



## Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720

978-264-4700

[www.abschools.org](http://www.abschools.org)

**Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Meeting**

**August 22, 2023 Workshop Agenda at 4:00 pm**

**Albert J. Sargent Memorial Library, 427 Massachusetts Avenue, Boxborough, MA 01719**

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### SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP APPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Tori Campbell, Liz Fowlks, Lakshmi Kaja, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer (5:45), Vikram Parikh, Yanxin Schmidt, Andrew Schwartz, Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent: Ben Bloomenthal, Leela Ramachandran

Others: Peter Light, Sheri Matthews, Beth Petr, Andrew Shen, Dave Verdolino

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1. **CALL TO ORDER (4:00)**

Chairperson's Welcome - *Adam Klein*

The ABRSC was called to order at 4:11 p.m. by Chairperson Adam Klein.

Members did an ice breaker discussion to get to know each other better.

2. **REVENUES AND CH. 70 AID - *Dave Verdolino and Sheri Matthews***

Sheri reviewed her memo informing members that the vacancy factor (\$425,000) was erroneously double counted in the FY24 budget, due to the manner in which it was identified in the budget preparation process creating a \$425,000 personnel shortfall. The proposed solution is to close this gap by a combination of reducing personnel expenses and accounting for increases in state revenue since the budget was originally approved. The Committee will be asked to vote on this at their September 7th meeting.

Dave reviewed the two routes for the process used to fund the Regional School Budget. This can start with the target appropriation (in dollars or a percentage) or start with the target assessment (in dollars or a percentage). The appropriation is the legal amount that the Annual Town Meetings vote to spend. Because Acton is at its Prop 2-1/2 Levy Limit, it has limited means of funding most government operations – including A-B's assessment. As a result, in recent years, the District's budget development has used the second option: a. What can Acton afford (typically a %) b. Determine town enrollment averages c. Calculate the resulting assessment (A and B) d. Identify estimated revenues and reserves. The result is the first draft budget for the new school year. (slide 5).

Revenues Sources include:

- State Sources: 1. Chapter 70 (Education Aid) 2. Regional Transportation Aid 3. Charter School Reimbursement Aid 4. Circuit Breaker Reimbursement
- Other Sources: 1. Medicaid Reimbursement 2. Investment Income

Members discussed the constraints of proposition 2 ½ particularly since our two towns are at different levels of the levy limit. Prop 2 ½ is the amount that a town can spend on everything - schools and town. Details are determined by the Acton Leadership Group (ALG) process - the primary driver of the overall budget. The Acton Finance Committee's annual Point of View (POV) document also provides guidance to the schools. A separate driver for Boxborough is student enrollment, shifting the allocation of budget assessment from Acton to Boxborough. It is important to have all of the groups in collaboration and support of the budget heading into the Town Meetings. It is very important to see the future budget a few years ahead.

Acton's Minuteman High School tuition is going up 25% a year which is significant. Every dollar going to MMT is one less that can go to the Town and Schools. This is not a statement on the value or quality of the programs. This is a function of the number of students coming from Acton going to Minuteman.

Moving to free All Day Kindergarten means that the \$900,000 cost to the District for the first year would have to be covered before the State pays the next year. We get 90% Regional Transportation Aid even though we have to provide transportation for all students. This will be part of the Open Enrollment discussion in the future.

Mr. Light summarized that looking at what the district needs have been over the past couple of years, most were due to student support services required by law. Multilingual services are also a large increase. It is a challenge to try to keep Acton students from leaving AB for Minuteman High School if we are not adding new and innovative programs.

### 3. **SCHOOL COMMITTEE, DISTRICT AND SUPERINTENDENT GOALS 2024 (First Read)**

The Committee will vote on the District Goals at their meeting on September 7th. Feedback is welcomed between now and then.

Mr. Light reviewed the website tab and began with the District Strategy and Goals because they feed into the others. When he came to AB, a new Mission/Vision/Values statement was created but the individual schools continued to work on different things and he wanted to bring them more together. The Administration wants to expand the statement in the future to include the importance of students and staff "Belonging".

Comments included:

- We can't do everything at once. If there are too many goals, we can't do anything significant.
- An ongoing discussion is about whether "equitable outcomes" mean equal or not?
- How does the role of families fit in? Members get feedback that parents want to give input. This will be addressed more in the action steps. From a district level, the website is being redesigned including a new Family and Community Advisory Committees section found under the Families tab on the homepage.

