

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Minutes (approved 3/30/15)

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

March 19, 2015
7:30 p.m. Executive Session
8:00 p.m. Open Business Meeting

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Michael Coppolino, Amy Krishnamurthy, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik
Members Absent: Dennis Bruce, Maya Minkin, Maria Neyland
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis (8:00), Glenn Brand, Mary Emmons (8:00), Clare Jeannotte (8:00), Beth Petr

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Kristina Rychlik, Chairperson.

1. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 7:30 p.m., it was moved, seconded and unanimously,
VOTED by roll call: to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation
(YES – Bieber, Brolin, Coppolino, Krishnamurthy, Murphy, Neville, O’Sullivan, Rychlik)

Kristina Rychlik stated that an open meeting might have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board and they would return to Open Meeting at 8:00 p.m.

2. **OPEN MEETING**

At 8:00 p.m., the ABRSC returned to Open Meeting.

3. **Chairmen’s Introduction** – Kristina Rychlik described the 20 Year Chair Ceremony held last night as a wonderful example of the camaraderie and friendships that develop among our staff members. She thanked the ABEA for sponsoring this annual event.

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

Warrants #15-017 dated 2/19/15 in the amount of \$3,279,790.19, #15-018 dated 3/5/15 in the amount of \$3,323,522.16 and #15-019 dated 3/19/15 in the amount of \$3,886,887.11 were signed by members of the Committee.
Meeting Minutes of 2/5/15, 2/12/15, 2/26/15 were approved as amended.

5. **Public Participation** - none

6. **ABRHS Professional Learning Update and 2015-2016 Midyear Pilot**

ABRHS Principal JoAnn Campbell, Associate Principal Beth Baker and Science Regional Department Leader David Palmer presented on a three year initiative at the High School that began in 2013-2014. The goal was to understand the challenges students and families face related to mental health and learning. A guiding question was “How do we put our students’ well-being at the center of what we do while maintaining our academic standards?” A Midyear Exam pilot is planned for 2015-2016 that would have all midyears given the week of January 19, 2016 and special schedules. Rationale for this change includes: equity, mitigating stress, offering timely instructional feedback and aligning curricular work with course objectives.

Starting next year, the parent community will be engaged by partnering closely with the PTSO. The administration recognizes that the role of families in the community is essential. Dr. Campbell emphasized that this is a pilot and will be evaluated at the end. Students have been asked for feedback.

Brigid thanked the presenters and said that they might hear concern about students having more tests. She loved that the PTSO and parent/guardians were going to be involved. Mary Brolin is very concerned about having a whole week of tests, instead of just a couple of midyear exams. She stated that currently there are rules about no homework during testing time and it is not enforced. She wants to be sure it is enforced in this case.

Amy Krishnamurthy agreed with Brigid that having exams before the winter break would be much better because students will be so worried about studying during the break. Mike Coppolino agreed with the pilot and having a midyear week. All staff will know not to assign anything during that week. Paul Murphy agreed and liked that the administration is trying something new. Deanne O'Sullivan liked that having midterms means students do not have to remember a year's worth of material. Dr. Brand also appreciated that the staff has put a lot of thought into this pilot.

7. **Curriculum Presentation: Elementary Literacy Overview**

Deborah Bookis and K-6 Social Studies and Literacy Curriculum Specialist Sharon Ryan presented on how literacy is taught in our district. See slides. They asked the Committee to analyze a poem and talk about how each person understands text differently. Deborah explained that students are encouraged to think about a story while they are reading, not just waiting until the end. Sharon shared her "ABRSD Literacy Newsletter" from March 2015. This publication goes out to PreK – Grade 6 staff. Family and community literacy engagement, how to weave literacy into things that families do together, is something that is very special to Sharon and evident in all of our schools. Brigid Bieber complimented Sharon on her enthusiasm for her work and her presentation.

