

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES (approved 10/18/12)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

September 20, 2012
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Dennis Bruce, Michael Coppolino, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, Deanne O'Sullivan
Members Absent: Xuan Kong
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

The Acton Public School Committee was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson, Kim McOsker. Kim thanked Acton TV (www.actontv.org) for the donation of cameras now installed in the library and ABRHS senior Brian Phalen for filming the meeting.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #201306 dated 9/18/12 in the amount of \$751,487.45 was signed by the Chair and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the previous APSC meeting were approved on 9/6/12.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - none

EDUCATION REPORT

Douglas School Principal, Dr. Christopher Whitbeck presented on "Student Growth Analysis". Dr. Mills began by stating that a district SMART goal this year focuses on Student Growth Analysis for all students. Dr. Whitbeck has led this work at the Douglas School for the past few years. The creation of student portfolios that follow the children over the years is a new and very valuable resource. Not all kids are showing great growth and if not, teachers try to assess/diagnose why and address it.

Dr. Whitbeck began by stating that there are so many skills to analyze that it is sometimes hard to decide what to focus on. Using data (slide 3) is valuable to help form reading groups by looking at students' levels. Staff is now asking, "How do we show growth in all areas of reading?" Deborah Bookis and others have given teachers good guidelines to use for this, including oral and written assessments. Online databases would be preferable, but they are not available yet. AMC (Assessment of Mathematic Concepts) aka Cathy Richardson program is used. Some staff are now looking at mathematics during one of the Thursday afternoon Professional Development programs.

Dr. Whitbeck pointed out that a key question is always, "How much time should be spent assessing and how much time should be spent instructing?" Staff needs to find the most effective and efficient balance.

Dr. Mills pointed out that each of our elementary schools now has a "guided library" so children can find an appropriate level book for their ability. A question was asked about how it is determined which kids need specialized instruction outside of the classroom. Deb Bookis responded that there is a level that automatically puts a child with the reading specialist based on two staff members assessment of them. There is consistency across the district on this. An unacceptable level of growth would also trigger a specialist's attention.. The point was made that each child deserves a year's worth of growth.

APS SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

7.1 Acton Health Insurance Trust Report

Kim McOsker reported that the Trust met the morning of the School Committee meeting. They had a chance to meet with counsel and review the Trust agreement as it pertains to various topics, including OPEB and Regionalization. There have been a number of larger claims over the last several months but with the reinsurance receivables, the Trust is essentially made whole.

7.2 ALG Report

Kim McOsker reported that the ALG met on 9/13/12. They are working towards a unified planning process with the hope that the group can get to a preliminary consensus in November. The Fincomm invited the School Committee to their meeting on 9/25/12 to discuss where things stand. Fincomm is looking for earlier dialog regarding the schools' FY14 budget planning. Xuan expressed the School Committee members' concern for any conversation related to FY14 with another committee prior to meeting with School Committee's own members. The next Fincomm meeting is scheduled for October 9th. ALG members also discussed getting all of the Town board members together so that they can get to know each other as this would help with overall communication and partnership. Coordinated long range strategic planning could also be discussed. OPEB was discussed. Dennis will update. ALG agreed that there will no substitutions in attendance. Next meeting has been moved from October 11th to the 17th.

7.3 Acton BOS Report

Paul Murphy reported that the Board of Selectmen originally voted to move the voting stations to the High School, but then they rescinded it. They did vote to move Precinct 1 to the Conant School.

7.4 Acton Finance Committee Report -

Dennis Bruce reported that there had not been another meeting since the Regional School Committee report. Next meeting will be Oct 3. They need to finalize the report that is to be delivered the first week of November. The timing of the budgets is a key conversation.

7.5 Regionalization School District Study Committee (RSDSC) Update

Dr. Mills reported that there is a meeting next Tuesday night of the RSDSC. Mary Brolin, Mac Reid, Steve Mills and Beth Petr submitted a grant last week to fund the two special Town Meetings and some legal time. Yesterday, Dr. Mills' staff and Dr. Bates' staff met to start talking about issues that would not be part of the regional agreement. The two superintendents pledged to meet with any parents who would like to talk with them. It was noted that many issues need to be negotiated with the unions and administrations.

Peter Ashton reported that not a lot has changed since their update at the Regional School Committee meeting on 9/6/12. Peter asked for more input from School Committee members. The RSDSC feels they need help and feedback in terms of where the School Committees think they should be and what is reasonable to assume. One thing has changed since 9/6/12. Roger Hatch from the DESE's Office of School Finance presented a simulation of what Chapter 70 aid would look like under a full regional system K-12. Unfortunately, the report said that Chapter 70 aid in FY13 would be \$148,000 less for the fully regionalized Acton Boxborough district than the sum of current FY13 aid distributions for the three separate districts. Peter said that when the numbers are projected out five years, there appears to be no net benefit to Acton. One requirement for moving forward is that both towns must show some benefit.

