

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING  
MINUTES (approved 10/22/15)

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

October 1, 2015  
7:00 p.m.

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*Members Present:* Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Kristina Rychlik  
*Members Absent:* Amy Krishnamurthy, Deanne O'Sullivan  
*Others:* Marie Altieri, Bonnie Bisbicos, Glenn Brand, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

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1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Kristina Rychlik, Chairwoman.
2. **Chairman's Introduction** –
3. **Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**
  - 3.1. Minutes of the meeting on 9/17/15 were approved as written. Maria Neyland abstained.
  - 3.2. Warrant #16-007 dated 9/24/15 in the amount of \$3,490,738.70 and #16-007PR dated 10/1/15 in the amount of \$453,666.28 were signed by the Committee.

4. **Public Participation** - none

5. **Comparable Communities Update** – *Marie Altieri*

- 5.1. Presentation Slides
- 5.2. List of Communities

Marie Altieri presented Peter Ashton's report because he was unavailable. This work was started in 2004 and formalized in 2008. As of 10/1/14, we now have 17 towns on the list for comparisons based on a number of criteria as measured along several different dimensions: Size/demographics, Financial, Ability to pay, and Location.

Mike Coppolino thanked Peter for continuing his work on this task. When looking at the financial columns, he questioned how much of a match the comparison towns are, particularly considering a balance of ability to pay, in addition to the other categories, although he has not examined the report thoroughly yet. The towns that were added seem to be on the higher income bracket. Marie pointed out that bond rating was a consideration. Paul Murphy noted that inherent in this analysis is an equal weighting to each category. He questioned if there should be some sort of prioritization.

It was the sense of the Committee that members were very comfortable with this analysis. When asked how to decide which comparison list to use, now that we have two, Marie stated that it depends what information is needed. At ALG, the Acton Finance Committee was comfortable with the new list. Brigid Bieber noted that it is important to be consistent with how we look at this type of information. Marie confirmed that the Acton-Boxborough region was used for comparing, not just the town of Acton.

6. **MASC District Governance Program Update** – *Kristina Rychlik*

- 6.1. ABRSC 2015 - 2016 Operating Protocols

Kristina Rychlik reported that the final protocols are in the packet and the next Workshop is scheduled for October 22 with Dorothy Presser.

## 7. **Budget Update**

### 7.1. FY17 Budget Process

#### 7.1.1. Budget Timeline

#### 7.1.2. Budget Guidelines

Dr. Brand described the process for determining the FY17 Budget and spoke about the proposed guidelines. Mary Brolin stated that the guidelines are excellent, but it will still be a challenge to make the decisions. The Committee did not feel the need to vote on this document.

## 8. **Subcommittee Reports**

8.1. Policy – Maria said the subcommittee has met twice to discuss how to move forward. Next meeting is 10/14/15.

8.2. Budget – Kristina Rychlik reported on the first meeting.

#### 8.2.1. Financial Reporting per the Regional Agreement (Section 11 & App A Section e)

Mary Brolin reported that the memo in the packet has been sent to both Towns' Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees. Clare Jeannotte wants to use the October 1 numbers for the report because it is most transparent and consistent, but it means the report will not be provided by October 1<sup>st</sup> as specified in the Regional Agreement. Brigid pointed out that this was included in the Agreement because the Blanchard School numbers were so different from the Acton elementary schools'. Using the different methodology will probably make the numbers look much different. Mary Brolin agreed.

The Boards all want to share these numbers with both communities, but the timing is important. Mary stated that they are hoping to have good numbers for this requirement by January.

Clare Jeannotte stated that January should be achievable except in terms of procedure. The District will file an end of year report by October 31. The audit for these reports is often not scheduled until February or March and it depends when the DESE issues the guidelines. Clare said that this will all be based on the assumption codes that DESE requires districts to use.

