

## ACTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

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Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

January 20, 2005  
7:30 p.m.

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*Members Present:* Marie Altieri, Mary Ann Ashton, Jo-Ann Berry,  
Michael Coppolino, Jeff Vandegrift  
*Also Present:* William Ryan, George Frost, Nancy Kolb, Tess Summers,  
Susan Horn, citizens and press

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The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Marie Altieri, chairperson.

### **CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION.**

The chairperson reviewed the items on the agenda.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of December 16, 2004 were approved.

### **APPROVAL OF WARRANT**

Warrant #2005-15 in the amount of \$443,132.54 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the rest of the Committee for signatures.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **1. FY'05 Budget Update**

- Bill Ryan said they continue to watch the budget numbers carefully. So far, the numbers are close, but acceptable.

#### **2. ALG Update**

- Marie Altieri reported that the override plan was solidified: a pyramid override with two options - \$3.8M and \$4.5M. Voter education will be essential about how the pyramid ballot vote works. To vote for the \$4.5M override, voters must also vote for the \$3.8M figure. The date of the override will be decided by the Acton Board of Selectmen. It will either be on election day or the week after Town Meeting. The School Committee felt it should be held before Town Meeting.
- Bill Ryan reported on his meeting with the Boxborough PTF. He said that the override numbers in Boxborough have changed for the good. They plan to have two ballot questions: 1) a structural override of about \$750K, and 2) a restoration override of an additional amount to be determined.
- Marie Altieri reported on the Long-Term Capital Plan Committee. Jo-Ann Berry is the School Committee rep. Their goal: to develop a 5-year plan, prioritizing town and school items.

#### **3. FY'06 APS Budget Process**

- Bill Ryan reviewed the items in the packet. He also reviewed the budget cuts which were made in APS FY'04 (about 8 FTEs) and FY'05 (about \$520K). The APS FY'06 budget is an increase of \$971,159.00 or about 5%. Both school budgets are consistent with the ALG plan. Bill reviewed the increased line items (for ex., sub salaries, health insurance, instructional supplies/textbooks, capital outlay, maintenance, SPED transportation) and explained the reasons for the increase. He reviewed the amount of cuts that would need to be made if the override fails - about \$1,284,500 in each system. He reviewed the schedule for the Jan. 22 budget workshop.
- George Frost reviewed the personnel budget changes.

- Bill Ryan referred to the Capital Plan. If the \$4.5M override passes, he suggested using the \$350K (the schools' portion) for the local schools, specifically the older buildings.
- Mary Ann Ashton questioned what should be included in the capital plan. The feasibility study for repair of older school buildings should either be in the budget or not done. Site work, although needed, should be taken off capital list. Building needs should be first. Michael Coppolino recommended finding out directly from each school what was most important.
- Marie Altieri felt it was important to get the feasibility study done, and it should be done in the "A" budget. She asked the administration to prioritize a list totaling \$350K. She added that she would not rule out technology in that number.
- Jeff Vandegrift asked about paving the McT playground. Marcia FitzGerald, principal, said it cannot hold grass, and the solution is to pave it, but it is not a priority.
- There was discussion about whether technology items should be included in the capital needs priorities. There will be more discussion at the Saturday workshop.
- Bill Ryan announced that he welcomes invitations to speak to any group in the community about the budget.
- Marie Altieri announced a Budget Forum for the community on Feb. 16 at 7pm in the ABRHS Auditorium. Both town and school budgets will be discussed.

#### **4 CTAC Update**

- Jeff Vandegrift reported that they are evaluating technology in K-3 classrooms . What do school really need? Teachers need a networked workstation, and needs are uneven around the district. Many machines are quite old, and difficult to maintain.
- Susan Horn added comments on the state of computers in elementary classrooms.
- Michael Coppolino felt strongly that each teacher to have usable workstation. But he didn't want to dismantle the computer labs. Maureen Bingham, Conant principal, said that many teachers do not have usable computers. Conant priorities are heat and teacher computers. Walter McGrail, Gates principal, said they were in a better situation, and grades K & 1 were the only grades in which teachers did not have useable computer. They also have a mobile lab with about 13 I-books. Marie Altieri and Michael Coppolino felt it is a high priority for teachers to do their jobs with computers.

#### **5. CAFY Report**

- The results of the Youth Risk Behavior Study will be presented on Feb. 15 at the HS Auditorium, 7pm.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **1. Recommendation to Revise School Committee Policy, I620 - Field Trips - First Reading**

- Bill Ryan asked members to review policy. A second reading and vote will be taken at the Feb. 17 meeting. Mary Ann Ashton asked under what conditions waivers would be granted. It should be spelled out better. What forms will parents see for field trips? Several members commented that the language of the revised policy is too formal, and parents should be aware of why we are making these changes.

#### **2. Recommendation to Approve a School Committee Policy re: Homeless Students - First Reading**

- A second reading and vote will be taken at the Feb. 17 School Committee meeting.

**3. Recommendation to Accept Gift from the Peterson family/Acton Preschool PTO**

- It was moved, seconded and unanimously

**VOTED: To accept, with gratitude, the generous gift of \$2,000 from the Peterson family for use at the Acton Preschool.**

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

- The Superintendent and School Committee members referred to several items.
- Susan Horn reported that the Kindergarten Information night went well. About 110-125 people attended. The school tours are ongoing, and early registration for incoming students with priority status takes place next week.

**ISSUES OF THE COMMITTEE**

- Jeff Vandegrift stated that he will not seek reelection to the School Committee.
- School Comm. meeting schedule for next year was in the packet. It was noted that, at the last regional meeting, Boxborough members feel it is not necessary to have regional meeting at Boxborough.

**NEXT MEETING:** Jan. 22, Joint Budget Workshop, 8:30 - 3:30, JH Library  
Feb. 3, Jt. Exec. Session, 6:30 - 7:30 pm - JH Conf. Rm.  
Feb. 16, Budget Forum, 7pm - ABRHS Auditorium  
Feb. 17, APS SC meeting and OPEN BUDGET HEARING,  
7:30 pm, JH Library

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah T. Lawton, Secretary pro tempore