

It was the sense of the Committees that the proposed Budget Planning Timeline should be used.

The APS SC adjourned at 10:43 p.m. and the ABRSC continued.

ABRSC BUSINESS

6.1 FY’13 Budget: Special Education Tuition Rates

Liza Huber reviewed the memo and recommended to move forward with option 2. The intention was to bring this to the Committee in August. She has received a number of questions about accepting Hayward Center students, although it is unlikely because they are very need intensive placements.

Mike Coppolino moved, Kim McOsker seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the ABRSD special education tuition rates as proposed.

6.2 Lower Fields Update

Steve Mills reported that everything is going very well with the project. Kids are on the fields 12 hours per day now. Fields are used 2:30 – 6:00 p.m. FOLF has collected \$38,000 and project \$175,000 will be collected this year. Mike asked when the parking would be finished. JD said that the Town has a different schedule for building out the skate board park. All resources went to the turf to get it open on time, making the pavement a lower priority. It will probably be the second week of October for 75 parking spaces. Lights may be on by Tuesday. Brigid thanked JD for his hard work all summer and asked that we stay on top of the finishing touches like signage, pedestrian ways, landscaping, etc. Xuan said that a

community member spoke to him about foot traffic on the campus, urging that it be well thought out for the whole campus. Regarding the specific cash flow projections shown at Town Meeting last spring, Xuan asked if by December an update of the cash flow projection could be done.

6.3 Recommendation to Approve Field Trip to Norway

Teacher Pat Garrison spoke about her hopes to share a new culture with the students who participate. Maria Neyland moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the field trip to Norway from 2/15/13 – 2/24/13.

6.4 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Dan Rinaldi Heart Fund

Kim McOsker moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to Accept a Gift from the Dan Rinaldi Heart Fund to fund a football coach.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

7.4 Curriculum Update: Summer Professional Learning

Dr. Mills highlighted Deborah Bookis' very successful summer full of staff opportunities.

7.10 Discovery Museum Lease Renewal

This lease was renewed and signed by the Superintendent and the SC Chair.

7.11 Bus Lease Follow-up Memo

Dr. Mills reviewed this follow up memo and said that he should have brought a conversation about the bus buying/leasing to the Committee last May.

A Joint School Committee executive session will be scheduled before the Oct 4th meeting.

In October, Dr. Mills will bring forward the District Improvement Plan and highlight initiatives. Don will give a review of the historic budget. The APSC members need to think about the revenue projections so they are prepared for the budget discussions at Acton Leadership Group (ALG).

NEXT MEETINGS

September 20, 7:00 pm, APS SC Meeting at RJGJHS Library

October 4, 7:30 pm, ABRSC Meeting at RJGJHS Library

The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: Agenda, Statement from Bruce Sabot

**ACTON PUBLIC and ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School**

**September 6, 2012
7:00 p.m. Joint School Committee Executive Session
7:30 p.m. Joint School Committee Open Meeting
followed by AB Regional School Committee Meeting**

AGENDA

1.0 **CALL TO ORDER** (7:00)

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION

– Strategy with respect to collective bargaining

2.0 **CHAIRMAN’S INTRODUCTION** (7:30)

- 2.1 First Day of School Report – *Steve Mills*
 - 2.1.1 Welcome Back Letter to Staff from the Superintendent
- 2.2 Statement from Bruce Sabot, Boxborough member

3.0 **APPROVAL of MINUTES and STATEMENT of WARRANT** (7:40)

- 3.1 Minutes of 8/1/12 Joint/AB/APS School Committee meeting

4.0 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

5.0 **JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS** (7:45)

- 5.1 ALG and Acton FinCom Reports –*Xuan Kong*
 - 5.1.1 ALG Draft Minutes of 8/9/12 meeting
 - 5.1.2 Suggested Calendar for Budget Planning for FY14 – DRAFT (ALG)
- 5.2 BLF and Boxborough Town Meeting Report – *Maria Neyland (oral)* (7:50)
- 5.3 OPEB Task Force Update – *Dennis Bruce (oral)* (7:55)
- 5.4 Negotiations Subcommittee Update on Legal Counsel – Possible **VOTE** – *Marie Altieri* (8:00)
- 5.5 Regional School District Study Committee (RSDSC) Presentation –*Peter Ashton, Mac Reid* (8:15)
 - 5.5.1 Recommendation to Authorize the Chairperson to request a Reorganization Needs Conference from the DESE for the purpose of expanding the Acton-Boxborough regional school district to include PreK to grade 6 – **VOTE** – *Mac Reid, Peter Ashton*
 - 5.5.2 Recommendation to Approve Legal Services for the RSDSC – **VOTE** – *Mac Reid, Peter Ashton*
- 5.6 Policy Subcommittee Update (8:45)
 - 5.6.1 Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff, File: GBEB – **SECOND READING – VOTE** - *Brigid Bieber*
 - 5.6.2 Student Fees, File: JQ – **SECOND READING – VOTE** – *Maria Neyland*
- 5.7 Strategies for the Prevention and Intervention of Adolescent Substance Use, A Community-Wide Approach – *Alix Callen, Liza Huber, Steve Mills* (9:00)
- 5.8 APS/ABRSD School Committee Proposed Budget Planning Timeline – *Xuan Kong* (9:30)

APS SC is adjourned. ABRSC continues.

6.0 **ABRSC BUSINESS**

- 6.1 FY’13 Budget: Special Education Tuition Rates – **VOTE** – *Don Aicardi, Liza Huber* (9:35)
- 6.2 Lower Fields Update – *Steve Mills (oral)* (9:40)

- 6.3 Recommendation to Approve Field Trip to Norway – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills (9:45)*
- 6.4 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Dan Rinaldi Heart Fund to football – **VOTE** – *Steve Mills (9:50)*

7.0 **FOR YOUR INFORMATION** (9:55)

- 7.1 ABRHS
 - 7.1.1 Back to School Letter to Families
- 7.2 RJ Grey Junior High
 - 7.2.1 Back to School Letter to Families
- 7.3 Pupil Services
 - 7.3.1 On Team
 - 7.3.2 Acton Public Preschool Open House: REVISED DATE: 10/18/12, 8:00-10:30 a.m.
 - 7.3.3 Sixth Annual Pupil Services Workshop
- 7.4 Curriculum Update: Summer Professional Learning
- 7.5 Monthly Enrollment
- 7.6 Update on Energy and Resource Conservation Goals
- 7.7 Community Education Interaction catalogue at <http://comed.ab.mec.edu/>
- 7.8 Parent Communication Map
- 7.9 Fall Athletic Coaches
- 7.10 Discovery Museum Lease Renewal
- 7.11 Bus Lease Follow-up Memo
- 7.12 For Your Calendars

8.0 **NEXT MEETINGS**

- September 20, 7:00 pm, APS SC Meeting at RJGJHS Library
- October 4, 7:30 pm, ABRSC Meeting at RJGJHS Library

ADJOURN (10:00)