



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting
Wednesday, May 11, 2011

MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. The following Board members attended the meeting: Bill Guthlein, Nancy Sherburne, Caroline Jarvis, Sasha Stavsky, Cynthia Overman and Valerie Ryan. Also in attendance were School Committee members Mike Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Paul Murphy as well as one other AB SpEd PAC member.
- II. Approval of Minutes
The February 9, 2011 meeting minutes were reviewed and a motion was made to approve. That motion was seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.
- III. Organizational/Business Issues
 - A. Treasurer's Report and Friends of AB SpEd PAC 501(c)(3) status – Sasha provided a written report – *Friends of Acton-Boxborough SpEd PAC, Ltd. Treasurer's Report For the period November 2010 through May 2011-* for review. She reported that the articles of organization had been submitted to the state and that this was the step necessary before applying for 501(c)(3). The by-laws adopted in February were amended to reflect officer's new titles. The next step is to apply for 501(c)(3) status once we have been in operation for a full tax year of 8 months – in October we will be eligible to apply. 501(c)(3) will be retroactive to the date we submitted the application. Filing fees for articles of organization are \$40 for the state and \$400 for federal (one time filing fees). Sasha also mentioned that all funds had been transferred to the Friends of AB SpEd PAC account and the original AB SpEd PAC account was now closed. She mentioned that the account has approximately \$2,400.00 if you include the donation she just received today.
 - B. Open Meeting Law Certification/Signature Pages – Nancy called for all board members who had not already done so to complete and turn in the certifications.
 - C. School Committee/Pupil Services Meeting Updates – Updates were given on district purchase priorities, new state criteria for teacher evaluations and summer programming.

- i. Purchase Priorities - Nancy reported that at the most recent regional school committee meeting Dr. Mills had covered purchase priorities using excess funds from staff retiring and federal grant monies. Much of these funds will be used for textbook replacement at the region as well as technology purchases such as increasing Smartboard purchases to outfit 25% of classrooms at the high school. Nancy mentioned that she had spoken to Deb Bookis about purchasing Universally Designed textbooks whenever possible, i.e., textbooks that present material at various levels as previously suggested by Caroline. Deb Bookis assured her that she and school staff have been actively seeking materials that will reach the broadest range of student learners possible. Many new textbooks now come with CDs, which allow students to access the material in different ways using technology. In addition, the district has and is continuing to purchase leveled readers particularly in the elementary grades. A brief discussion took place regarding technology purchases: Bill asked what the measurement criteria are for technology pilots and Xuan replied that teachers will be asked who wants them; a SpEd PAC member cautioned that purchase of new technology should be balanced with other priorities such as teacher education/professional development – Nancy said she had personally written to Dr. Mills and the School Committee about this issue and mentioned that if others had strong feelings about the topic that they should contact the School Committee to share their opinions before the purchases are made. For more information on the topic you can find Dr. Mills' comments included in the most recent school committee packet.
- ii. Teacher Evaluation Criteria - Bill spoke about state changes for teacher evaluation criteria. The new system proposed by the state is a two-part evaluation system of teachers that has categories ranging from Superior to Needs Improvement. The first part of the teacher evaluation system focuses on Student Outcomes (using SGP scores from MCAS results and other formative assessment data) and the second part is a traditional Principal Evaluation. If there is discrepancy between parts one and two, a third teacher evaluation will be conducted by the superintendent. The evaluation system is not tied to compensation. Two questions were raised about this evaluation system: Will it be applicable to special education staff?; and How are K-3 level teachers evaluated in terms of student performance? Comments were made about the importance of accounting for effective education of special needs children by regular and special education educators and about the necessity of a parallel evaluation system for special educators.
- iii. Summer Programming - Nancy updated the group on summer programming efforts. She stated that despite long-term efforts (since Sept./Oct.) to schedule a meeting with Liza and Erin Bettez

regarding summer programming for students on the spectrum, she had not had success. Mike mentioned that he would speak to Liza about getting a meeting scheduled and Paul mentioned he could also speak to Liza about the topic. Nancy reviewed the goal of needing enhanced summer programs for autism spectrum children and that the lack of an integrated program had been a topic brought up in the parent forum discussions. She also mentioned that summer programming fell under Least Restrictive Environment criteria and that an integrated environment was necessary to meet the needs of autism spectrum children. She also mentioned that other districts have successfully set-up integrated summer programs, which we could use as a model. The initial thought was to have a program that addresses academics in the morning with an integrated community education summer program in the afternoon. Erin Bettez has mentioned financial concerns regarding holding full-day slots open for half-day participants.

- D. Long Range Strategic Planning Committee Input – The school committee has put together a subcommittee to develop a long-range plan for the district and is currently conducting a vision and goals survey in the community. Nancy stated that she and Bill had responded on behalf of the PAC and shared a copy of their May 1, 2011 letter with meeting participants. Bill mentioned the need to be certain allowances are made for parent involvement in decision-making as well as the need to define concrete measures for success. The observation was also made that developing well-rounded students and emotional wellbeing should be priorities for the district. One member also said that if anyone was aware of students experiencing any physical barriers to school participation, as a member of the Acton Commission on Disabilities he'd like to know about it so they can take action on behalf of the student.
- E. Priorities for Next Year – Nancy mentioned that June is the Annual Meeting and Election of Officers and asked the board members to let her know if they would like to run again. Nancy suggested the following possible priorities for next year and solicited other ideas: bringing in high quality speakers for the community; creating handouts for families about each major disability; evaluating the creation of parent support groups; fundraising – direct appeal plus one other fundraiser – Caroline suggested selling energy saving light bulbs through NSTAR since all of the sales price is profit to the organization. Bill offered to analyze the survey data and conduct an MCAS analysis next fall. It was also suggested that the PAC make efforts to ensure a presence on hiring committees for district schools as a matter of course.
- F. PAC Survey Status – Nancy shared that they had received 97 responses in the first three weeks that the survey had been open.

G. Parent Handbook Status – Nancy shared that the draft is almost complete with only one and a half sections left to finish. She stated that the content would then be shared with Pupil Services for feedback. The goal is to distribute the handbook electronically in June and perhaps some hard copies in school offices and Pupil Services. The handbook will be available on the PAC website. Mike suggested it should also be made available on the district’s website. A suggestion was made to make the handbook available on individual school websites as well.

IV. Adjournment – A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, that motion was seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Next Meeting – AB SpEd PAC Annual Meeting and Election of Officers on Wednesday, June 8, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the R.J. Grey Junior High Library.

Respectfully submitted by Valerie Ryan, Secretary