

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
MINUTES (approved 6/22/17)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

May 18, 2017
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik (left at 7:09 p.m. and returned at 8:15 p.m.), Eileen Zhang (7:15 p.m.)
Members Absent: Maya Minkin
Others: Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Superintendent Glenn Brand.
2. **Superintendent’s Introduction** – *Glenn Brand*
 - 2.1. Annual Spring Town Elections
 - Boxborough Election Results – congratulations to Katie Neville on her reelection and welcome to our newest Committee member from Boxborough, Tessa McKinley.
 - 2.2. Thank you to FY17 Officers
Brigid Bieber and the Committee thanked Mary Brolin for her leadership as Chair this year. Amy Krishnamurthy and Katie Neville were thanked for their service this year as Acton and Boxborough Vice Chairs.

3. **Election of Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Officers for FY18** – *Glenn Brand*
 - 3.1. Chairperson – **VOTE** – *Glenn Brand*

Paul Murphy nominated Amy Krishnamurthy to serve as FY18 ABRSC Chairperson. Brigid Bieber seconded. Diane Baum stated that she could not support the nomination because she does not trust that Amy will represent all of the members, and that she will uphold the ethics and democratic policies. Katie Neville stated that she absolutely supports Amy. She has served with Amy on the budget, policy and negotiations subcommittees. Amy has worked tirelessly building good relationships between the School Committee and community groups, particularly the Acton Leadership Group (ALG). Katie cannot think of a better chairperson.

The motion to elect Amy Krishnamurthy as FY18 ABRSC Chairperson was,

VOTED: and approved

(YES: Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Murphy, Neville, Rychlik

NO: Baum, O’Sullivan)

- 3.2. Vice Chairperson(s) – **VOTE** – *Glenn Brand*

Kristina Rychlik nominated Paul Murphy as Vice Chair from Acton. Diane Baum seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to elect Paul Murphy as Vice Chair from Acton for FY18.

Katie Neville nominated Brigid Bieber as Vice Chair from Boxborough. Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to elect Brigid Bieber as Vice Chair from Boxborough for FY18.

- 3.3. Executive Secretary – **VOTE** – *Glenn Brand*

Deanne O’Sullivan nominated Beth Petr as Executive Secretary for FY18, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to elect Beth Petr as Executive Secretary for FY18.

- 3.4. FYI: School Committee Annual Meeting Policy, File: BDA
School Committee Officers Policy, File: BDB

Dr. Brand welcomed Amy Krishnamurthy as the new ABRSC Chair to lead the meeting.
(Kristina Rychlik temporarily left the meeting at 7:09 pm.)

Dr. Brand read the mutual statement he issued with the School Committee regarding his resignation. He had shared this earlier in the day with District staff and school families.

4. **Statement of Warrant and Approval of Minutes**

4.1. The Committee reviewed and signed the warrants. See list attached.

4.2. ABRSC Meetings of 4/27/17 and 2/2/17

Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and the minutes of 4/27/17 and 2/2/17 were approved. Deanne O'Sullivan abstained because she was not at the meeting on 4/27/17. (Eileen Zhang arrived at 7:15 p.m.)

Dr. Brand invited the 3 High School student representatives, Arnav Mehra, Ben Lin and Lee Dong, to come forward. The students spoke briefly about the new proposed change regarding test assessments which Arnav was in favor of, the use of social media, raising money for their class events, and how much the therapy dogs, donuts and hot chocolate that were brought in during some of difficult days last fall was appreciated. The students were thanked for their participation this year.

5. **Public Participation**

Amy Krishnamurthy welcomed the public to speak but reminded them of the 2 minute limit per person, due to the anticipated length of the meeting.

Members of the public expressed their surprise and frustration about the joint statement they had just received from the Superintendent and the Committee. They asked for specifics about the educational and operational philosophies, as "taxpayers and parents", as well as how the hiring process would be different. The Committee was asked for transparency and parents said that they want to work together with the school and the School Committee. There was concern about how the additional salary payment would be covered in the budget. There have been recent articles about how hard it is to hire school superintendents lately.

A parent who was a former School Board member in VT stated that she supports Dr. Brand's direction particularly addressing suicides, and busy homework that "doesn't do anything for kids in our schools". She agrees with all of the measures currently being taken in the district and wants to know what led to this decision.

Amy stated that there would be a meeting next Wednesday 5/24/17 at 7:30 p.m. to discuss "Next Steps".

One parent asked if High School teachers could be more available to help students with their work. She said that students have to schedule time with teachers during their free period if they need help, and that is not always possible. Often parents need to hire a tutor for their students.

