

**Minutes of the Joint School Committee Meeting
January 8, 2009**

Members Present: Jonathan Chinitz, Heather Harer, Brigid Bieber,
Michael Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Sharon Smith McManus
Maria Neyland, John Petersen, Bruce Sabot

Also Present: William Ryan, Susan Horn, Marie Altieri, Liza Huber, Sharon Summers,
citizens, five student reps

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by AB Chairman Chinitz and APS Chairman Harer.

STATEMENT OF WARRANT

AB warrant 2009-013 in the amount of \$1,382,137.46 and warrant 2009-014 in the amount of \$2,318,758.26 were signed by the chairperson and circulated to the rest of the Committee for signatures.

APS warrant 2009-14 in the amount of \$650,290.11 was signed by the chairperson and circulated to the rest of the Committee for signatures.

CHAIRPERSONS' INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Chinitz announced that both School Committees will be meeting together until Town Meeting. The Committees welcome public participation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Joint Minutes of December 18, 2008 were approved as written.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Peter Ashton presented an update on school enrollment and enrollment projections. APS enrollment has declined 27 students from last year and 70 from the 2004 peak. The region has increased by 43 students and the HS increased by one student. Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 8 were higher than projected. Difference in enrollment projections from last year is birth model. New birth model, developed by I&I, is being used by the state (Cohort Survival Method). I&I did review two new developments in Acton, Avalon project in North Acton (.034 students per unit) and Robbins Mill project in North Acton (0.9 students per unit). Results are consistent with historical data. Peter also noted that housing turnover in Acton has slowed considerably in the last six years. Significant decline in births in Acton since 2002. Housing prices in both towns do not allow many young families to move in. Ratios used are five year averages. Choice students are excluded from the projections. Acton enrollment drops 21% over next ten years, and Boxborough enrollment drops 24% over same period.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. FY09 APS and A-B Budgets

- Bill Ryan reviewed the legislative authority sought by the Governor for further 9C cuts of \$1 billion dollars. Bill and Steve Ledoux, Acton Town Manager, met today re: what would need to be done if there are further cuts this fiscal year. Region would not require a separate town meeting vote as reductions could be made by the Committee. Jonathan reminded members to read the MTF news explaining the state and federal financial situation.

2. FY10 APS and A-B Budgets

- Proposed Reductions: Level 1 thru 4 budget reductions are noted in the new budgets. Administration needs the Committees to approve these reductions. Questions/comments follow:
- John Petersen – two items of concern – Level 4 material and supplies is a problem, and SPED planning is risky taking away the potential new student.

