



## Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council Board Meeting - Wednesday, March 11, 2010

### MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order. The following Board members attended the meeting: Bill Guthlein, Nancy Sherburne, Steve Lowe, Caroline Jarvis, Sasha Stavsky, and Valerie Ryan. Also in attendance were Pupil Services representatives Julie Towell and Matt Kidder.
- II. Approval of January minutes – After the minutes were reviewed, a motion was then made to approve the January minutes. That motion was seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.
- III. Organizational/Business Issues
  - A. Budget Update – Bill gave an update on the budget. Bill mentioned that there would be no level five cuts\* due to found monies and promising chapter 7 allocations. There were also some small trimmings such as reducing costs by increasing athletic fees. The school committee voted in budgets that do not include cuts but the Finance Committee has to vote it in as well. Bill mentioned that the vote is looking promising. At the last minute, special education funding was reinstated including funding for assistants. Funding for assistants was broken down at \$60,000 for AB; \$70,000 for APS, and \$46,000 for general class assistants and specialists returned. Members of the PAC board expressed gratitude regarding the School Committee’s decision.

\*Budget cuts at levels one through five were previously described elsewhere by superintendent Steven Mills, with five being the most severe.

- B. PAC Priorities Update
  - i. Autism Parent Focus Groups – Nancy passed out a consolidated summary of the four parent forums. She mentioned that suggestions of top priorities were provided to Liza and that Liza is working on an On-Team article regarding the outcome of the forums. Discussion took place with regard to posting the summary on the PAC website and sending it out via e-mail. It was agreed that posting the consolidated version would be adequate (vs. posting the notes for each of the forums). It was noted that feedback among the groups was consistent with the PAC’s 2009 survey results. Commonalities with regard to comments among the parents attending the forums were: need for improvement/change in the management of transitions, professional development, and communication. Steve suggested

adding a comment pointing out the commonalities among the four meetings. Steve also expressed concern about the wording of the statement that assistants do not have specialized training. Nancy to clarify language to specify that assistants don't have a uniform, specialized skill set. Other items from the forums mentioned were: compilation of a list of extracurricular activities; looping or overlapping an aide through transitions from Elementary to Jr. High and Jr. High to High school (it was pointed out that this had occurred during the 2009 transition from Pre-school to Elementary as the Elementary school aide worked with two of her future kindergarteners over the summer); and the need for a sequential study skills curriculum. Nancy gave kudos to Liza and the Pupil Services Leadership Team for being receptive and solicitous to parent feedback. Steve also gave kudos to the strength of the collaborative effort between the PAC and Pupil Services. Nancy mentioned the possibility of the PAC developing a parent support component. Caroline pointed to the North Shore group. There was some discussion of the PAC developing targeted information pamphlets. Bill pointed to developing an action plan from the information gathered at the forums.

**Action Items: 1) Nancy will revise and post Summary of Autism Parent Forums on Website; 2) Move toward next step of developing an action plan together with Pupil Services.**

- ii. Bullying Prevention – A draft proposal to the School Committee has been produced and another meeting is planned to refine it. Nancy called for Board members to send her resources that would be appropriate for posting on PAC's website. A bullying area for the website is planned.

**Action Item: 1) Board members e-mail resources to Nancy.**

- C. Special Education Cost Savings Proposal –Liza responded to the PAC's proposed cost savings through the School Committee. (Note: A copy of the response was e-mailed prior to the meeting). Nancy expressed concerns regarding the answers to the first two proposals – 1) Shift district practice to accepting recommendations from quality Independent Educational Evaluations (vs. retesting in-district) prior to implementing recommendations for students and 2) Streamline the IEP development process-both paper and technology based – increase pre-meeting communication between parents and staff; increase parent involvement in IEP development to reduce number of revisions. Nancy and Bill plan to meet with Liza to discuss her responses.

**Action Item: Bill and Nancy meet with Liza to discuss her responses.**

D. Update on 501c3 Process & Proposed PAC By-Law Changes – Note: a draft copy of the by-laws containing proposed changes was distributed via e-mail prior to the meeting.

