

ACTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Cafetorium
Douglas School

March 17, 2005
7:30 pm

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

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

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION.

The chairperson reviewed the items on the agenda.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

Warrant #2005-19 in the amount of \$119,466.88 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the rest of the Committee for signatures.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of February 17, 2005 were approved as presented.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Pat Clifford, Acton Finance Committee, asked the Committee for input about 'Life after NESWC.' The NESWC (trash removal service) contract expires in September, and plans need to be made for trash collection and use of the landfill site. She announced that there will be a Special Acton Town meeting on June 13 to discuss the issues and solutions.

EDUCATION REPORT - Douglas School

Dr. Christopher Whitbeck, Douglas School principal, introduced representatives of the School Council and PTO, each of whom made a short presentation.

Todd Fenniman, School Council rep, reviewed how the School Council works at Douglas and specifically how school improvement goals are set each year. The School Council suggests that a School Committee member attend at least one School Council meeting during the year.

Claire Howe, PTO co-chair, reviewed their budget, noting how what they fund has changed over the last five years. Most of the funds go to support classroom assistants. They can no longer fund some of the enrichment programs previously offered. Their budget for FY'05 is \$48,415, and \$25,685 of this goes to pay for classroom support/assistants. Claire also mentioned that they continue to be concerned about the state of their physical plant.

The School Committee had several questions and then thanked Douglas for a great presentation and for hosting the meeting.

Chris Whitbeck briefly commented on his first year at Douglas, and how staff used their Professional Day, which was very exciting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. ALG Update

Mary Ann Ashton reported that ALG discussed the NESWC situation. A developer is interested in using the landfill site, which would bring in money to the town. There was consensus at

ALG that there should be a separate discussion about how this money could be used, and it would be a Town Meeting decision. School Committee members agreed. There was also discussion about how to use additional revenues, should they become available, and if the override fails. Would cut positions be restored? Marie Altieri said that the School Committee would make the cuts as stated in the "B" budget. Additional unexpected revenue would probably be saved for another year, and not used for FY'06. Mary Ann noted that there is specimen ballot on the town website.

2. Health Insurance Trust Update

- Marie Altieri reported that the rates will increase 26% across the board. This increase will build back fund balance and pay for the projected costs.

3. Recommendation to Approve the FY'06 Acton Public Schools Proposed Budget

- Bill Ryan reviewed the budget cuts. He has adjusted the budget cuts, based on the new health insurance rates.
- Mary Ann Ashton moved, it was seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the FY'06 "A" budget for the Acton Public Schools in the amount of \$20,479,235.

- Jo-Ann Berry moved, Mary Ann Ashton seconded and it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the FY'06 "A+" budget for the Acton Public Schools in the amount of \$20,829,235.

4. CTAC Update

- Jeff Vandegrift reported on the last meeting. There was discussion of Macs throughout district being upgraded to OSX. The focus will be on Conant first.

5. CAFY Update

- Terry Lindgren reported that the Red Flag book will be coming to each home soon. Marie Altieri suggested having copies of the YRBS results available at the community meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Recommendation to Accept Gift to McCarthy-Towne School from MathWorks

It was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To accept , with gratitude, the generous gift of \$502.62 to the McCarthy-Towne School from MathWorks.

Marie Altieri encouraged donors to take advantage of matching gifts whenever possible.

2. Report of Staff Professional Day, March 11, 2005

- Susan Horn reported that it was an exciting day at all the schools. She noted many of the topics discussed. There was great variety, and staff saw the day as a productive and successful use of their time.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Superintendent referred to several items.

ISSUES FOR THE COMMITTEE

- All are invited to attend the EDCO Legislative For on April 1.
- It was suggested that the topic of the Conant heating system be placed on the May 19th School Committee agenda.
- Terry Lindgren asked for a discussion (at a future School Committee meeting) of the Health Insurance Trust, and whether it's worth having. Marie Altieri suggested it could be done at the May 19th meeting.
- Mary Ann Ashton noted that SBA will do a free needs assessment of all school buildings. She advised the Committee to stay in touch with this. She also responded to an OpEd piece in the Beacon re: reasons not to support override. SPED staff increased after the FY'05 budget was passed due to bringing out-of-district placements back to Acton. So it really saved us money to do this. No SPED reductions were made this year because these staff positions are required by law. Many SPED assistant positions are funded by grants that must be used for these specific purposes.
- Marie Altieri referred to the MASC School Committee Policy review, which has just begun. The first reading of the first set of revised policies will occur at the March 24 ABRSD School Committee meeting. It is hoped to have the second reading and vote at the March 31 School Committee meetings.

NEXT MEETING: March 31, 2005 - following Regional Comm. mtg., JH Library

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah T. Lawton, Secretary pro tempore