

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING
Approved Minutes

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School

Tuesday, August 1, 2017
6:15 p.m. Open Meeting
10:00 p.m. (approximate) Executive Session

Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Deanne O’Sullivan (6:20 p.m.), Tessa McKinley, Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Kristina Rychlik, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin
Others: Beth Petr

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 6:17 p.m. by Vice Chair Brigid Bieber who was chairing the meeting in Amy Krishnamurthy’s absence. She announced that the meeting was being taped.
2. **Chairman’s Introduction – Brigid Bieber**
 - 2.1. Disclosure of Appearance of Conflict of Interest Forms
<http://www.mass.gov/ethics/disclosure-forms/>
Disclosure of Appearance of Conflict of Interest Forms were submitted by Paul Murphy (who also did one for the Interim Superintendent Search Subcommittee), Kristina Rychlik, Brigid Bieber and Mary Brolin, because Marie Altieri was a finalist. Karen Sonner and Dawn Bentley also filed them for the Interim Superintendent Search Subcommittee. Disclosure by Non-elected Municipal Employee of Financial Interest and Determination by Appointing Authority Forms were received from David Krane, Karen Sonner, and Dawn Bentley for the Interim Superintendent Search Subcommittee.
3. **Statement of Warrants – Brigid Bieber** read the warrants and they were signed by the Committee. See list.
4. **Interim Superintendent Finalist Interviews – Brigid Bieber**
Brigid Bieber reviewed the process. School Committee members reviewed the five interview questions and volunteered to ask them. Follow up questions for each candidate may be asked if there is time. Deanne O’Sullivan would be the timekeeper. Each candidate would be given 2 minutes for a final statement.

- 6:30 Interview with Ms. Marie Altieri

Ms. Altieri described herself as a collaborative listener and consensus builder with a varied background of experiences. She has extensive building committee experience from the last projects in the district, as well as knowledge of the budget and school state funding process due to participation with a coalition to increase that funding a few years ago. She has learned a tremendous amount from the three superintendents that she has worked for. She stressed the need for stability right now and noted that there is a great leadership team in place.

Ms. Altieri has been involved in creating two Long Range Strategic Plans for the district and each one took a big step forward to prioritize student wellness and helping kids find balance.

Setting the values of wellness, equity and engagement helps to define success not in just one venue, but in many areas (athletic, performing, etc.) Ms. Altieri spoke about encouraging all young people to find a passion and be excited about learning because this will keep them going once they leave our schools.

Increasing communication with all constituent groups is something that she is very excited about. She spoke about the need to reach out to all groups regularly to keep them informed about what is being done, not just when there is something urgent or needed. This is about building relationships and knowing what each other values. Twitter, facebook, blogs, and newsletters are all mechanisms.

Ms. Altieri referred to the cultural shift within our classrooms and community. Students are much more diverse now with many more English language learners. Teachers and administrators must study these new needs and adjust. AB's revised homework policy is a good example of this.

Assistant funding at the elementary school was given as an example of Ms. Altieri's leadership. She has been involved in the district for about 20 years. Five years ago dialogue began about this topic and she recognized that it is both a detailed issue and a big picture issue. She looked for solutions that would bring people to the table and make it work. Building principals were key and she brought them together to find a solution for all 6 schools, keeping in mind their interests, needs and values. This issue came to the School Committee meeting in June. She has led the district to solutions repeatedly including the Health Insurance Working Group which was a political issue involving 8 unions and much disagreement. This resulted in major cost savings for the town of Acton and the AB schools.

Ms. Altieri noted that the District is doing an equity audit which will lead into MTSS (Multi-tiered System of Support). This will include discussion of equity and cultural and socio economic standing. Regarding the role of transparency and trust building, she said that the district must be as transparent as possible but still protect student and staff rights. She feels that she has built very strong bridges in our community, including serving on the Acton Leadership Group (ALG) for 10-12 years, and successfully negotiating many contracts.

When asked about priority setting, and the many initiatives the district is currently involved in, Ms. Altieri said that timelines and deliverables are needed for the top priorities. The pace of change is critical – not too fast and not too slow. She is committed to implementing the work of the district and the community.

- 7:45 Interview with Mr. Bill McAlduff

Mr. McAlduff also described himself as a collaborative leader who encourages feedback and input from the various constituencies – parents, students, staff and community members, to build consensus around key decisions and recommendations that need to be made. He is not a micro-manager. He lets people do their jobs. He learns something new every day and said that that's what makes his work exciting. Given his varied experience in regional and high performing districts, he believes he has the best background. Although he is technically retired, he feels that AB would be a great opportunity.

