



Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Business Meeting

February 25, 2014

I. Call to Order

Nancy Sherburne called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. The following AB SpEd PAC Board members attended the meeting: Nancy Sherburne, Bill Guthlein, Carolyn Sprague and Julie Towell. Four other members also attended the meeting.

II. Approval of Minutes

Review and approve minutes – The meeting minutes for November 2013 were reviewed. A motion was made to approve the minutes as written and that motion passed unanimously. The meeting minutes for January 2014 were reviewed. A motion was made to approve the minutes as written and that motion passed unanimously.

III. Organizational/Business Issues

A. Proposed AB SpEd PAC By-Law Changes – Nancy Sherburne shared some proposed changes to the AB SpEd PAC By-Laws and invited feedback on those changes. Revisions were made to fold in information from the Boxborough SpEd PAC By-Laws as we merge the two organizations as a result of K-12 regionalization efforts. The new proposed By-Laws change:

- The name of the organization to the Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council,
- Reallocate some responsibilities of the different officer positions and specify in more detail the responsibilities of each position. Some duties were shifted from Chairperson to Secretary and a new Communications officer position was created to handle event advertising, emails lists, and to moderate Parent-to-Parent posts.
- The definition of voting membership to parents or guardians of special needs children either residing in or attending school in Acton or Boxborough.
- The timing of Officer elections to once every two years at the Annual Spring Meeting, with all positions expiring on June 30th.

The proposed By-Laws were discussed in some detail. Blossom Davies suggested shifting more responsibilities to the Communications Officer (e.g. web master) and yoking the position to that of the Chairperson. There are potential difficulties regarding web expertise. We also considered whether, since the Chairperson sets the agenda, they should also send out meeting notices. However this doesn't create any efficiencies because the Secretary would still be responsible for maintaining the records.

Discussion of Secretary duties included discussion of Open Meeting Law requirements to file together and archive three forms of meeting notes (handwritten, typed, and all associated documents shared/discussed at the meeting). Options were discussed for storing the organization's records and membership list. The current membership list is an email list kept in Constant Contact. Julie Towell has requested the names and email addresses of all Boxborough families to add to Pupil Services distribution list. However, she must send out an invitation to those families to join her email list as well as the PAC email list – they can't be added without parent consent. Currently job responsibilities and records for each Officer are kept in a binder specific to that office. Nancy will check with Beth Petr, the Superintendent's Administrative Assistant, to see how long they are required to keep records and whether scanned pdfs fulfill the open meeting law requirements.

It was decided that we needed more time to discuss the specific responsibilities of each office and that a small subcommittee of folks would meet to refine the proposed By-Law changes before bringing it back to the larger group for vote. In the meantime, the proposed changes remain posted on the AB SpEd PAC website and people are invited to call or email their thoughts between meetings.

- B. Upcoming Presentations & Meetings –
 - On Mar. 12th Dr. Nadine Gaab will present “The Typical & Atypical Dyslexic and ADHD Brain and Reading”
 - On Mar. 19th we'll have our next AB SpEd PAC meeting
 - In May we hope to bring in Dr. Jeff Bostic to speak on children's mental health issues – the date is tbd

- C. New Superintendent Selection – Nancy shared her thoughts about the new superintendent, Glenn Brand. He has experience as a teacher at the elementary, middle and high school levels, experience as a school principal, as well as Assistant Superintendent. He's worked in very large school districts like Acton and has experience working in diverse communities – socio-economically and culturally. He's an excellent communicator – very articulate – and someone she thinks will work well with all of the different constituencies in town. He comes across as a man of integrity who genuinely believes in open, transparent communications. And he's said he's willing to move to town and is looking for a community to which he can make a long-term commitment as his own children grow up. We're very excited to have him on board and hope he will bring many good things to the position/district.

- D. 2015 Budget Concerns – Nancy Sherburne reported on the final 2015 budget that the School Committee voted on, which will be presented at Town Meeting in April. She is deeply concerned that the Special Education Coordinator position was cut from the 2015 budget at the last minute as this position is essential to meet the increased needs of our

expanded K-6 school district. Both the Financial Committee and Board of Selectmen lobbied the School Committee to reduce the originally proposed school budget and stated publicly that they would not support that budget at town meeting, citing projected decreases in student enrollment and concerns regarding budget sustainability. The Special Education Coordinator position and program continuation of grade 4-6 specialized services at Gates and Douglas didn't make it into the budget for the fifth year in a row, despite verbal commitments during the 2014 budget cycle that special education resources from Blanchard would be reallocated to meet these regionalization needs. The .4 Merriam Special Educator position did stay in the budget – this position was needed because of an increase in the number of special education students at that school. And the .4 Speech/Language coordinator remained in the budget as well. The budget also included 3.5 FTEs for Assistant Principals so each elementary school would now have a full-time Asst. Principal. We considered our options at this juncture to address the situation. There was discussion about whether or not funds from the budget could be reallocated by the district; however, the Chair of the School Committee had stated publicly that she would not be open to reallocating funds due to transparency concerns. We discussed the possibility of polling the membership, etc. We anticipate that the lack of sufficient special education supervision will have multiple negative effects on special education students and families. Nancy and Bill will draft a letter from the PAC to the Superintendent and School Committee regarding our 2015 budget concerns.

- IV. New Business
None was discussed.
- V. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.
- VI. Next Meeting – March 19, 2014 at 7:30 pm in the R. J. Grey Library.

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Sprague, Secretary