

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
APPROVED MINUTES

Administration Building Auditorium
15 Charter Road, Acton

June 10, 2021
7:00 p.m.

To *view* the meeting virtually (no participation): <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

To make a public comment (two options):

1. In-person - please wear a mask if not fully vaccinated
2. Virtually: https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5TIZ-zBATHmANF2nyzugmA
(pre-registration required for virtual - 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 (7:38 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, Debbie Dixon

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:04 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, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (came later), Amy Krishnamurthy, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang and herself.

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) or attend in person. 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, or attend in person. The procedures are posted with Public Participation policy BEDH. This meeting was recorded and posted on Acton TV's website at actontv.org.

- a. **Chairperson's Welcome** - *Tessa McKinley*
- b. **ABRHS Student Rep Update** – none
- c. **Public Participation** – *none*
- d. **Superintendent's Update** – *Peter Light*
 - i. Larry Dorey, David Krane and Debbie Dixon were thanked for their years of service to the District and presented with a small token of appreciation.
 - ii. For additional updates from Mr. Light, see <https://sites.google.com/abschools.org/abtransitiontoschool/superintendents-updates>

2. PRESENTATIONS

a. **Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) Update**

Amanda Bailey and Carrie Weaver presented the Spring Update. At last night's meeting, Amanda and Abe Gutierrez were elected as Chairs for next year. The SEPAC's mission is "to ensure understanding, respect, support and the appropriate education of all children in our community". Under state law, the SPEDPAC's duties include: "advising the district on matters that pertain to the education and safety of students with disabilities and meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development and evaluation of the school district's special education programs." Diane Baum was thanked for her "years of dedication to the SEPAC, tireless advocacy around literacy instruction, and on behalf of students with dyslexia."

b. **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) Family Advisory**

Dawn Bentley, Lucienne Schmidt (, Maria Veronica Barnes (Curriculum), Nannette Wright (Hiring Practices), Jane Archer (Family Engagement) and Heidi Koelz (Police/District Interactions) presented on the important work done by this impressive new Advisory group. Due to the pandemic, they were forced to take a break just as they were getting started and could only meet virtually. Lucienne thanked all who were involved.

Comments and Questions from the Committee:

- Tessa said that when she and Dawn were asked to share this work at a recent MASC conference, it was remarkable to be able to share all of this impressive work. It made her really proud of the district.
- Especially with Covid, it was amazing that members really dug into the right things.
- In response to a question, Nannette said that in order to hire more people of color, we have to open a wide net to get the qualified people that we are looking for. Advertising in the local area doesn't give you the diversity needed. Sources like the black colleges and other organizations are important.
- How the job description is written is also key. There is a lot of research regarding unintended bias when writing advertisement. A diverse set of thoughts must be used when evaluating an application to ensure no bias.
- Retention is essential. Bringing candidates in the door is the first step, but good onboarding is key so these staff members will encourage their friends.
- The budget reflects our values. Regarding retention, funds should be set aside to support things like transportation and a support system for staff in the future. The affinity group for people of color that was started this year is a great example.
- So much work has been accomplished by this group! Do the group members feel that way? Several members admitted that it was hard to wait for answers sometimes. "You can't just put all the great ideas into play right away." That was a frustration coming from the corporate world to the public school environment.
- Members appreciated the administration's support. While some short term ideas were proposed, it was frustrating that resources were not available for implementation because budgets were done. Programs will need to be reviewed and some things will have to be prioritized and let go to make way for some of the new proposals. Mr. Light agreed that there were many great ideas from this group. A member described it as "very long term work".
- The Advisory Group was very diverse, speaking different languages, but also coming from a number of different educational environments. A key challenge for a lot of immigrant parents is that they don't know who to ask or where to go, when they have a question. "What is the Central Office?" was an example.

- Having served on the School Committee for 6 years, Diane Baum complimented members on “this very strong work” and said that it was an honor to have this presentation from the Group. She noted that a group at DESE recently put out an emergency issue of teacher licenses and because they offered some flexibility the percentage of minority teachers was 9% - a 4 fold increase in who they attracted due to a different approach.
- We all need to become more educated about how our School Resource Officers work. Diane advocated for a Restorative Justice model.
- Regarding the curriculum piece, Deb Bookis reported that the DEI Group proposal was shared with the teachers and they will be considering it this summer. They were very thankful for the work.
- The sub chairs were thanked for their extensive work and excellent presentation, on top of all of their other work and families.
- We know everyone will do some good and bad things. We can't change history, but we can go forward. How do you teach children this? Maria Veronica replied that critical thinking is involved and having Social Emotional curriculum that allows children to understand that something in history is true but doesn't have to happen again.

Members of the DEI Advisory Group were thanked again for their impressive work and a very informative presentation.