Mr. McAlduff manages priority setting and implements change by being honest and open in all communication and dealings. Regarding district priorities, as an interim, he feels it is very

straightforward that the School Committee's priorities for this year are his priorities because the district sets the agenda.

Mr. McAlduff's focus would be on developing strong positive relationships. No matter what the issue, there is always some positive to be viewed. Trust is the key to moving forward. Five years ago, Winchester was opening a new elementary school and a complete elementary redistricting was needed. The majority of parents liked their existing school. He led the redistricting committee for 15 months including many community meetings and 16 redistricting plans that all had issues. Using this open and transparent process, a plan was brought to the School Committee and most parents supported it. The trust and integrity that he brought to this process made the plan work.

At Winchester High School, parents felt that students were under too much stress. They were beginning a new MSBA building project, so Mr. McAlduff created a task force with these parents to address these issues. By resetting the culture of the building, a new strategic plan was developed that drove how the new High School was designed. He was also Interim Superintendent at Dover Sherborn for 2 years during their Challenge Success initiative.

Managing social media is a challenge for school districts although the opportunity it provides to communicate is great. Mr. McAlduff would rely on our leadership and technical staff to advise him on the best use of social media and what is currently available to effectively communicate with the community. He noted that it is important however to realize that sometimes too much communication will cause the community ignore it. When there is an important communication it needs to be paid attention to.

As an interim superintendent, the CEO of the district, Mr. McAlduff said the job is to be sure all of the everyday procedures and requirements are being followed, including compliance and reporting. Everything that normally should be done must get done. Secondly, he would work with all of the key stakeholders to ensure that the interim year is not one where the district stands still. Priorities have been set here and he will not suggest changes simply because it is how another district does things. Once a permanent superintendent is named, an interim must work closely to ensure a smooth transition and that the permanent person is ready to go. If changes are needed during the year, however, the interim should advocate as appropriate, for solutions.

When asked what his biggest challenge at AB would be, Mr. McAlduff replied that anyone would have the challenge of getting up to speed quickly and developing good relationships with the people they have to work with. The upcoming building project has key milestones that the district will need to meet and although he has had significant experience with this, he needs to learn about AB's specific plans. He shared his experience with the Winchester High School project and the King Philip Regional community where an override passed by a large amount. The school start time initiative is something that he has not gone through, although he has been paying close attention to other districts considering this.

5. 9:00 **School Committee Discussion and Deliberation**

Brigid Bieber thanked the Screening Committee for a great job. Mary Brolin described the very positive reference checks that she and Diane Baum did for both finalists. The summaries were read.

Tessa McKinley summarized the discussion that she had with the Senior Leadership Team regarding the finalists. The conclusion was that both finalists have many strengths.

School Committee members agreed that Ms. Altieri and Mr. McAlduff were both very strong candidates. Comments included:

- An external person could bring an objective view to the anger in the community and new ideas. An internal person would bring familiarity with the system, larger community, politics, initiatives and priorities. Mr. McAlduff could draw on Ms. Altieri if he was in the position.
- Would Ms. Altieri end up doing a lot of the superintendent work if Mr. McAlduff becomes the interim? She has trained two superintendents already.
- There is a great leadership team in place to support whoever is appointed.
- Mr. McAlduff's experience with the MSBA process is very important, although Ms. Altieri has also had significant successful building project experience in our district, and has played a key role on the current Building Committee.
- Is the stability of an internal person and one less transition something to consider with a new Finance Director and new High School Principal in place?
- Communication skills and transparency are crucial.
- One member felt an outsider as an interim could calm the community, but another member felt this was not a compelling enough reason, given Ms. Altieri's experience and strengths. Would hiring her be a risk given that she has never been a superintendent before? On the other hand, she knows our community's expectations exceedingly well.
- One member felt the best way to win approval for the new building project would be with an experienced outsider as superintendent. Bill has this experience. Another member disagreed saying that she would be more confident about success knowing the Marie has been involved and would be leading the district.
- Some committee members expressed fear of losing Ms. Altieri if she were not given the position as she clearly wants to be Superintendent and may go elsewhere. It was agreed that that was not a good reason for making the decision.

