

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 3/19/15)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

February 26, 2015
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, , Maya Minkin, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons, Clare Jeannotte, Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order by Chairwoman Kristina Rychlik at 7:00 p.m.

2. **Chairmen’s Introduction**

ABRHS students from Speech and Debate Team, including Carolyn Zhou and Vrinda Agarwal - Lincoln Douglas Debate, Joonha Lee and Daniel Bamfo - Public Forum Debate, Rupayan Neogy, Rea Savla and Vennela Pandaraboyina – Speech, Shaurya Shetty, Abhishek Kumar - Congressional Debate teams. Each student shared why they decided to do Speech and Debate. Responses included that debate helps a student become a confident speaker and do research and that these skills can help get a job. This is one of AB’s biggest and fastest growing groups. Everyone was invited to the tournament being hosted by ABRHS on April 11. Advisor Mrs. Susan Hennessey was thanked for her dedication to the team.

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

The minutes of School Committee Meetings on: 1/31/15, 1/22/15, 1/8/15, 12/11/14, 10/16/14, 9/18/14 and 9/4/14 were approved as written. There were no warrants.

4. **Public Participation - none**

5. **State Representative Jennifer Benson Presentation**

Rep. Benson gave an informative talk on the Chapter 70 Funding Formula including implications for Special Education Funding using slides from DESE’s Melissa King and Roger Hatch dated 10/9/14. The Committee discussed the need to use all of the real data that is now collected and available to test and revise the assumptions used in the formula. Rep. Benson agreed. She encouraged the Committee and the public to tell the legislature that the funding is not being done correctly and to bring our own towns’ data analysis as an example. The Committee discussed, “What are we fundamentally asking the state to reimburse?” Mary Brolin asked if changing the formula would increase the pot of money, noting that we are not looking for more money at the expense of another community right now. Rep Benson stated that everyone will acknowledge that the current formula is flawed but there is a fear because legislators know that it cannot be fully funded. Chapter 70 is the biggest single line item in the state budget and it is the only one that continues to go up year to year.

6. **K-12 Mathematics Presentation**

Deborah Bookis introduced Heather Haines, Phil Stameris, Bill Noeth and Jess Janus who shared their experiences teaching mathematics to our K-12 students. They described working on: professional learning for elementary teachers on new programs, exploring instructional materials for the Junior High, furthering

understanding of shifts in the MA Curriculum Frameworks, and learning to incorporate the mathematical practices.

The Committee asked, “With so many different math programs in our elementary schools, what are the costs associated with using all these different programs, and the redundancy of the work load?” Heather explained that all of the schools follow the MA frameworks - all 3rd grades start with addition and subtraction. Many line up the same, but not all. Deborah Bookis stated that there certainly are start up costs for new programs, but the consumables are very much the same. Dennis Bruce noted that the superintendent’s entry plan findings found concerns about efficiency and consistency. He asked if we have this in the math curriculum, because it seems like we are always trying out math programs. Mary Brolin noted that there is some benefit to teachers in a school coming together and deciding what’s best for them to use, it is empowering to the teachers and makes them excited to teach it. Paul Murphy likes the diversity of the different programs. He believes the goal of education is not to be efficient; it is to educate the students. Brigid Bieber appreciated the presentation going step by step through the grades of what is being taught and concluded that the “staff is doing an amazing job teaching math.”

7. Superintendent Entry Plan Report

Dr. Brand reported on his Entry Plan findings after months of talking with community members. He does not necessarily see these things as problems that need to be fixed, but topics to be considered. He needs to explore these findings more deeply with the Administration, community, staff and others. Kristina Rychlik stated that the meeting was not the time to delve into these issues, but she commended Glenn for the detail that shared. Dennis Bruce suggested trying to address the highest ranking topics first, not everything that came up. He noted slide 31, “Multiple views believe that elementary schools throughout the District are not resourced equally.” Glenn elaborated that this involves levels of fundraising and how assistants are funded, some schools running their own community education programs, etc. A discrepancy was noted between Slide 14 – a strength is attending to the emotional well being of students and staff, compared to the many comments about student stress and anxiety. Glenn explained that while we have been working on this issue for a long time, it is still not at the level that people feel is satisfactory yet and it has a lot of people’s attention. One member stated that ultimately, the Superintendent will be judged on how he deals with all of this information.

