

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
Approved Minutes

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R.J. Grey Junior High School

August 23, 2018
7:00 p.m.
~~9:00 p.m. (approximately) Executive Session~~

Members Present: Michael Bo, Mary Brolin, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Tessa McKinley, Paul Murphy, Angie Tso, Eileen Zhang
Members Absent: Diane Baum, Amy Krishnamurthy, Maya Minkin
Others: Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Dawn Bentley, Peter Light, Beth Petr, Dave Verdolino

1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Paul Murphy, Vice Chairperson who ran the meeting in the Chairperson's absence.
2. **Chairman's Introduction**
3. **Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Light introduced his "Superintendent's Report" as another way to keep the community informed. These will be posted to the Superintendent's section of the website after each meeting. The start of school information will be emailed out to all families. Ed Tech Director Amy Bisiewicz was thanked for a tremendous job redesigning our school website. School Operations Director JD Head and the Transportation Department were thanked for a "herculean" job of reworking the bus routes for the new start times. The Facilities department as also praised for completing approximately \$1 million of capital improvements over the summer.

 - 3.1. Entry Plan Update

Mr. Light shared the final version of his Entry Plan. He appreciated the feedback he received on the High School profiles and the request that he review the School Improvement Plans, which he will do.
4. **Statement of Warrants & Approval of Minutes**

Paul Murphy read the warrant numbers of the documents being signed (see list).

 - 4.1. Minutes of July 16, 2018 Workshop Meeting

Tessa McKinley moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED**: to approve the minutes of the School Committee workshop on July 16, 2018 as written.
5. **Public Participation - none**

Per policy BEDH, members of the public may speak for up to 2 minutes on items not included on this agenda. Typically, the Committee/Administration will not respond to comments during public participation.
6. **FY19 Staffing Report – New Staff – Marie Altieri**

Marie Altieri reported that yesterday was New Professional Staff Orientation which is always very exciting. This year has been a big hiring year with 54 newly hired professional staff to date. Marie explained the complicated nature of looking at the number of positions as there are many ins and outs of people who have retired, left or switched jobs within the district. In

addition to professional staff, many support staff have been hired. Marie reported that the new staff fit within the existing FY19 budget. In fact given savings from teacher turnover the vacancy factor may be increased a bit next year.

Members asked if new positions were all approved as part of the FY19 budget process. Marie said that they were. Angie Tso noticed a total of ten Special Education teachers were added. Marie responded that many of those were replacing teachers who left the district. Michael Bo asked for more detail about the salary levels of the staff members who left. At the Chair's suggestion, Michael will email the Superintendent with his specific questions. A question was asked about how the annual budget is created. Marie explained the budget process and that this is when much of this type of detailed discussion takes place for the coming year. Marie will send Angie Tso a link to the Budget Saturday information about new staff numbers and categories approved in the budget. Marie will also speak with Eileen Zhang to answer her questions about the hiring process.

7. **Transportation Update – JD Head**

7.1. Superintendent's Transportation Letter

7.2. Frequently Asked Questions

JD Head updated the Committee on the significant transportation changes resulting from the changes in school start times. He is still looking for more bus drivers and has had some luck using the job site, Indeed.com. Cost is still trending under the \$750,000 budgeted. Routes have been published on the website. There is a strong focus on safety, student management and de-escalation strategies for this year.

Members asked about the very cold weather last winter and how some students waited outside for a long time when the busses didn't come. JD explained that this type of situation will be improved now because the district uses Bright Arrow to send targeted timely email/text/phone messages to different groups of families which will be very helpful. Prior to that, the only option was to call families' phones individually. The revised Transportation website was noted as very helpful. Angie Tso remembered a number of years ago when an absolute temperature was used to determine when elementary students could go out for recess. She asked if this could be done for transportation so parents would know if a bus would be delayed or school cancelled.

Mary Brolin asked if the parents from the two cul de sacs who spoke at a meeting last spring had their stops changed. JD said that the department determined again that they were safe stops so they have not been changed. Mr. Light explained that it was a broader issue than just cul de sacs. The district must ensure that every stop is safe. There had been a change about the cul de sacs, but the focus is safety and evaluating each stop for it. That has been done and this particular stop has been determined to be safe based on our evaluation including working with the local police for their professional opinion.

Mr. Light emphasized that the district works to be transparent about all of the transportation questions. One issue coming up now is the length of some bus rides. He is hearing concerns from some families who have a 45 minute bus ride and he empathizes with them. The Transfinder software is a very valuable tool that provides the shortest route available.