Comments from the Public:

Amanda Bailey spoke as the AB Special Education PAC Chair, and noted that she had not heard any mention of students with disabilities or any of their issues. Inclusion takes vision. She emphasized that AB is not a K-12 district, but a preK to age 22. A homeowner spoke asking for "good solid decisions about stability" and saying that these choices have big ramifications and referring to the community's concerns, "we are not going away". Jon Benson stated that the success of prior building projects and overrides has been due to the confidence the community has in the School Committee and that should be kept in mind. This decision is only about an interim superintendent that will work for 10 months for the district. Former School Committee member Xuan Kong urged the Committee to make their decision based on what is right for the district, not what is fair to a candidate. He said that their two main issues are the Building Project and conducting a robust permanent superintendent search.

Deanne O'Sullivan moved to appoint the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Interim Superintendent, subject to successful contract negotiations and satisfactory results of final background checks, to be William McAlduff. Eileen Zhang seconded the motion.

Tessa McKinley remarked that due to all of the discussion going on on the closed facebook page, she was feeling bullied into making a decision. She stated that Marie Altieri is 100 % qualified to be the Superintendent but Tessa does not want to be the focus of these posts. Brigid Bieber strongly urged members to ignore these comments, and stated that making a School Committee member feel intimidated is not the way to get people to do what you want.

The Committee voted on the motion:

FOR: Deanne O'Sullivan, Diane Baum, Paul Murphy and Eileen Zhang (4 Acton x 2.5 = 10 votes)

AGAINST: Mary Brolin, Tessa McKinley, Brigid Bieber, Katie Neville and Kristina Rychlik (4 Boxborough plus 1 Acton = 4 + 2.5 = 6.5 votes)

The motion was approved. All of the Committee members agreed that they would support Mr. McAlduff as the Interim Superintendent of the District.

BUSINESS

6. **Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB Soccer Boosters – VOTE** (*next meeting*)
7. **Recommendation to Accept Gifts from AB United Way – VOTE**
 - 7.1. To AB Community Education for children's scholarships
Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to Accept the Gift from AB United Way with gratitude to Bernadette Keegan and the United Way.
 - 7.2. United Way HealthyTeen Initiative Grant
 - 7.2.1. To AB Community Education Extended Day enhanced programming
Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to Accept this Gift from the United Way with gratitude.
 - 7.2.2. To the High School's AB Wellness Initiative : Because You Matter (*accepted 6/22/17*)
8. **Recommendation to Approve FY18 ABRSC Subcommittee Assignments – VOTE**
Diane Baum moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to Approve FY18 ABRSC Subcommittee Assignments as proposed.
This was based on the discussion held at the meeting on 7/11/17.
9. **Recommendation to Approve Letter of Support for Boxborough MassWorks Grant Application – VOTE** – *Brigid Bieber*
Mary Brolin moved, Paul Murphy seconded and it was unanimously
VOTED: to approve Letter of Support for Boxborough MassWorks Grant Application
10. **Open Meeting Law Complaints – Brigid Bieber**
 - 10.1. From Allen Nitschelm on 7/31/17 re 7/26/17 School Committee meeting
 - 10.2. From Allen Nitschelm on 8/1/17 re 4/26/17 Executive SessionBrigid Bieber read the details of the two Complaints that were received. They have been sent to Counsel for assistance with the response.
11. **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**
 - 11.1. ABR High School Leadership Announcement
 - 11.2. FY17 Schools Open, Back to School/Open House Dates, FY18 School Calendar
 - 11.3. FY17 Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting Dates

- 11.4. Family Financial Assistance Letter
- 11.5. Open Invitations for the Committee
 - 11.5.1. New Professional Staff Orientation Lunch on August 23rd at Jr High Cafeteria
 - 11.5.2. ABRSD Opening Day on August 30th at 8:00 a.m. at the High School

12. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 10:48 p.m., Brigid Bieber moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was,
VOTED by roll call: that an executive session be convened under M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.

(YES: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, O’Sullivan, McKinley, Murphy, Neville, Rychlik, Zhang)

Brigid stated that the Committee would return to Open Meeting for the sole purpose of adjourning.

The ABRSC returned to Open Meeting and adjourned at 11:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: see agenda, list of warrants

Next Meetings:

ABRSC, Thursday, August 24, 7:00 p.m. in the Junior High Library (packet posted August 18)
ABRSC, Sept 7, 7:00 p.m.