6. **Presentation: Superintendent's Wellness Committee Report**

6.1. Wellness Policy and Procedures – *Kirsten Nelson, Abigail Dressler (Asst Principal at Conant)*

6.2. School Climate and Culture Subcommittee – *Diane Spring, Rajini Reddy*

Diane Spring, Kirsten Nelson, Abigail Dressler and Rajini Reddy presented. No change was needed for the Wellness policy but they did update the procedures and they are posted on the website. They hope to increase community and staff awareness of the new wellness procedures next year. School culture and climate was an interesting new topic to study.

Diane Baum asked what the School Committee's role was in this area. Diane Spring was not sure who makes the final decision but she said that the Senior Leadership Team would probably form a subcommittee to go further with it. Diane Baum offered to help. Dr. Brand said the Administrative team would bring recommendations to the School Committee about this in the future, particularly involving the survey options.

Mary Brolin asked who would own the raw survey data because she gets nervous if a consultant retires or moves and the district loses that connection. She would prefer if the District owns it so we could do trend analysis in the future. Diane Spring will be sure to ask about that. It was pointed out that Stan Davis only works in English so that might result in hidden costs to translate, if he would permit it.

7. **Presentation: Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Self-Assessment Report**

Director of Student Services, Dawn Bentley introduced Dr. George Batsche who is consulting with the District.

Dr. Batsche presented MTSS in the context of the District's Long Range Strategic Plan, Goal 2 that says, "Our students will have equitable opportunities and the tools to learn". He described the approach as "go slow to go fast." This is what integrates and increases efficiency. At AB, the demographic groups who are increasing in the proportion of the district population are also the groups whose performance is the lowest in the district. It is a significant disparity among groups. Dr. Batsche posed the question, "How do you take the resources you have and continue to grow your success?" The goal is not to let students get behind.

Mary Brolin noted the importance of the principals (and teachers) but asked how important is it to bring the parents along? Dr. Batsche said that letting parents know what to expect and ensuring that they understand is very important for success. Paul Murphy worried that some school principals will embrace this and some will think their methods already address the issues. Dr. Batsche said that this is a good worry. Don't wait until it's a problem to address it. School leaders have to all be comfortable with this because others have to follow them. There has to be a lot of trust involved.

Deanne O'Sullivan asked how this factors in with assistants. It helps to allocate the resources based on the needs because you have to use your people strategically. AB's open enrollment seems to be a real strength because it predicts some movement because students move and that means the resources move.

Eileen Zhang liked the presentation and asked for an example of how this will work at the kindergarten level. Dr Batsche said that all kindergarteners would be screened for literacy and engagement within the first 20 days of school. Data would be reported about which students are above and below the risk level. After 20 more days, students who did not do well are reassessed. By October, staff knows which kids are at risk. This screen predicts with 93% accuracy who will have trouble. Skills can be assessed and services can be modified to address those skills quickly. Accelerated groups could also get targeted resources. Dawn Bentley pointed out that the District already screens our Kindergarteners on a variety of measures before they enter school (May) and again in the Fall.

Dr. Batsche said it was evident that AB has many of the components of MTSS already in place, but not in a way that is integrated and connected yet. He also said that services are better given in the general education classroom than to do pull out (of the classroom), if we want success in the mainstream classroom.

Diane Baum agreed with "go slow, go fast" stating that it is important to avoid reaching a capacity that you can't support. When she was reading the report, she was concerned because it feels like we have reached capacity with our ELL instruction. She asked if he were to make a recommendation right now, what would it be? Dr. Batsche said the most important grade level for literacy is kindergarten because students are not behind yet. It is the launching pad.

Dawn Bentley said that the Administration is realizing that if we want to focus as much energy as we want to on Tier 1, then we have to think about the rollout. There is a lot of discussion about how Thursday afternoons will be used next year for professional learning and this will be an important topic. She said the District has work to do culturally about the language we use about kids who struggle. There is also a lot of integration work to do, but the focus next year will be Tier 1 instruction and teachers.

8. **ABRHS Handbook for 2017-2018, Review of Changes** – First Reading – *ABRHS Dean of Students, Peter Cavanaugh*

Peter Cavanaugh described the proposed changes including #5 regarding test postponement which was mentioned by one of the student reps at the beginning of the meeting. A typo was noted regarding an asterisk that will be corrected.

It was asked if #9 and #10 should be for all students, not just athletes. Regarding the wording “may impact...” A member asked if kids understand what that means because it is vague. Peter said that changing it would impact the investigative process and our Memo of Understanding. There are also a lot of other factors that are taken into account in these situations.