- Mr. Light asked the Committee to help define the outcomes. What are the two data points that we want to use for each? In the past, each elementary school used their own curriculum, etc and they could not be compared. The process was all reactive (e.g. waiting for MCAS results). It was difficult to be proactive. Currently it is about developing common assessments.
- The District Goals last year had too much information. This year Mr. Light would like to choose two or three goals.
- Goal #1 - Improve social-emotional and mental and behavioral health outcomes for students by shifting our environments, practices and supports so that students can more effectively access learning and cultivate constructive relationships. Last year was the first year for this and work will continue for 2 or 3 more years. Teachers will continue to need support and professional learning in this area. An example is the Advisory Program which has been through several iterations. It has been important for teachers from the High School to develop the plan.
- Goal #2 - Increase the number of students on a pathway to proficiency in Literacy and Mathematics through implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), in order to expand access and opportunity for students. Third grade literacy and eighth grade math are the critical years. We look at the growth. All students need a growth goal. Learn by trying different programs, for example the district moved away from I-Ready when it was not what we needed. These are important screening tools.
- New steps are implemented by trying not to be too specific. Early College opportunities for High School students could help address some students moving to Minuteman. A “loose tight strategy” allows us to pursue opportunities as they come along.
- Goal #3 - Improve students’, staff, and families’ sense of belonging by strengthening school culture and climate, diversifying the professional staff, and implementing culturally-responsive instructional practices and materials. Community conflict won’t be “solved”, but how do we reconcile community disagreement with good educational practice? Examples include: High School course leveling and the School Resource Officer resource website. A presentation will be done for the Committee in October by Mr. Light and Principal Dean. The proposal will be finalized in November and voted by the Committee in December. The Administration continues to focus on improving the diversity of our workforce, including that some of our educators of color are leaving. We want to be sure our educators are “actively interrupting bias incidences”. If a witness does not react as they see something happening, the message is that the staff thinks that the incident is ok. SEED training is part of this, to understand your own implicit bias when stepping into a situation. The new AB Resource Center will be terrific in coordination with the AB United Way.

Mr. Light shared his Superintendent Goals.

- #1 Improve District Engagement with Families and Community. Chris Horan is doing an independent assessment of our communications. After presenting his findings he will do professional development for staff and may add something for School Committee. A new parent communication tool and community newsletter are being planned.

- #2 Develop new leadership Teams at Central Office and Districtwide as High-performing, Equity-focused Teams.

Feedback or questions should be sent to Mr. Light. Goals will be voted on September 7.

The School Committee discussed their goals for the year and how they will know if they are making progress. Adam, Rebecca and Liz helped with a brainstorm activity. Members offered tangible goals for the Committee to “own and execute” that were then grouped into large categories.

Discussion included:

- Free All Day Kindergarten is important and needs to be figured out strategically.
- Outbound communication is essential. This can be difficult due to Open Meeting Law. With 11 members, not all agree on everything. Balancing that the Chairperson speaks for the Committee and having a group that wants engagement is important. Newsletters and the issue that Facebook is not an open group were discussed. Facts need to be expressed clearly and accurately. Dialogue is key to engaging nonparents.
- The Budget Process and a long term budget plan are important.
- Several members want to empower students more to hear their voices. The role of the School Committee student representatives was discussed. Could they sit at the table as was done in the past? Have more coffees with students? Publicize the meetings? This is part of being inclusive.
- School Committee Operations is important. This includes attendance. Could the size of the Committee be reduced although it is dictated by the Regional Agreement? How do we operate as a big committee? An upside is that we are able to populate many subcommittees. A smaller group would not be able to do as much.

It was agreed that better communication would be a goal, as well as supporting the educational welfare and wellbeing of all students, and demonstrating professional and collegial relations at all times. The protocols will be voted at the meeting on Thursday night.

#### 4. **ADJOURN**

Andrew Schwartz moved, Liz Fowlkes seconded and it was unanimously,  
**VOTED**: to adjourn the ABRSC at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: Agenda, FY24 Budget Handout -S. Matthews 8/22/23, Financial Information Slides -D. Verdolino & S. Matthews, Superintendent Goals FY 23-24 Slides -P. Light  
NEXT MEETING: August 24 at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building Auditorium