8.3. Legislative – *Paul Murphy*

8.3.1. Update on meeting with Rep. Jennifer Benson on 9/11/15

8.4. Regionalization Financial Oversight Committee to meet Tues 10/6/15 at 7:00 p.m in Superintendent's Conference room

## 9. **School Capital and Space Planning Committee** (*new*) – *Glenn Brand*

Dr. Brand reported on the interest he found for this new committee, particularly with the Existing Conditions Phase 1 Report coming out in January, followed by the second phase. He would like two members of the School Committee to be on this committee and welcomed feedback. Kristina asked anyone who would like to serve on this committee to let her know. Dr. Brand will launch this committee in December or January because it will be tied to the conclusion of the Existing Conditions Study Report. He will ask for volunteers in his first newsletter of the year that will go out soon. Kristina is interested in serving but not if another Acton School Committee member would like to. She suggested asking for people with related professional experience. Maria asked for a broad group of members, including non-school parents to serve.

## 10. **School Committee Member Reports**

10.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Kristina Rychlik*

#### 10.1.1. Meeting on 9/24/15

Kristina reported that the spreadsheet is being simplified. She talked about the Three Board Meeting on Oct 27 and noted that a complaint was received from a Boxborough citizen asking if the Boxborough Boards were invited and if not, why. As discussed at the August meeting, the

School Committee offered to do a similar meeting with the Boxborough Boards. Mary Brolin will send the Boxborough Boards the timeline and guidelines and she will ask if they would like a presentation, or have the Committee come to one of their meetings.

10.2. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– *Mary Brolin*

Mary reported that at the meeting on 9/25/15, they discussed that there is a small loss for the year, but there is a concern that it is a small multi-year loss. There is however, a significant fund balance that will cover it. The FY15 draft audit is expected in mid-November. The trust will have to deal with the Cadillac tax that is part of the affordable Care Act now. We have one plan that is in this category for retirees who live out of state.

10.3. Acton Finance Committee – *Kristina Rychlik*,

Clare Jeannotte will present at the 11/5/15 School Committee meeting, followed by the first Acton Finance committee meeting after that.

10.4. Acton Board of Selectmen – *Paul Murphy*

A large number of people attended for the Senior Center discussion.

10.5. Boxborough Finance Committee- *Mary Brolin*

Mary and liaison Amy Burke have talked to ensure that a good communication plan is in place.

10.6. Minuteman Tech Update – *Diane Baum*

10.6.1. Building Committee Informational Meetings: Sept 28 at 7p.m. & Oct 2 at 8 a.m.

10.6.2. Five Year Projected Revenue Plan and Assessments

Mike Coppolino and Brigid Bieber attended the earlier Building Project Update meeting. Brigid shared 3 handouts from the meeting. Another meeting is being planned. Minuteman Tech will lose their State Building Assistance (SBA) funding in June if they don't have enough support by then. All documents are posted on the Minuteman Tech website. Mike reported that there was a diversity of opinion. He wanted to know what the alternatives were. He said the message given to the Building Committee and Minuteman School Committee was to consider other options like selling some of their land. They have also made some programming changes and realignments. Diane Baum will attend the next meeting.

11. **Standardized Testing Statement from the Administration** – *Glenn Brand*

Dr. Brand stated that the purpose of this statement is to clearly communicate directly to our constituent groups, the Administration's position on and use of standardized testing. Because ABRSD is not a PARCC district, Dr. Brand and the Administration do not feel qualified to speak for or against PARCC at this time.

Paul thanked Dr. Brand for this statement, given the PARCC vote to be taken in November. He asked if the School Committee wanted to create their own statement about this. Members shared their frustration about the topic and agreed they wanted to send a statement. Mary Brolin emphasized that the process is flawed so it is inappropriate for the state to vote due to the lack of public data. Kristina suggested that Paul could watch the previous meetings and put the comments together with the Administrators' statement. She found the document in the packet to be excellent and could be included. Paul agreed to draft a letter for discussion at the October 15 School Committee meeting.

Mike Coppolino asked about the last paragraph on the last page about Student Growth Percentile (SGP). Marie Altieri explained how this could affect a teacher. He feels the paragraph is too strong and appears to be throwing out SGP completely. After his years of teaching, he feels consistently high SGP often means something good is happening and low means something could be better.

Kristina and Maya Minkin commented. A point was made that regarding SGP, it is important to find a place to be comfortable with this item because it does come up every year.

Bill Guthlein spoke on behalf of the SpedPAC, emphasizing that their group has always focused on how to raise the achievement level of special education students, and to them, this means higher SGPs. He disagrees with the Administration's statement because it says that MCAS or PARCC scores will not be used to measure success, and he feels it is important to include if we are trying to raise student output. He does feel that standard testing should not stand equal with all other measures.