More information is being requested from DESE. Our elected officials are being contacted to see if they can help. Another important unknown is the potential impact of bringing Boxborough teachers into the Acton contract.

Peter was asked about the recommended makeup of the new School Committee. He acknowledged that this is one of the very difficult questions that the RSDSC has not come to agreement on yet. Boxborough wants greater representation but understands that there needs to be weighted voting. One possibility is to have five Acton and three Boxborough members with weighted voting based on population. Peter feels the financial questions should be dealt with first, because compromises will be involved.

Dennis Bruce questioned why the RSDSC was only projecting out five years, when this would be a longer term commitment. Peter explained that there are so many uncertainties that the RSDSC decided this was the best estimate. It is also consistent with FinCom's projections. The numbers get progressively worse because Boxborough has choice revenue and a working assumption is that choice revenue would decline over time.

Mike Coppolino asked if regionalization was revenue neutral, would it still make sense to do. Peter said that that is what the RSDSC wants the School Committee to decide. Mike pointed out that there are operational and educational efficiencies, and questioned if the whole project and committee should be jettisoned at this stage. Peter emphasized that a proposed new regional agreement must be one that both towns can support.

The School Committee agreed to reach out to the political leaders. Xuan has talked to Jen Benson and James Eldridge. Peter asked if any Committee member had input for him to take to the RSDSC. Mike Coppolino stated that at the Regional SC meeting, he was in favor of five Acton and three Boxborough School Committee members. In his opinion, the 5% benefit that Boxborough has doesn't make sense to give if it is all one region. Dennis Bruce urged the RSDSC to look at net benefits over next 5 years or more. He asked if the split was different, would it be more palatable to both towns. Peter said this was also Bob Evans' idea. Peter reiterated that there is not a strictly financial net benefit overall at this point. Deanne O'Sullivan emphasized that there are non-financial benefits that must be kept in mind such as administrative consolidation and particularly benefits to the students. Peter replied that this was presented at the last Town Meetings and there are some real non-financial benefits. He urged the Committee to engage the elementary school parents as early as possible to see if they agree with these benefits and will convince others.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Kim reported that the Boxborough School Committee was meeting and would decide who will replace Bruce Sabot following his recent resignation.

NEXT MEETINGS:

- October 1, 7:30 p.m. JT SC Executive Session in Superintendent's Conference Room
- October 4, 7:30 p.m. JT/AB SC meeting at RJGJHS Library
- October 18, 7:00 p.m. APS SC meeting at RJGJHS Library

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents used: see agenda

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

September 20, 2012
7:00 p.m.

AGENDA

- 1.0 CALL TO ORDER (7:00)
- 2.0 CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION
- 3.0 STATEMENT OF WARRANT
- 4.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES
- 5.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- 6.0 EDUCATION REPORT – “Student Growth Analysis”, Christopher Whitbeck, *Douglas School Principal* (7:10)
- 7.0 APS SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS (7:40)
 - 7.1 Acton Health Insurance Trust Report – *Kim McOsker* (oral)
 - 7.2 ALG Report– *Kim McOsker*
 - 7.2.1 Approved Minutes of 8/9/12
 - 7.2.2 Draft Minutes of 9/13/12
 - 7.3 Acton BOS Report – *Paul Murphy* (oral)
 - 7.4 Acton Finance Committee Report - *Dennis Bruce* (oral)
 - 7.5 Regionalization School District Study Committee (RSDSC) Update – *Steve Mills* (oral)
- 8.0 FOR YOUR INFORMATION (7:55)
 - 8.1 Pupil Services
 - Social Thinking and Interaction Workshop on October 17th
 - Acton Public Schools Preschool Open House on October 18th
 - 8.2 Staffing Update
 - 8.3 Student Enrollment, 9/1/12
 - 8.4 Curriculum Update, Open House Information for Parents
 - 8.5 School Newsletters
 - Conant Crier: <http://conant.ab.mec.edu/pto/newsletter.html>
 - Douglas Digest: <http://douglas.ab.mec.edu/pto/digest.html>
 - Gates Gazette: <http://gatesschoolpto.org/gazette>
 - McCarthy-Towne Bulletin: <http://www.mctptso.org/bulletin/>
 - Merriam Comm News: <http://www.merriampto.org/Merriam>
 - Acton Public School Preschool: <http://ab.mec.edu/Preschool/index.htm>
- 9.0 NEXT MEETINGS:
 - October 4, 7:30 p.m. JT/AB SC meeting at RJGJHS Library
 - October 18, 7:00 p.m. APS SC meeting at RJGJHS Library

ADJOURN (8:00)