



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council Board Meeting - Wednesday, April 14, 2010

MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order. The following Board members also attended the meeting: Caroline Jarvis, Sasha Stavsky, and Valerie Ryan. Also in attendance was a parent from the Acton district and Pupil Services representative Julie Towell.

- II. Organizational/Business Issues
 - A. PAC Priorities Update –
 - Review of Autism Focus Group Parent Priorities – Bill and Nancy met with Liza and agreed that they could work together in setting priorities.
 - Bullying Task Force – Recommendations for the School Committee are targeted for next month.

 - B. Discussion of the DOE’s new “Guidance for SpEd PACs” – Nancy shared that the DOE had issued guidance for PACs at the end of March. The DOE’s recommendations have a direct impact on the way PAC business is conducted. Of immediate concern is our 501c3 filing. It looks like we’ll want to file for tax-exempt status under a different name. According to the DOE’s guidance, funds received by the PAC “must be deposited with the municipal treasurer, held as a separate account, and become part of the district’s End-of-Year Pupil and Financial Report.” However, if we set up a separate fund raising entity such as “Friends of the PAC,” that group can raise and dispense funds for the PAC without having to go through the district. Nancy recommended we establish such an affiliate organization to raise funds for the PAC. It was agreed that an expert in financial matters be consulted to make recommendations on how the organization’s taxes should be filed and other such matters. The Guidance also states that the PAC membership list is a public document and that all emails and listserves are subject to Public Records Law. This seems to conflict with student/family privacy/confidentiality laws. However, since parent support meetings/communications are considered separate from PAC business meetings it appears these meetings/communications may remain private. Other guidance given by the DOE included that all electronic communications are a matter of public record.

 - C. Update on 501c3 Process & Proposed By-Law Changes – Sasha stated that the proposal was essentially complete and that the deadline is May 15th (as our fiscal year begins December 15). A suggestion was made to change the beginning of our fiscal year to June, which would coincide

with the school year and election schedules. It was agreed that we would change the name of the organization on the 501(c)3 application to “Friends of the AB SpEd PAC” in light of the new DOE guidance provided to PACs. This new affiliate organization’s purpose will be listed as fundraising for the AB SpEd PAC. It was suggested that the organization should have three officers and need a voting quorum of five.

D. End of the Year Presentation to the School Committee – Nancy and Bill are currently working on the end-of-year SC presentation.

E. Officer Nominations for Next Year – Nancy suggested that the Board members start getting the word out regarding the June election and said she hoped all of the current officers would run for office again this year. Julie suggested that she send an e-mail out regarding the election to the general membership.

F. Upcoming Presentations –

- “Shut-up About Your Perfect Kid” May 5th
- “Special Education Law and Children with Autism” May 13th
(sponsored by the Parent Support Group of the Autism Support Center).

III. New Business – Concerns regarding summer programming and IEP meetings were discussed. Bill and Nancy will mention to Liza that parents would like more information regarding the summer program so that they can make informed decisions for their children: they’ll ask what are the components of the summer program, the student groupings, program description and curriculum for the extended year program? It was also mentioned that Goals and Benchmarks are not being discussed in IEP meetings, thereby not allowing parents to have direct input into these areas of the IEP. This often necessitates rejection of portions of the new IEP and a subsequent Team meeting. It was agreed that the use of technology would address this but that it should be happening regardless. A suggestion was made that parents make it clear to the Team Chair that they want to discuss these areas during the IEP meeting.

IV. Open Issues –

- Accepting outside evaluations – Liza had mentioned to Nancy and Bill that the district had made a shift and is now finding more students eligible for special education based on outside evaluations/recommendations. Recently, at the AB level, four out of five children qualified for services based solely on independent evaluations. At the APS level approximately 50% of the children whose parents submitted outside evaluations were determined eligible based on independent recommendations. Julie pointed out that the outside evaluations were now more individualized and detailed than they had been previously. In addition, more private evaluators were

coming in to the district to observe students or contacting school therapists for feedback regarding the child's performance in the school environment.

- Professional Development – Nancy and Bill will meet with Steve Mills to discuss the importance of allocating more funds for special education related professional development.

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

VI. Next Meeting – AB SpEd PAC Board Meeting on Wednesday, May 12 at 7:00 pm in the High School Library and AB SpEd PAC Annual Meeting & Election of Officers on June 9th at 7:00 pm in the R.J. Grey JH Library

Respectfully submitted by Valerie Ryan, Secretary.