8. **Superintendent's Midcycle Review**

1. DESE Model Evaluation Process for Superintendents
2. Progress Report and Goals Update

Kristina Rychlik described the five step cycle of continuous improvement being used. Steps include:

1. Self-Assessment
2. Analysis, Goal Setting and Plan development
3. Plan Implementation and Collection of Evidence
4. Mid-Cycle Goals review – *for discussion tonight*
5. End of Cycle and Summative Evaluation Reports

The goal was to review and discuss Dr. Brand's progress report and evidence. Kristina asked the Committee to provide relevant feedback, ask questions, and make sure they have a clear understanding of progress being made on each goal. Dr. Brand reviewed his reflections on the year so far. He noted that some activities have taken longer than he expected.

Mary Brolin appreciated the material stating that it gives her a lot of information that provides a foundation to write a meaningful evaluation. She pointed out that when working on the goals, other things enrich it. Considering a student learning goal- the sign of a good leader is that when he/she sees productive work from the staff, he/she highlights it. She will add all of this into her summative evaluation. Regarding regionalization, Mary appreciated when Dana Labb presented at School Committee about how it was going at Blanchard. This was very valuable.

Michael Coppolino was thoroughly impressed by Dr. Brand's report. He asked for a more measurable focus on the student learning goal to the extent that the Superintendent has or will put initiatives in place. He would like achievements to be more measurable. He asked for more focus on improvements (such as in special education and ELL) in general student achievement.

Paul Murphy confirmed that the New Superintendent Induction Program is a 3 year program. He echoed Michael's comment about the importance of establishing measurable goals.

Brigid Bieber thought what Dr. Brand put together was great, especially for his first year. She looks forward to seeing what he does next year. Regarding the format being used, she pointed out that a person is measured on the specific goals, but there is nowhere to talk about the day to day regular job and duties. This format makes it awkward to find a spot to comment on the routine performance of the job.

Kristina Rychlik agreed. A lot of what she thinks about Dr. Brand doing, does not fit into the goals. She wondered if there could be a general management goal. Marie Altieri explained that when the Committee does the summative evaluation and report in May and June, they will look at all of the elements as well as the goals together. The Midcycle review/goals reflection is far less formal, and it could be changed to be more flexible next year.

Kristina stated that regarding the first reflections of Goal 1, a delay is understandable given all of the work being done. She thanked Coach Perry Davis for his efforts. Under the regionalization goal, she feels the status is very Blanchard focused. She said that Dr. Brand should be aware of integration issues for all of the schools, not just Blanchard.

When asked if there will be new goals next year, Dr. Brand stated that some goals might continue into the new year, and new goals could also be developed.

Kristina summarized for the Committee that while they shared some comments and questions, there seems to be no real concerns. She encouraged Dr. Brand to "continue on the path that he is on."

9. Leadership Search Update

Dr. Brand described the two search processes. He emphasized how hard it is for all school districts to find leadership candidates. There is a short window of time for districts to look for candidates and run searches. If a window of time is missed, the best candidates are gone. If it is late in the school year, a candidate may be hesitant to leave their district because it leaves that district in a tough position to find a replacement.

1. ABRSD Athletic Director - Steven Martin was recently named the new Athletic Director. Three full days were spent with the three finalists visiting AB. The Athletic Leadership Group of students was very enthusiastic about Mr. Martin. One hundred and twenty written feedback forms were turned in on all three candidates.
2. Pupil Services Director – Marie Altieri agreed with Dr. Brand about the urgency of this search. Marie thanked Andrew Shen for leading the process to this point. Pupil Services leadership is one of the hardest to fill. There were 18 candidates and six were interviewed. Three finalists were selected and one just pulled out, leaving two. She reminded everyone that the Community Forum to meet them is Monday evening.

10. **ABRSD FY16 Budget Update**– *Glenn Brand*

Clare Jeannotte distributed an update of FY16 funding sources. There are still some moving parts to the governor’s budget and this information was not available the last time the School Committee met. These numbers will not be incorporated into the latest version of the budget. The regional transportation rate was just announced at 63%.

Paul Murphy asked if for FY16, the district is projected to be down \$139,220. Clare confirmed that number, but depending on what happens with the house budget and senate, that could change. She suggested that rather than try to amend it, the Committee should wait. Regional bonus aid would be something to advocate for because ABRSD is one of the few regions that it affects significantly. Mary Brolin will draft a letter of support/advocacy for this from the Committee.