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. **FY22 ABRHS Handbook - First Read**

Maurin O'Grady reviewed the proposed six changes to the handbook. A member thanked her for removing the PE requirement to change clothes (#5), as it is difficult for some kids. In response to a question, Maurin said that requiring students to wait in the lobby after hours (#4) should not affect traffic in the circle because it is after dismissal. Larry Dorey added that there are some larger handbook items that need to be looked at in the future. Committees will be formed soon to start addressing them. These include the Attendance policy, Assessment, and Discipline. These are items that need to be studied before being addressed. This will be back at the next meeting on June 17 for a vote.

b. **MSBA Statement of Interest (SOI): Conant - VOTE- Peter Light**

This SOI has been submitted annually for the past few years. When Dore and Whittier did their study, Gates and Douglas were highest priority but Conant also had significant needs. The enrollment numbers were updated with minor changes and some of the minor repairs have been done. In past we have submitted Accelerated Repair paperwork for Blanchard but the MSBA is not considering these repairs any more so we will pause on that.

Adam Klein moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: “Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on June 10, 2021, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee of Acton and Boxborough, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated June 25, 2021 for the Luther Conant Elementary School located at 80 Taylor Road Acton MA, 01720 which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future [Insert a description of the priority(s) checked off on the Statement of Interest Form and a brief description

of the deficiency described therein for each priority] for Priority 2 which is the elimination of existing overcrowding, Priority 5 which is the replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility, and Priority 7 which includes the replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements.

and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the City/Town/Regional School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.”

c. **FY22 School Committee Meeting Calendar - VOTE - Tessa McKinley**

Members preferred the evening Budget Meeting, as was done this year, compared to the traditional Budget Saturday. Mr. Light explained that the MASS conference in November, is the best and only real way for School Committee members to have access to professional development for their work.

Adam Klein moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the meetings as posted in the packet with the option of an evening Budget meeting.

4. **ONGOING BUSINESS**

a. **Policy - Diane Baum**

i. Evaluation of the Instructional Program, File: IL - Second Read – **VOTE**

No feedback was received on this.

Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Nora Shine seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve IL. (Evelyn was briefly out of the room during this vote.)

ii. Public Gifts to the Schools, File: KCD - Second Read – **VOTE**

This draft has gone through several versions and has been shared with many stakeholders, some more than once. It has been well vetted and Diane is very proud of it. She keeps thinking of a triad of the PTOs, Principals and Leadership. They all need to imbed equity conversations in these decisions and this policy will help.

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

VOTED: to approve the Public Gifts to Schools policy KCD.

iii. Policy Subcommittee FY21 Report

Diane reviewed this year’s progress on the policies and thanked all members who participated in the many robust discussions. Equity was the theme of the most significant policies addressed. Diane was thanked for her “heavy lifting” and leadership as chair of this subcommittee.

b. **Town Meeting Updates - John Petersen, Adam Klein**

The slides and message were in the packet. Tessa invited all Committee members to attend both Town Meetings, as was the custom before Covid.

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

i. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 5/20/21

ii. Recommendation to Approve Gift of \$836.45 from the MA Cultural Council to Blanchard for band equipment

- iii. Recommendation to Approve Gift of \$2,100 from the AB-PTSO and \$4,000 from the Society for Science and the Public (Regeneron Science Talent Search) to the High School

Kyra Cook moved, Diane Baum seconded and it was unanimously.

VOTED: to approve the consent agenda.

d. **Subcommittee and Member Reports**

- i. Building Committee - Adam Klein

At the meeting last night it was reported that the building is relatively on budget and schedule. \$26M of work has been submitted for reimbursement and we've received 49% reimbursement, which is great benefit from the state. A discussion of whether we would need the second borrowing is starting. The Project Manager says it is still too early to decide. It is possible, but there is still a way to go. The School Committee was reminded that the primary decision maker in that case would be the Building Committee.

- ii. Acton Leadership Group - Boxborough Leadership Forum Updates -

John Petersen reported that the Fincom recommended that the ALG Plan be modified regarding the Fire Station by reducing the tax rate and it was agreed.

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

Tessa McKinley moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the warrants, see motion language on memo.

It was agreed that warrants will continue to be approved electronically so members can review them prior to the meetings.

b. **FYI**

Mr. Light congratulated the retirees, adding that the quality of our schools is built on the staff that work with our kids. He is very grateful to all.

He also is working on our second Annual Report to be mailed to all homes this summer. The focus of this Report will be the pandemic. Andrew Shen will coordinate the project.

5. **Adjourned**

At 9:22 p.m. Adam Klein moved, Nora Shine seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS:

Next Thursday, June 17 ABRSC at 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, July 20 ABRSC Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION (FYI)

- a. Boxborough Town Meeting is June 12. Acton Town Meeting is June 21.
- b. Congratulations to our 2021 ABRSD Retirees!
- c. 2021-2022 ABRSD School Calendar (dismissal times updated for JH and HS)
- d. [This Month in the Division of Open Government, May 2021](#) - [Open Meeting Law Guidebook](#)