

**ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Library
R.J. Grey Junior High

January 6, 2005
7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Rebecca Neville, Marie Altieri, Mary Ann Ashton, Jo-Ann Berry, Michael Coppolino, Terry Lindgren, Bruce Sabot, Jeff Vandegrift

Also Present: William Ryan, George Frost, Susan Horn, Nancy Kolb, Sharon Summers, citizens and press

The meeting was called to order by the chairperson at 7:30 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of December 2, 2004, were approved.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #05-012 in the amount of \$1,639,011.87, warrant #05-013 in the amount of \$1,850,581.20, warrant #05-13A in the amount of \$998,575.31 and warrant #05-014 in the amount of \$1,214,867.10 were signed by the chairperson and circulated to other members of the Committee for signature.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. R.J. Grey Junior High School Improvement Plan Update

- Celeste Margolius, representing the School Council, reported on the changes in the plan. Committee members thanked Celeste, Craig Hardimon and the School Council for the revised improvement plan, which was reflected some School Committee suggestions and clarified the goals.
- Marie Altieri moved, it was seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the R.J. Grey School Improvement Plan as revised and presented.

2. ABRHS Building Project

- Marie Altieri reported that the project is winding down. Commissioning continues to go very well. The project budget update shows no changes, and we anticipate having \$300K - \$330K remaining, at this point. She referred to the priority needs list from Steve Donovan concerning the use of the excess funds.
- Bill Ryan noted that we received almost \$10M from the state SBA as reimbursement for the R.J. Grey JH project. In the end, we will get a total of 62% of the total project cost reimbursed.

3. FY'05 Budget Update

- Bill Ryan reported on the State Treasurer's visit and presentation of the \$9.9M check as state reimbursement for the JH project.
- Nancy Kolb gave an update on the circuit breaker funding program and figures for FY'05 and projections for FY'06.

4. ALG Report

- Mary Ann Ashton reported on the last two ALG meetings. The main items discussed were the size of the override, type of override (pyramid) and the budgets. A \$3.8M override would cover the proposed budget, with an additional \$700K (total override of \$4.5M) which would be evenly split between schools and town for capital items. Most boards were in agreement to go forward with the pyramid override numbers of \$3.8M and \$4.5M. There was no decision as to the timing of the ballot vote (before or after Town Meeting). There was also no consensus on whether to present a lower override amount in addition to the other two.
- Becky Neville supported having the override vote before Town Meeting.
- Mary Ann Ashton wanted a sufficient level of capital in the budgets.
- Marie Altieri suggested that the \$350K for capital items (the school's half of the \$700K) be used exclusively at APS. Bill Ryan agreed and stated that this would simplify things for both towns.
- Bill Ryan stated that he felt conflicted on offering a lower override number. We need to have something, but we need more than the minimum. In general, School Committee members felt they should keep an open mind about having a lower number. There was discussion about how the schools might spend the \$350K on capital the first year and then what it would be used for in subsequent years.
- Bill Ryan and Marie Altieri said it was time to start selling the override to the communities. Bill will meet with any group he can to convince people that we need the override. It is important that we get everyone involved in this effort.
- Terry Lindgren moved, it was seconded and unanimously
VOTED: To support an FY'06 budget pyramid override with two amounts: \$3.8M and \$4.5M.
- Terry Lindgren moved, it was seconded and unanimously
VOTED: That the ballot override vote take place before Acton Town Meeting.

5. BLF Report

- Becky Neville reported on the special town meeting coming up in Boxborough, with a 'state of the town' meeting. They will do on a citizens survey about the override. Boxborough will need a \$1M plus override, and are also discussing adding a 'restoration' budget override number. They have agreed that the regional school budget will be held harmless.

6. FY'06 Budget Discussion

- Bill Ryan reviewed the proposed FY'06 ABRSD budget in the packet.
- George Frost talked about the APS/AB Capital Needs Plan in the packet, and noted that a capital needs committee had their first meeting. The first nine items on the Year 1 plan are the most important to fund. George said we need to have expert appraisal on how to address the needs of the older buildings. Marie Altieri suggested asking for free estimates from roofing companies, electrical companies, etc. , instead of an architectural study to determine feasibility and needs. Bill Ryan felt that spending the \$80K for an professional overall evaluation was the way to go. As most of the capital plan items are for APS, Mary Ann Ashton suggested further discussion at the next APS School Committee meeting, and at the Jan. 22 workshop. Jo-Ann Berry would like to see the capital plan items included as line items in the budget, even if there is a \$0.
- Bill Ryan noted that the proposed budgets are consistent with the ALG financial plan, which assumes a \$3.8M override. Also assumed is a Minuteman School assessment of \$850K. This budget does not include any new teachers at the high school. The operating budget is up 4.76%, debt service is up 44.6%, and the total budget is up 7.08%. Assessments are up 12% overall. Bill reviewed the per pupil costs which continue to be low, and the AB/APS average is below the state average.
- Bill Ryan recommended moving \$100K from SPED Salaries into the IDEA SPED grant in FY'06 to gain 2 FTEs at ABRHS. In addition, he recommended accepting 50 Choice students at ABRHS to gain 4 more FTEs (2FTEs for Choice), for a net gain of 4 FTEs at ABRHS. Steve Donovan noted that

ABRHS would need 3.7 FTEs to maintain current class size.