- i. 501c3 Change – The Articles of the By-laws were reviewed. Some discussion took place regarding Article 5, section 2 - the wording around removal of an Executive Board member. Concern was expressed that it was both heavy handed and open to abuse. A discussion took place on how to minimize ambiguity in the language while still allowing potentially necessary action to be taken. It was agreed that adding conditionality to the wording to reflect reasons for removal would be helpful. Reasons such as behaving in a manner unbecoming of an officer and taking actions counter to the goals of the organization were suggested. Additionally it was suggested that a process be put in place such that, should the behavior and/or actions of a board member be in question, a member be given notice by the chair(s) and subsequent opportunity to make changes. There was also discussion regarding the portion of the same section stating that the Officers will elect replacements of Executive Board members. It was suggested that the general membership be given the opportunity to vote. Julie suggested using an interim Board member in situations where a replacement needed immediately. Discussion also took place around Article 9 – Dissolution. Nancy mentioned that she feels strongly about having any available monies go to another 501c3 organization vs. having it go back into federal funds. She gave the example of the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Bill mentioned that the IRS would want the by-laws to stipulate a back-up plan regarding what will happen to any remaining monies. It was suggested that the monies could be earmarked to go to a particular area of need with-in the school system. The next steps are to have a lawyer review the proposed changes and to e-mail the proposed new by-laws to the general membership in preparation for a vote.

**Action Items: 1) Revise language in Articles 5 and 9; 2) Obtain legal council to review the proposed changes; 3) E-mail proposed changes to the general membership.**

- E. Update on IEP Technology Task Force – A meeting was held in February but there was a low turnout. The task force is getting input from districts currently using technology for Team meetings. Ideally, there will be an opportunity to observe use of the e-spaced software program.
- F. Special Education Parent Handbook – A discussion took place regarding Board members taking on sections of the handbook. So far, there has been discussion of Steve doing the OOD section and Val doing the program descriptions and/or the glossary. Nancy will share the table of contents

allowing board members to pick a section. Nancy shared that while the DOE is working on a guidance document for PACs, the Federation does not have plans to revise their Parent Handbook, as previously thought.

**Action Item: Nancy to e-mail Table of Contents to Board members.**

G. Upcoming Presentations –

- Caroline will e-mail Debbie Bauch for details on her April presentation on sensory integration.
- Steve suggested a presentation on social communication given by Pamela Ely and Elsa Abele of the Ely Center would benefit the AB community as an idea for the fall.
- Nancy mentioned that we would be co-hosting the “Shut-up About Your Perfect Kid” presentation with Sue Horn in May.

H. Conant Principal Search – A brief discussion took place during which it was mentioned that Dr. Mills is hoping to announce a full replacement prior to the end of the school year. Dr. Mills shared that we had a pool of 52 candidates who had applied for the Conant Principalship. Dr. Mills had also mentioned that he plans to allocate some of the time of curriculum specialists for support of school principals. Nancy encouraged board members who are parents of Connections program children at Conant to request participation on the parent hiring committee.

I. New Business – The School Committee election – Bill suggested that we ask the candidates to answer 3 or 4 special education related questions. The answers could then be posted on the PAC website. This would serve the purposes of making the candidates more sensitive to special education concerns and of encouraging special education parents to vote. A discussion took place regarding the idea and the approach. There was agreement that this would be in line with the goals of the PAC and suggestions for questions were made. It was agreed that in the interest of time, suggestions would be e-mailed to Bill, compiled and circulated to the officers by email.

**Action Items: 1) Board members determine questions to be posed to SC candidates; 2) Bill compile and send questions to candidates; 3) Nancy make membership aware of responses.**

IV. Adjournment – A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

V. Next Meeting – Sensory Integration Presentation on April 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm in the Parker Damon Library. General PAC meeting April 14, 2010 at 7:00 in the Junior High Library.

*Respectfully submitted by Valerie Ryan, Secretary.*