Eileen Zhang asked about #3 High School Transcript. She sees a lot of very valuable things happening in the community that are not included in this list. She asked if other activities and awards could be included on the transcript. Deborah Bookis responded that it would not be appropriate because this is an academic transcript and there are other ways to recognize these types of achievements.

9. **Recommendation to Approve ABRSD Bus Lease between ABRSD and New England Transit Sales, Inc.** – **VOTE**– *JD Head*

9.1. Proposed Lease

9.2. Bid from N.E. Transit Sales

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

VOTED: to approve the proposed bus lease between ABRSD and New England Transit Sales

10. **Recommendation to Approve Solar Net Metering Credit Agreement –First Read** – *JD Head*

10.1 Memo

10.2 Proposed Agreement

JD Head described a new solar opportunity for the District. Mary Brolin asked why these organizations need a public partner like the schools. JD said it is to get a tax id number. Paul Murphy likes these partnerships and would like to do more of them.

11. **Recommendation to Approve FY18 Education Cooperative (TEC) Bid** – **VOTE** – *Glenn Brand*

Mary Brolin moved, Katie Neville seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve FY18 Education Cooperative (TEC) Bid

12. **Recommendation to Approve FY18 Discovery Museum Lease** – **VOTE** – *Deb Bookis*

Deborah Bookis explain the new lease. Every year the District receives approximately \$3600 worth of services in exchange for allowing the Museum to use some storage spac.

Paul Murphy moved, Diane Baum seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY18 Discovery Museum Lease.

13. **Recommendation to Accept PTSO Gift to McCarthy-Towne School for Art Integration** – **VOTE** -

Paul Murphy moved, Kristina Rychlik seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the PTSO Gift to McCarthy-Towne School for Art Integration with gratitude.

14. **ABRSD Budget Update** – *Glenn Brand*

14.1. Boxborough Town Meeting update – budget approved

- 14.2. Moody's Investors Service Report dated 5/12/17
The District's rating has not changed but the negative outlook has improved. Paul noted that the report says a Aa2 rating, and asked if this is the highest. Dr. Brand will ask Clare Jeannotte.

15. ABRSD Master Plan / School Building Project Update

- 15.1. Massachusetts School Business Authority (MSBA) Update – *Glenn Brand*
The EPQ is due in July and is being worked on. The upcoming enrollment piece is also very important.
- 15.2. District Master Plan Review Committee (DMPRC) Update – *Mary Brolin, Kristina Rychlik*
- 15.2.1. Meeting Minutes of 4/6/17, 3/29/17, 3/8/17, 2/15/17
- 15.2.2. Current Flyer
Mary Brolin reported that a report and recommendations will be brought to June 8 School Committee meeting. Paul Murphy thanked all involved and said that the forum presentations were excellent.
- 15.3. ABRSD Building Committee (due 6/2/17 to MSBA)
- 15.3.1. Recommendation to Approve the Composition and Voting Status of the School Building Committee – Second Read – **VOTE** – *Kristina Rychlik*
Kristina Rychlik agreed to chair the School Building Committee. She explained the list of proposed members' names memo and explained that after the vote, they would be sent to the MSBA.

Paul Murphy moved, Katie Neville seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the Composition and Voting Status of the School Building Committee as proposed.

16. Subcommittee Reports

- 16.1. Budget – *Kristina Rychlik (have not met since last time)*
- 16.2. Policy
- 16.2.1. Memorials Policy (new), File: FFA – Second Read - **VOTE** – *Dawn Bentley*
(Deanne O'Sullivan left at 10:00 p.m.)
Mary Brolin moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the new Memorials Policy as proposed.
- 16.2.2. Naming District Facilities (revision), File: FF – Second Read - **VOTE** – *Dawn Bentley*
- 16.2.2.1. With revised procedures, File: FF-R
Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously
VOTED: to approve the Naming District Facilities policy revision as proposed.
- 16.2.3. Sustainability Policy (new) – Second Read – **VOTE** – *Brigid Bieber*
(*Due to the late hour, this item was taken out of order. Also, Kristina Rychlik filed a conflict of interest form before the last meeting because her daughter was involved with this policy proposal.*)
Diane Baum said she is looking ahead to some procedures that would flow from this policy, she highlighted some of her concerns.

Mary Brolin moved to approve the new Sustainability Policy as proposed.