- Bruce Sabot - need to plan for worse, more should come from materials and supplies, could put more back if worse case does not happen. We should plan for Level 5 & 6.
- Jonathan Chinitz – appropriate about \$100 per student for year. If we convert to a fee, we would ask each APS student to sign up with a check for \$20 and regional student, \$30. What is the Choice schedule? (Vote usually taken in March.)
- Xuan Kong – agrees with proposed cuts and maintain staff levels – would look for alternative revenue rather than additional cuts. Transportation fees and Choice are options.
- Bill Ryan – ALG will discuss % of cuts to be taken. Suggests that Fin Comm state level service budget amounts. Committee needs to discuss whether to take another 45 Choice students (\$225K).
- Heather Harer – appreciates the cuts as presented, reasonable and tough. Next \$950K will be tough as well. Supports what is being done, and additional info in two weeks
- Maria Neyland – would like additional transportation info on the use of \$30K in revolving fund – it would need to be put back in the FY11 budget. Supports the recommendations.
- Sharon McManus – agrees with reductions and the risks being taken. Agrees with Xuan re School Choice.
- Bill Ryan – if we must make cuts of \$1.7-\$1.8 and we take 45 more choice students (\$225 in revenue from the School Choice), we would still need to cut \$950K. Hopes we do not have to go to this level.
- Jonathan Chinitz – ALG meeting of one month ago was the start of this decision. Acton deficit was \$2.5 million. 69%, or \$1.7 to \$1.8 million of Acton dollars.
- Marie Altieri – updating ALG spreadsheet, if there is a 10% reduction in all of state aid would be \$1.9-2.3 million. If % is used, we may need to make more cuts.
- Bill Ryan likes the strategy of cutting small bits from many different places, so that recovery will be easier.
- Michael Coppolino – would like us to put Choice students way down the line until we hear from the state and federal govt. Agrees with reallocations. Avoid gloom and doom.
- Brigid Bieber– confidence is important and this is a cycle. Favors the preferred line. Next step will be more difficult and is not an easy thing to go through. At BLF meeting, Boxborough is on hold for \$500-\$700K. These reductions do help at the Boxborough level.
- *Student comments* – Level 4 and computer leasing would regret next year – would like to see continuation of computer program next year. Budget should not be absolute numbers and sees a lot of waste, should cut percentages.
Q: parking lot prices have been raised and will it increase next year? Bill Ryan – these fees are not being considered at this time.
- Michael Coppolino – what kinds of abuses? A: on the consumable side (printing of too many copies).
- John Petersen- \$125 per student for supplies, and many other fees are being requested by parents. A lot of expenses should be born by the general public that are being put on parents. Be mindful of the total burden placed on parents.
- Bill Ryan– looking for support for this level of reductions. Bill has told each principal to be prepared for the following cuts - \$400 HS, \$225 JH, \$275 ELEM (5 principals), \$50 CO, etc. has asked staff to make recommendations for these cuts, and will be meeting with principals tomorrow.
- Michael Coppolino – any consideration to move the Town Meeting back? Bill – would be discussed at ALG, would need to convene and set a later date.
- Steve Noone, Acton FinCom – had conversation with Moderator re Saturday workshops – could convene Town Meeting and postpone to date certain.
February 26 meeting would start at 6:30 – all were in agreement. Bruce may not be able to attend.
- Marie Altieri – re: Supt. Search: four interviews will be on 2/5/09. Need to set aside time for the interviews (3-5). Bring a proposed schedule for next week’s meeting. Interviews should be done before February vacation. Schedule to be sent to Committee for resolution. Saturday, February 7 was suggested by Sharon. Week of February 9 – will need two nights for interviews.
- School Choice – will be considered at a future meeting.

3. SPED Financial Task Force

- Liza Huber presented her summary of the recommendations on the plan.
- Jonathan Chinitz wants to see action taken on the recommendations.
- John Petersen would like to see #5 included in the goals. Responsible person and target dates for

implementation.

- Liza's top three are program design and development, study teams, and early intervention. Meeting with Director of Finance is in place.
- Michael Coppolino – CASE program was very high on our list. He feels this is a priority.
- Jonathan Chinitz – End of March for timeframes and action table to be submitted to Committees.
- Xuan Kong – Item #7 – use outside consultant – would like to see breakdown on these two choices – outside consultant vs. program staff person. Xuan would like to see pros and cons. Mike Coppolino would like to see a timeframe for each step, and real substance may be in additional programs. If additional programs can bring savings, they would be interested in that.
- Jonathan thanked Mike, Xuan and Kent for their efforts in this study.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Acton Outdoor Lighting presentation** – tabled to next meeting.

ISSUES FOR THE COMMITTEE

- **Superintendent Search**

Jonathan – please include Boxborough Leadership Forum information in the Committee packet. It was agreed to do this.

Supt Search Update Meeting: Heather reported – no meeting last evening. Worked on questions at last meeting. On the 14th will meet to finalize questions, and tomorrow is last day for applicants to submit resumes. Will receive packet tomorrow evening. The meeting of the 14th will be a lengthy meeting to review apps. Have received 24 applications. Have five days set aside for interviews. Committees may interview 10-12 candidates. Will keep Committees informed as interviews progress. The School Committees are expected to interview the finalists the first week of February.

The chair suspended the Acton Public School meeting at 9:45 p.m.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee meeting continued.

The Joint Session resumed at 10:06 pm.

JOINT EXECUTIVE SESSION

Acton School Committee action:

At 10:07 pm, it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To go into executive session under Chapter 39, Section 23B, paragraph 3, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel. Each member was polled individually and each member voted to go into executive session for the stated purpose.

Acton-Boxborough School Committee action:

At 10:07 pm, it was moved, seconded and unanimously

VOTED: To go into executive session under Chapter 39, Section 23B, paragraph 3, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel.. Each member was polled individually and each member voted to go into executive session for the stated purpose.

The Committees returned to open session at 11:15 pm and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Summers, Director of Finance