Kristina noted that this is the Administration's document. It is up to them if they want to change it. Dr. Brand will share the Committee's comments with Deborah Bookis and rest of the team. It was suggested that the authors of the document be identified in it.

## 12. Superintendent's Report – Glenn Brand

### 12.1. FY17 School Calendar Preliminary Discussion

Dr. Brand asked the Committee for their thoughts about voting a 2 year school calendar. Each year the Committee would still be approving a calendar but it is 2 years out (after the first year, when they would approve two years in a row). He agreed that this may not be feasible this year. He also asked for input on how to handle the religious holidays.

Maya Minkin stated that the memo is what she understood the Committee agreed to. She feels there is merit to doing a 2 year calendar. She also wants to rethink the April and February vacations. She said that many parents (and some McT staff) would like the vacations changed so they could avoid traveling during the usual busy vacation weeks. The vacation question has come up in past School Committee meetings and the discussion has been postponed due to timing. Kathleen Neville agreed. She also wants to discuss religious holidays again because it was before full regionalization that the Committee voted.

Kristina Rychlik thinks theoretically that a 2 year calendar sounds good, but there are so many constraints and complications that she feels it is a contractual issue that is not realistic to decide now. She is happy to table the religious holiday discussion for next year.

Maria Neyland agreed with Maya regarding vacations because kids are getting out of school so late in June. She would like to talk about vacations for next year. She always wants to talk about religious holidays because our demographic continues to change, and she has been consistent every year advocating for not cancelling school on Good Friday, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur

Mike Coppelino wants to ask parents and staff for their opinion. This may not be the time to do a 2 year calendar, although Mike agrees with considering it for future years. He is not in favor of eliminating the February and April vacations

Marie Altieri stated that there is a lot of language in the teachers' contract that School Committee must be aware of. She said a side letter could be used if necessary regarding a 2 year calendar.

Brigid Bieber agreed with Maya about vacations, suggesting that the District could try a couple of long weekends and a March week off, to avoid the travel crowds. She stated that regarding the religious holidays question, the District's school calendar is not structured appropriately given our community now, but surveying makes the community angry. She would like to survey the community every 5 years or so, not every 2 years.

Kristina asked given there is interest in revisiting the vacation schedule, would it be for next year's calendar. The Committee agreed it would be to start in FY18 given the significance of this kind of change. It would affect so many families with sports, exchange programs, etc. Mike agreed with Brigid that people don't want to be surveyed too often. Kristina and Dr. Brand will discuss this and decide how to proceed.

- 12.2. EDCO Update
  - 12.2.1. September Update
  - 12.2.2. Request for Proposals re Study of Increasing CASE/EDCO/LABB Partnership  
Dr. Brand discussed the memo about the three collaboratives exploring working more closely together with perhaps eventually consolidating. He will keep the Committee updated.

13. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

- 13.1. Thank you to Northern Bank and Trust Company, 414 Mass Ave in Acton (Branch Manager, Nancy Dinkel) for collecting donations of school supplies for our students
- 13.2. Annual Friends of Lower Fields (FOLF) Meeting (9/21) Update
- 13.3. Influenza Vaccine Clinics at Blanchard (10/1/) and ABRHS (10/6,10/7, 10/8)
- 13.4. *“Thinking Through, In and About Mathematics in 2015”*, 10/6/15 at 7:00 p.m. in the RJGJHS Auditorium, ABRSD Family Learning Series – Dr. Brand thanked Deborah Bookis and her staff for a wonderful program.
- 13.5. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results Presentation, Oct 21 at 7:00 p.m. Location: TBD – Bonnie Bisbicos urged the public to attend this panel presentation. The next survey will be done in March 2016.

Dr. Brand reported on the light pole that fell on Leary Field last month. JD Head had an engineering firm do an inspection and overall things are in good shape. Four poles, not on Leary Field, do need to be replaced. A report will come out soon.

The ABRSC adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

**NEXT MEETINGS:**

Oct 15	ABRSC Meeting	7:00 p.m. in Jr High Library
Oct 22	ABRSC Governance Workshop	7:00 p.m. in Jr High Library
Oct 27	Three Board Meeting	7:00 p.m. in Acton Town Hall Room 204