The elementary buses will also have many more children on them than in the past, which will make routes longer. The benefit to this issue is later start times for the Junior High and High School and a single schedule for all of the elementary schools that does not change year to year. This has been a goal for several years and will have a significant positive effect for

student learning and wellness. A member agreed but suggested that perhaps the transportation budget could be increased next year to improve the bus rides next year.

8. **Capital Projects Update – JD Head**

JD Head reported that the High School auditorium ceiling has just been replaced which was a large, badly needed project. Well over \$1 million of capital improvements have been completed this summer. Michael Bo asked about the projects that are not 100% done yet (see chart posted in the packet). He asked if going forward, phases of work for some large projects could be considered and included in the plans.

The early dismissal times for the High School and Junior High will be added to the School Schedule flyer as soon as they are confirmed.

9. **ABRSD Budget Update – Dave Verdolino**

9.1. FY18 Financial Status as of June 30, 2018 – Preliminary & Unaudited

Dave Verdolino reported similar overall annual results between FY18 and FY17 due in part to previous Finance Director Clare Jeannotte’s skillful budgeting. Dave suggested that perhaps with this safety net of good financial health, the district may be able to budget somewhat less conservatively in the future. The net surplus for FY18 was \$1,687,854 compared to FY17’s \$1,635,330 . The district could receive an additional \$100,000 - \$150,000 due to the Governor’s supplemental budget for FY18. Dave will keep the Committee posted on this.

Mary Brolin asked about the old transportation account and if some of the E&D funds (slide 5) could be moved to this type of account. Some of that funding could be used for another bus if it was decided that another one is needed next year. This funding might also be used to increase the OPEB contribution. Dave agreed that there are some strategic financial planning opportunities now that we are close to the E&D ceiling. It was clarified that the old transportation account was never actually funded. It was understood that there are some high priced needs in the district that could/should be addressed.

9.2. FY19 Budget Update

9.2.1. FY19 State Budget

Dave reported that all figures are looking positive right now. He projected a \$400,000 favorable variance to budget this year, although there are many variables. In response to a question, it was confirmed that there are two more years until the Lower Fields Agreement would result in more revenue to the district. Questions about the circuit breaker account will be addressed during the budget process that will begin this fall. Referring to the 2% variance from last year that looks similar for this year, Dave explained that historically, coming into regionalization, the district had small reserves and the previous Finance Director saw the need to budget conservatively which helped to build E&D by about \$1 million a year. This has been a trend for 4 straight years now.

9.3. Annual Recommendation to set the imprest balance of the 3 Student Activity checking accounts for FY19 – **VOTE**

Mary Brolin moved, Ginny Kremer seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to set the imprest balance of the Student Activity checking accounts for the 2018-2019 school year consistent with the prior year, as follows:

Senior High School	\$35,000
Junior High School	\$25,000

10. **Subcommittee Reports**

10.1. Recommendation to Approve FY19 Assignments and Subcommittee Members –

VOTE – *Paul Murphy*

Tessa McKinley moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the FY19 Assignments and Subcommittee members as proposed.

10.2. School Committee Operating Protocol Subcommittee Update

Mr. Light reported that members met for the first time on August 13, 2018 with the goal to make the protocols clearer. They met again on August 23rd and will share a draft for a First Read with the School Committee hopefully in September.

11. **School Building Committee Update – *Mary Brolin***

11.1. Designer Selection Update

The Superintendent described the process and announced that Arrowstreet Inc. was selected on August 7, 2018 as the Project Designer. Although all 3 firms were very well qualified, Arrowstreet was the most responsive to questions and had obviously done a lot of research on our culture and values as well as the different cultures of the schools. Feasibility work has now started focusing on the educational plan including visioning discussions, building on what was done before. The community will be involved. The Douglas building will be assessed, as well as Conant and Gates. JD Head brought Eversource representatives to the meeting and they are starting a new initiative, MassSAVES with many possible cost saving items. Eversource is interested in trying this with a school building, and MSBA, Skanska and Arrowstreet are all interested in working on this together. The website will be kept up to date with all pertinent information.

11.2. Building Committee Membership Update

11.2.1. Recommendation to Add Maya Minkin as a New Member - **VOTE**

Ginny Kremer moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to appoint Maya Minkin as a new member of the Building Committee. In addition to being a School Committee member, Maya has construction experience.