11. **Review of FY15 School Committee Leadership Structure** (1 Chair, 2 Vice-Chairs) – Kristina Rychlik

1. Original School Committee Annual Organizational Meeting policy, File: BDA
2. Original School Committee Officers policy, File: BDB

Kristina reviewed the Committee’s discussion last year and asked the members if they wanted to continue having a Vice Chair from Acton and a Vice Chair from Boxborough. (Copies of her letter were on the table.) Brigid thought it was helpful for each town to have a consistent face beside the Chairperson. Kristina said that it was helpful to her as Chairperson, but she could have delegated more to the Acton Vice Chair. Her real concern is that it does not allow for succession planning for leadership. Mary Brolin noted that if succession planning is agreed on, there has to be some flexibility built in because the future is unpredictable for people.

The School Committee agreed that policy BDA should go to the policy subcommittee for review.

12. **Subcommittee Updates**

1. Negotiations
Marie Altieri reported that the Negotiations subcommittee met with some members of the Acton-Boxborough Education Association (ABEA) to discuss salary scales prior to the next negotiation round.
2. Budget
Kristina reported that they met on 3/4/15 and Erin Bettez reported on Facilities usage. A sub group is being formed to review this including Brigid Bieber and JD Head.
3. Policy
 - i. Curriculum and Instructional Material, File: IGA - SECOND READING – **VOTE** - Maria Neyland (combining policies IGA, IGD, IJ, IJJ and IJK)
Michael Coppolino asked why the parent feedback part of this policy was deleted. Deborah Bookis said it was included before the frameworks that we now have determine what is taught. Parent feedback has not been part of this in recent years. Mary Brolin moved, Kathleen Neville seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve Policy IGA as proposed.

13. **School Committee Member Reports**

1. Acton Board of Selectmen – *Paul Murphy*
The Board voted 4 – 0 to support the ABRSD budget.
2. Boxborough Finance Committee- *Maria Neyland*
The Boxborough School Committee members presented the FY16 budget at Fincom and it all seems favorable. The Fincom has not voted on it yet.

3. Joint PTO/PTSO/PTF Co-Chairs – *Deanne O’Sullivan*

The next meeting is 3/25/15. Deborah Bookis and JD Head will come and speak about the Play Spaces that are on Acton’s Community Preservation Committee list for approval at Acton Town Meeting.

14. **Acton and Boxborough Local Elections** – *Kristina Rychlik*

The League of Women Voters’ Candidates night was held just prior to this meeting.

15. **Superintendent’s Report** – *Glenn Brand*

The Superintendent gave an Acton Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Update. The district asked for funding for 4 outdoor play spaces at \$131,900 and the CPC recommended funding a \$120,000 proposal for Acton Town Meeting. Boxborough just became a CPC town and the school district will pursue that funding next year.

16. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

1. USDA and DESE Visit ABRHS Cafeteria to Celebrate National School Breakfast Week - Dr. Brand and Marie Altieri enjoyed breakfast at the High School with these representatives when they visited with Food Services Director Kirsten Nelson, Cafeteria Manager Heidi Conley and the Cafeteria staff.
2. *Dr. Jeffrey Bostic on Mental Health Issues in Children & Teens, 4/7/15, JH Auditorium, Cosponsored by AB SpedPAC and ABRSD Pupil Services Department*
3. Dr. Brand stated that he has not forgotten about the interest around sleep/health and wellbeing and their relationship to school start times. He will move forward with a task force very soon. He took feedback regarding the size of the group and who will be part of it.

Mike Coppolino thanked Clare Jeannotte and Dr. Brand for the revolving fund monthly accounting and the transparency that it shows. He has never seen this included in the packet before and appreciates it.

The ABRSC was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda

NEXT MEETINGS:

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meetings – *start 7:00 p.m. in the Jr High Library*

- 3/30/15 (*change from 3/26/15*)
- 5/7/15

Acton Town Meeting begins April 6, 2015.

Boxborough Town Meeting begins May 11, 2015.