



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council Board Meeting - Wednesday, May 12, 2010

MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm. The following Board members attended the meeting: Bill Guthlein, Nancy Sherburne, Caroline Jarvis, Sasha Stavsky, and Valerie Ryan. Also in attendance were School Committee Member, Mike Coppolino and Pupil Services representatives Julie Towell and Matt Kidder.
- II. Approval of April Minutes– The minutes were reviewed and a motion was then made to approve them. That motion was seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.
- III. Organizational/Business Issues
 - A. The DESE's New Guidance for PACs –Discussed the impact of this guidance on the organization.
 - i. The DESE recommends that funds either be held by the municipal treasurer or held by a separate 501(c)(3) organization. Mention was made of the previous discussion regarding organizing a separate, Friends of the PAC, organization to manage funds. The question was what to do with existing funds that had been raised in the PAC's name. Mike suggested that the amount of existing funds was very low and that the issue could be discussed with the new Finance Director. Mike also suggested consulting the DESE. Nancy mentioned that she be attending a meeting of representatives of regional PACs later in the week and that a representative from the Federation of Children with Special Needs will be in attendance to help answer questions.
 - ii. Membership – The new guidelines suggest that membership lists be a matter of public record. The issue of privacy was discussed and Nancy suggested we explore asking people if they want to join “on the record.”
 - B. 501(c)(3) update/Tax filing - Sasha stated that in the past the PAC's fiscal year started in January and ends in December. This would mean that we would have to file taxes in May. However, the PAC is exempt from filing because the year's funds were less than \$5,000 and it is a charitable organization. Sasha also mentioned that the new organization, Friends of the AB SpEd PAC, now has a tax ID number so we can open an account after we organize a Board.
 - C. Recent changes in the PAC's By-Laws were briefly discussed.

- i. Article 5- Elections - Mike suggested minor reorganization of the structure of paragraph 2 to provide clarification.
- ii. Article 8 - Sasha suggested removing the last sentence as it makes reference to the Executive Board approving all fundraising activities and expenditure of funds. She suggested making reference to the new Friends of AB SpEd PAC by-laws. Nancy suggested that there is presently the issue of our existing funds in the PAC's name. Discussion took place regarding how to transfer funds from the PAC to the Friends of the PAC. Nancy said she hoped the meeting of PAC representatives regarding the DESE guidelines would provide additional guidance on this topic.
- iii. Other - Brief discussion about how to organize the Board of the Friends of the PAC and whether or not the PAC would continue to need a treasurer. The issue of needing enough members for a voting quorum was raised and it was suggested that we specify in the By-Laws that the officers of the PAC be the officers of the Friends of the PAC.

D. End of the Year Presentation to the School Committee –Work is in progress regarding Nancy and Bill's scheduled presentation to the School Committee on June 3rd.

E. Quarterly meeting with Pupil Services – Autism Parent priorities from the PAC Survey and subsequent Parent Forums were discussed. The district would like to expand the Connections Program to increase services to the autism community (grades 9-12) and complete the Hayward Center at the High School. While these in-district programs will involve a significant up-front investment, it will ultimately save the district money by keeping students in-district. Superintendent Mills is receptive to these expansions if the funds can be found. The PAC has offered to support this program development in any way it can. The need for increased professional development of regular education teachers and special education staff was also discussed in the quarterly meeting. As was changing the time of pull-out services to before or after school (vs. during academic class time). However this option would involve teacher contract negotiations regarding expanding hours for teachers or introducing flex time. Mike suggested exploring the possibility of bringing in contractors to provide the services. Next steps: Liza will outline a likely timeline and determine fiscal feasibility of autism parent recommendations.

F. Extended Year/Summer Programming – Liza will create extended year program description and attach it to individual family notification letters. In addition Liza has committed to working with Community Education to allow SpEd students access to the afternoon program for integrated, supported social pragmatics.

G. Identify topics for annual Meeting and Election of Officers/Officer Nominations for Year – Nancy asks Board members to let her know if

they will be able to run again. She mentioned that she and Bill were attempting to get Dr. Mills to come to the meeting to speak about his views on special education.

- H. Presentation Ideas for Next Year – Nancy suggested getting presentations and reservations in place prior to fall. Ideas included social pragmatics and authors of “My Baby Rides the Short Bus”.

IV. Open Issues

- A. Concerns about the process for combining outside specialists’ recommendations with district evaluations and recommendations and appropriately incorporating those recommendations into the IEP - Nancy shared that Liza had mentioned a shift towards accepting more IEE recommendations for eligibility without asserting the district’s right to test. Four out of five eligibility recommendations at the region have been accepted and 50% at the elementary level. Liza explained that the discrepancy was due to the more defined nature of special needs as children get older. Liza has agreed to track some statistics on IEEs in the coming year to better define the district’s current practice. Dr. Mills said he was supportive of a practice in which the district accepted outside testing and recommendations from quality IEEs.
- B. Mandatory special education training and professional development for regular and special education staff and hiring of dual certified staff – Nancy stated that Dr. Mills is willing to advertise the district’s preference for dual certified staff when hiring. Liza offered to put \$12,000 of ARRA grant money towards professional development for special educators.
- C. Increased use of Technology in IEP Development/Revision Process – The Task Force has received feedback from Lexington, Bedford, and Lincoln/Sudbury regarding their use of technology during the IEP process. The next step is to go visit the districts that use ESped software like we do. A discussion of the usefulness of using technology in IEP meetings took place. Mike mentioned that a couple of School Committee members are interested in this project. He also stated that the benefit of streamlining the IEP process is possibly a good enough reason to move forward with this. Bill also spoke to the fact that it was good time management. Val mentioned that it would ensure that IEP goals and benchmarks are discussed at the meeting.

Action Item: Matt to set up next IEP Technology Task Force meeting.

- V. Adjournment – A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. That motion was seconded and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.
- VI. Next Meeting – AB SpEd PAC Annual Meeting and Election of Officers on June 9th at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Valerie Ryan, Secretary.