11.3. Determination by the School Committee of a Building Committee Member’s Disclosure of Financial Interest as Required by M.G.L. c. 268A, S.19 – **VOTE** -

Peter Light

The Committee gave serious consideration to Building Committee member, Katie Raymond’s submission of a Disclosure by Non-Elected Municipal Employee of Financial Interest and Determination by Appointing Authority Form as required by M.G.L. 268 s.19. Ms. Raymond filed this form because she is employed by Epsilon Associates, a subcontractor that will be performing work under Arrowstreet’s contract. Under Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.), this could be considered a conflict. An individual in this situation can either resign from the Committee or submit the disclosure form requesting that the appointing authority (the School Committee) decide if the information disclosed presents a significant conflict of interest that should prevent the individual from staying on a Committee. The Superintendent spoke with the Attorney General’s office and the District’s legal counsel on this question. Because the role of Epsilon is limited to working on environmental permitting and Ms. Raymond is an employee, not an owner or

partner, she has no financial interest in Arrowstreet. Ms. Raymond's supervisor has also agreed to excuse her from any work related to this project. For these reasons the Superintendent asked the School Committee to determine if a significant conflict exists. Mary Brolin noted that Ms. Raymond has been an extremely strong and valuable member of the Building Committee.

A member asked about the relationship between the Building Committee and the contractors. Mary Brolin replied that the Building Committee approves all payments so Epsilon will submit a bill to Arrowstreet and Arrowstreet will submit the bill to the Building Committee. Skanska oversees all of Arrowstreet's work for the district, beneath them is the architect, Arrowstreet and then under them are the subcontractors, including Epsilon.

Michael Bo felt that because the Building Committee supervises the Project Manager, there is an indirect conflict of interest. Mr. Light said that Ms. Raymond would be abstaining from any discussion or votes on environmental permitting. To get the same knowledge if Ms. Raymond left the Committee, another environmental engineer would have to be found to volunteer for the Building Committee. Michael expressed concern about the influence she still might have. It was pointed out that the Building Committee is a large one with many layers in between Ms. Raymond and her direct influence.

Ginny Kremer stated that the process set forth is very thorough and the district is benefitting from the volunteer services of a community member. Ginny works on issues like this in her profession and doesn't see a problem because Ms. Raymond will not directly benefit from her serving.

Ginny Kremer moved, Tessa McKinley seconded and it was

VOTED: As appointing officials, as required by G.L. chapter 268, section 19, we have reviewed this matter and the financial interest identified by Katie Raymond and determined that the financial interest is not so substantial as to be deemed likely to affect the integrity of the services which the School District may expect from Ms. Raymond as a Building Committee member. As a result, we authorize Paul Murphy, as School Committee Vice-Chairperson, to sign this Disclosure Form as the Appointing Authority.

(YES: Brolin, Klein, Kremer, McKinley, Murphy, Tso NO: Bo ABSTAINED: Zhang)

The motion passed.

Vice-Chairperson Paul Murphy signed as the Appointing Authority in the absence of the Chairperson.

- 11.4. Feasibility Study and Schematic Design Proposal from Arrowstreet, 8/20/18
- 11.5. Building Committee Minutes of Meeting on 7/2/18

12. School Committee Member Reports

- 12.1. Acton Leadership Group (ALG) – *Paul Murphy*
 - 12.1.1. DRAFT Minutes of June 28, 2018 (next meeting is September 26th)
Paul Murphy reported that this was an introductory meeting.
- 12.2. Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)
Mary Brolin reported that BLF met last night. A Special Town Meeting will be held on Sept 5 regarding two warrant articles involving marijuana sales.

13. **Recommendation to Accept Gifts to the School District – VOTE**

- 13.1. \$5,250 from Acton-Boxborough United Way for scholarships to Community Education’s Summer Day Program
- 13.2. \$4,000 from Danny’s Place Youth Services for Community Education’s Leader-in-Training Program

Tessa McKinley moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to accept these gifts with deep gratitude.

14. **FYI**

- 14.1. Superintendent’s Welcome Letter to Families, *August 2018*
 - 14.2. FY19 Schools Open, Back to School/Open House Dates, FY19 School Calendar
- It was emphasized that the schools all have new start times and bus schedules next month. It is critical that all families review the notices.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – The Superintendent stated there was no need for the executive session as the pending litigation had been resolved.

The ABRSC was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: See agenda, list of warrants