8. Leadership Search Update – Marie Altieri

1. Athletic Director
Three finalists are scheduled to visit ABRSD. Wednesday evening is a community forum to meet all three candidates. Visits will be done to the 3 sites the next week and then Glenn will make the decision.
2. Pupil Services Director
This search process has just begun with the first meeting held yesterday. 25 applications were received with 18 or 19 complete. Interviews will be the week of March 9, the week of March 16 finalists will visit AB, and a decision is anticipated toward the end of March. Andrew Shen is leading this search.

9. Recommendation to Approve ABRHS Trip to Spain, April 2016 – Brigid Bieber moved, Maria Neyland seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED:** to approve the trip as proposed.

10. ABRSD FY16 Budget Update

1. There has been no change to FY16 Table 6, since the Final Assessment voted on 2/12/15.

2. Health Insurance Rates were voted on 2/19/15. Plans for active employees will go up 11% instead of 8%, but due to EGWP adoption, rates for retirees will go down and will offset it. No net change to the budget.
3. Presentation to Boxborough Selectmen and Finance Committee was done on 2/23/15.

The Acton Fincom will vote on the Acton assessment on 3/3/15. Kristina Rychlik will present the FY16 Budget and Assessment to the Acton Board of Selectmen at their meeting on 3/9/15 and ask for their support.

11. **Review of New England Association of School (NEASC) Response**

1. Memo from Dr. Brand, 2/23/15
2. Background including letter from ABRSD and others, 3/8/13

NEASC is being asked by many communities to reconsider their process for reviewing public secondary schools. The Superintendent asked for School Committee's support of staying in a holding pattern on this issue because ABRHS is coming up to their five year point when a new review would be due. Glenn will find out what the down side of taking this position is, but the Committee agreed that he could formalize AB's "hold" position with NEASC at this time.

12. **Subcommittee Updates**

1. **Negotiations** – Approval of new member – **VOTE** – *Kristina Rychlik*
Dennis Bruce moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: that Amy Krishnamurthy join the Negotiations Subcommittee.
2. **Policy** –
 - i. Curriculum and Instructional Material, File: IGA - FIRST READING – Maria Neyland (combining policies IGA, IGD, IJ, IJJ and IJK)

13. **School Committee Member Reports**

1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – The group discussed projected out years' budgets. Town of Acton is dealing with a \$600,000 shortfall that they will cover within their budget.
2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) – The group reviewed preliminary budget numbers on the expense side. They continued discussion about the Superintendent's budget presentation, and Minuteman Tech.
3. Health Insurance Trust (HIT)– Mike Gowing was thanked for his years of service.
4. Acton Finance Committee – The budgets, PAYT and outlying years were discussed.
5. Acton Board of Selectmen - *The Town Meeting warrant, worksheet and order of items was discussed.*
6. Acton-Boxborough SpedPAC – Paul Murphy reported that they met last night. There is concern about communication and clarity regarding Pupil Services. There is hope for improvement with the new Director starting July 1st. March 10 is a new parent support group at West Concord Library. SpedPAC is doing a survey.
7. Boxborough Finance Committee- It is not clear when they will vote the assessment.
8. Boxborough Board of Selectmen – Brigid Bieber noted that the BOS in Boxborough does not vote an opinion on the assessment.
9. Joint PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs – Deanne O'Sullivan reported that they met last night and she went through FY16 Budget slides. A statement will be created for all schools to use regarding the upcoming Town Meetings and the budget/assessments. Three groups have come together to organize the babysitting this year for Acton Town Meeting's first two nights. The Town of Acton will pay the license fee for the movies. A flyer will be included in the warrant.

14. Acton and Boxborough Local Elections

Three people are running for two positions: Deanne O'Sullivan, Frances Cook and Diane Baum. March 19 is a League of Women Voters' Candidates Night, which unfortunately is the same night as the School Committee meeting.

15. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Brand reported that Thursday, June 25, 2015 is the last day of school now due to 4 snow days. A Community Forum for the ABRSD Athletic Director Finalists will be held on March 4th. The JH Musical, "Once on this Island" opens tomorrow night.

The ABRSC adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda