

Finance Committee Meeting  
Acton Town Hall, Room 204  
January 28, 2014  
MINUTES

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ACTON

**Members Present:** Pat Clifford, Mike Majors, Bill Mullin, Mary Ann Ashton, Margaret Busse, Steve Noone, Bob Evans, Herman Kabakoff, Doug Tindal and Liaison-Brian McMullen.

Chairperson Pat Clifford called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

The Chairperson led a brief overview of this evening's agenda items.

- I. Public Comment. – None  
II. Minuteman Regional High School Budget Status *Nancy Banks*

Nancy indicated that there will be two articles on the 2014 Annual Town Meeting Warrant that addresses the following:

- *Minuteman Regional School District Assessment*
- *Minuteman – new Regional Agreement*
- The budget is scheduled to be voted and approved on February 24, 2014

- III. Overview of Fiscal Year 2015 Budget for new Acton Boxborough Regional School District *Steve Mills, Superintendent and Don Aicardi, Finance Director*
- Steve Mills introduced his budget with a discussion of the upcoming Budget Saturday Budget review.
  - Steve indicated that the FY 2015 Priorities include:
    - Develop unified Pre-K to 12 budget
    - Meet the growing State and Federal requirements for school leadership
    - Meeting the needs of increasing numbers of our “at-risk” students
  - Dr. Mills recommended the FY '15 budget abides by the Finance Committee “Point-of-View” document
  - Dr. Mills indicated there are no requests for additional staff, just a realignment of existing resources

ABRSD FY '15 Operating Budget (in thousands)

	AB
FY 14 Final (Constructed)	\$ 75,326.
FY 15 Preliminary Budget	\$ 77,068.
\$ Change from Final FY 14 Budget	\$ 1,742.
% Change from FY 14 Budget	2.31%

- Questions from FinCom followed the presentation.
- Steve Noone asked where are the savings. The proposed budget looks like less money put into classroom teachers and more money into administration.
- Mary Ann Ashton agreed with the slide (#23) that addressed the “Regionalization Staff Savings” that totaled ~ \$416.5K. Mary Ann also questioned the budget reductions generated from the Blanchard school

when compared to others. She also questioned the proposed realignment of staff (Slide #22).

- Mary Ann also noted that Chapter 70 funds – the Governor's budget, is higher than previously anticipated by the schools.
- Herman commented about savings in the regionalization budget and justifying additional expenses such as adding 3 FTE Assistant Principal positions and building a case for them at the macro level.
- Doug Tindal was disappointed with the increases.
- Margaret Busse suggested to Dr. Mills that the rationale for the budget increases should be clearer.
- Bob Evans was of the opinion that realignment of existing resources should not increase costs.
- Bill Mullin stated that, contrary to Dr. Mills' comments, he does not think that this budget abides with the spirit of FinCom's Point-of-View document.
- Mary Ann stated that we have \$1 million worth of savings. How are we going to allocate those savings?
- Charlie Kadlec had a question regarding FY 15 Total Assessments and the FY 15 Operation Budget of \$77,068Pat Clifford indicated to the Superintendent that the ABRSD budget does not have the support of FinCom at this time.

#### IV. Acton Leadership Group Update

*Pat Clifford and Steve Noone*

- Pat informed the committee that the ALG addressed revenues and other issues including a one-time out-of-district special education bill for an Acton student.
- There was no consensus in the ALG except for revenue projections.
- Steve stated that there is no agreement on the tax levy (2.5% vs. 2.0%). FinCom has recommended from the beginning not to 'tax to the max' in favor of tax relief for the taxpayers.
- Bill Mullin stated that he is still looking for an answer in writing from the town regarding the status of the NESWC fund balance.
- Pat is looking for comments regarding the ALG multi-year model.
- Bill suggested that the reserve allocation should be in proportion to the ABRSC budget.
- Margaret asked that in order to generate tax relief, what are the conditions that need to be in place? Based on tonight's meeting, it looks like the taxpayers of Acton can never have tax relief.
- Mary Ann thinks the School Committee needs to put more money on the table. She also has an issue with OPEB liability as handled by the ALG as well as ABRSD.
- Doug mentioned that resistance on the part of the School Committee to be aggressive with paying down the OPEB obligation is long-standing, going back at least three years.
- Mary Ann noted that our POV document asked for tax relief, \$1.1 M for OPEB and \$1.9 from Reserves. The current ALG plan doesn't show any of those things. Herman K. agrees with Mary Ann's comments.
- David Clough (BOS) has been keeping the Board of Selectmen informed of FinCom issues. He will be looking more closely at the budget.

**V. Finance Committee Business**

- Minutes were deferred.
- Reserve Use Subcommittee – Doug Tindal will see if the committee can reach consensus on a number.
- Acton 2020 - Margaret Busse updated the committee on the Transfer of Development Rights presentation.
- CPC budget request updates by Herman Kabakoff.
- Motion was made by Margaret and seconded by Herman to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm
- Next Meeting – Tuesday, February 11, 2014

**Documents presented at Meeting:**

1. DRAFT Minuteman Regional High School “Point-by-Point Comparison” outlining differences between Current Agreement and Proposed Agreement (as prepared by Carrie Flood 1/15/2014)
2. PowerPoint Presentation: “FY15 ABRSD Budget Presentation – January 28, 2014”
3. ALG Minutes of January 23, 2014 - draft