- Bill Ryan reviewed the budget line items, and the School Committee commented. Several members suggested making creative moves toward conservation in heat/AC and lowering telephone costs.
- There was consensus to support the plan to add 4 FTEs at ABRHS suggested by the Superintendent.
- Mary Ann Ashton commented that it would be better to make the Choice decision sooner rather than later to get 50 students. She asked to hear from Craig Hardimon about Choice at the JH. She suggested writing articles for the AB PTSO newsletter about Choice, and asked for feedback from the JH and HS teachers about the tradeoffs of materials vs. bodies in the classroom.
- Committee members were asked to submit specific places to cut via email to Bill Ryan.
- At the School Committee's request, Bill Ryan will run the budget by Admin. Responsibility format.
- Terry Lindgren asked for an organization chart with FTEs and positions. He also would like a scenario from the administration about what adding 7.5 FTEs (vs. 4 FTEs) teachers at the HS.
- Marie Altieri asked for School Committee opinions about having a budget forum for community input in early February. The two chairs will work out a date.

7. Health Insurance Trust Report

- Marie Altieri reported that they are cautiously optimistic about the trust balance this year. They hope to set next year's rates at the February meeting.

8. CAFY Report

- Terry Lindgren reported that there will be a meeting on February 7 at 7 pm in the JH Auditorium to review the Youth Risk Behavior Survey report.

9. Leary Field Update

- Bill Ryan reviewed the three-part funding plan for putting artificial turf on Leary Field: 1/3 from Acton CPA funds, 1/3 from private donations, and 1/3 from the ABRHS building project funds. Half of every dollar contributed by the Acton CPA comes from state funds, 62 cents of every dollar contributed by the ABRHS building project comes from state funds. This is a tremendous partnership of private and public funds coming together for a public good, and in many ways is the best way that we can create recreational opportunities that benefit our regional school athletes as well as many members of our whole community. Bill asked the Committee for a commitment of funds from the building project.
- After discussion, Mary Ann Ashton moved, it was seconded and unanimously
VOTED: That the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee support the new Leary Field project with \$250,000. Of this amount, \$150,000 will be taken from the ABRHS construction funds and the remainder will come from non-appropriated budget sources that will be defined in the next month as we close out the ABRHS project.
- Mary Ann Ashton suggested that the School Committee vote the intermunicipal agreement at the January 22 Workshop.
- Bill Ryan and Marie Altieri thanked Bill Mullin and the FOLF for a year's work in bringing the project forward, and the School Committee members who have worked on it. Bill noted that this is the largest gift that the ABRSD has ever received.
- Bill Mullin thanked the schools, and specifically Steve Desy and JD Head, for their support.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Recommendation to Accept Gift from New England Patriots

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the generous gift of \$2,000 from the New England Patriots Foundation.

2. Recommendation to Accept Gift from AB Soccer Boosters

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the generous gift of \$1,000 from the Acton-Boxborough Soccer Boosters.

3. Recommendation To Accept Gift from Community Education

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the generous donation of \$16,215 from AB Community Education.

4. Recommendation to Revise School Committee Policy I620, Field Trips - FIRST READING

The policy will receive a second reading and vote at the February 3 School Committee meeting.

5. Recommendation to Approve a School Committee Policy re: Homeless Students - FIRST READING

The policy will receive a second reading and vote at the February 3 School Committee meeting.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Superintendent referred to several items.

ISSUES OF THE COMMITTEE

- Mary Ann Ashton announced that she is not going to run again for School Committee. She has served on the Committee since 1998, and feels it is time to move on.
- There was a discussion about whether to produce School Committee packets electronically. Several School Committee volunteered to look into it.
- There was discussion about location of School Committee meetings. No changes were made. The Committee decided to have only pitchers of water as refreshments at future School Committee meetings.
- Marie Altieri was disappointed to read in the Beacon about Boxborough's school calendar. She felt it was bad for families for two towns to have different schedule.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 11:35 p.m. it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To go into joint executive session to discuss strategies relative to collective bargaining under Chapter 39, Section 23 B, paragraph 3. Each member was polled individually and each voted in the affirmative to go into executive session for the stated purpose.

The Committee returned to open session at 12:05 a.m. to adjourn.

NEXT MEETING: February 3, JH Library - 7:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah T. Lawton, Secret