In response to a question, High School students Anna Rychlik and Chantal Raquin described some of the research they did with the Acton Water Department that contributed to part of this new policy. A member of the public stated that he has concerns about Acton's water quality. JD Head replied that the district tests the water extensively and he believes it is "excellent". Eileen Zhang complimented the girls on their great idea for a project but she also wants to see the sugary drinks go away. Buying a bottle of water is really convenient sometimes, so she will vote no. Brigid Bieber reminded the committee that this policy was not only about bottled water.

Paul Murphy seconded the motion and it was,

VOTED: to approve the new Sustainability policy as proposed.

(YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Murphy, Neville, Rychlik NO: Zhang)

16.2.4. Student Activity Accounts, File: JJF – Second Read – **VOTE** – *Brigid Bieber*
Paul Murphy moved, Diane Baum seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to approve the Student Activity Accounts policy revision as proposed.

16.2.5. FYI: Revision of Use of Facilities Procedures, File: KF-R

16.2.6. Homework Policy, File: IKB – *revision coming soon* – *Brigid Bieber (oral)*
Homework has been discussed a lot and the policy sub will be looking at this at their next meeting.

16.3. Outreach (including PTO Co-chairs) – April 2017 Update - *Kristina Rychlik (next meeting)*
This subcommittee has not met recently. One or two more updates should be coming out.

17. School Committee Member Reports

17.1. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)

Mary Brolin reported that the fund is still looking very favorable. They voted no increase for FY18.

17.2. Acton Board of Selectmen

Eileen Zhang reported that Katie Green will continue to be the School Committee rep.

17.3. Minuteman Technical High School (MMT) Update

Diane Baum reported that for a second year, MMT won a \$490,000 grant to be put toward a program, including girls and STEM.

18. FY18 ABRSC Summer Workshop and August Business Meeting–

18.1. Addition of meeting on Thursday, April 12?

It was the sense of the Committee that adding this meeting was a good idea.

18.2. FY18 ABRSC Meetings with proposed dates added – Second Read - **VOTE**

This will be discussed at the next meeting.

19. Superintendent’s Report/Updates – *Glenn Brand*

19.1. Superintendent’s 2016-2017 End of Year Goals Report

Due to the late hour, this will be done at the June 8th School Committee meeting.

19.2. Interschool Council meeting on May 10 (oral)

19.3. Start Time Committee (oral)

A presentation will be done at next meeting on 6/8/17. 2500 responses were received.

19.4. Website Accessibility

19.4.1. Memo

19.4.2. OCR Complaint Letter

19.4.3. Education Week article

Dawn Bentley and Amy Bisiewicz are working on this. They will bring a revision to the policy subcommittee soon. An audit will be completed in about 12-14 months. Dawn mentioned some of the technology that may be used including Chromevox which is a screen reader. One test of accessibility is to try to navigate it just using a keyboard and not a mouse. This is pretty much impossible for most of our web pages. Another large area to upgrade are pictures that don’t have tags on them. This will create challenges around training in the future, and there is a large cost to what we will need to do. Dawn explained that money had been put aside for scanning special education documents and some of that will be used. Given that this is a civil rights complaint resolution, it takes priority. The audit alone will cost \$20,000 - \$30,000.

19.5. Central Office Relocation / CASE Colbrook (oral) – *(passed over due to time)*

20. Annual Superintendent’s Evaluation Process– *(passed over)*

21. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

21.1. Discipline Reports, 5/1/17

- 21.2. Monthly Student Enrollment, 5/1/17
- 21.3. Emergent Bilingual Student Population by School, 5/1/17
- 21.4. ABRSD Marquee Sign Update Memo, *Erin Bettez*
- 21.5. ABRSD Financial Reports as of 4/30/17
 - 21.5.1. Revenue vs Budget
 - 21.5.2. Expenses vs Budget
 - 21.5.3. Special Revenue
 - 21.5.4. Grants
- 21.6. Challenge Success Newsletter
 - 21.6.1. From ABRSD
 - 21.6.2. From Challenge Success
- 21.7. Schedule for Last Day of School, Thursday, June 22, 2017
- 21.8. Leary Field Project Summer Schedule memo, Erin Bettez, 5/15/17
- 21.9. Family Learning Series Presentations:
 - 21.9.1. May 31, 2017, 7:00 - 8:30 PM
 - Presenter: Dr. Anthony Rao
 - Topic: *Getting to Manhood: Raising Boys to Succeed*
 - Audience: Grades PK-12
 - Location: High School Auditorium

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, list of warrants

NEXT MEETINGS:

- NEW: Wednesday, May 24 at 7:30 p.m. in the Jr High Library – “Next Steps”
- June 8 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (material posted June 2)
- June 22 – ABRSC Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library (material posted June 16)