



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 14, 2012**

**Approved:** May 23, 2012

**PRESENT:** Raid Suleiman, Chair, Christine Robinson, Clerk; Frank Powers, Member; Rebecca Neville, Member and Les Fox, Member

**ALSO PRESENT:** Selina Shaw, Town Administrator

The documents discussed herein have been included with the file copy of the agenda packet for the above-referenced date and are hereby incorporated by reference.

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 6:15 P.M., Chair Suleiman called the meeting to order in the Blanchard Memorial School Library.

**MINUTES**

It was moved and seconded to approve all of the minutes as written, specifically:

- Executive session, May 2, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)
- Executive session, May 7, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)
- Executive session #1, May 9, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)
- Executive session #2, May 9, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)
- Executive session #1, May 10, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)
- Executive session, #2 May 10, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)

**Approved 5 – 0.**

**OLD BUSINESS**

Selectmen discussed draft recommendation on Article 9 (Regionalization) and agreed to revise first paragraph to include estimated amount of savings related to transportation (\$500k - \$750k). Selectmen agreed to the “con” as written and voted 3 – 2 in favor of the sense of the meeting motion, with Members Fox and Neville dissenting.

Selectmen then agreed to the recommendation on the proposed Board of Health budget amendment, which Selectman Powers will deliver on behalf of the Board.

**ADJORN**

At 6:30 PM, Selectman Neville moved to adjourn. Seconded, and **approved 5 – 0.**



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**Meeting Agenda**  
**May 14, 2012**  
**Blanchard Memorial School library**  
**493 Massachusetts Avenue**  
**Boxborough**

**1. CALL TO ORDER, 6:15 PM**

**2. MINUTES**

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| a) Executive session, May 2, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)     | ACCEPT & POF |
| b) Executive session, May 7, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)     | ACCEPT & POF |
| c) Executive session #1, May 9, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)  | ACCEPT & POF |
| d) Executive session #2, May 9, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team)  | ACCEPT & POF |
| e) Executive session #1, May 10, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team) | ACCEPT & POF |
| f) Executive session, #2 May 10, 2012 (Contract Negotiating Team) | ACCEPT & POF |

**3. OLD BUSINESS**

- a) Annual/Special Town Meeting  
Review recommendation regarding regionalization and other town meeting prep

**4. CORRESPONDENCE**

- a) Internal Communications  
b) Minutes, Notices & Updates  
c) General Communications

ACCEPT & POF

**5. CONCERNS OF THE BOARD**

**6. ADJOURN (by 6:45 PM)**

## Sense of the meeting – regionalization

A majority of the Board of Selectmen guardedly recommend that the Regionalization Study Committee be empowered to explore the options and possible arrangements for complete regionalization of the combined school districts of Boxborough and Acton. We do not find the economic arguments for savings to be compelling, and are skeptical. Near term net savings are estimated to be about 2 FTE, which is about 0.2% of the current combined budget of the Boxborough, Acton and AB Regional districts. Additional state aid for transportation, while nice to have, would again be a fraction of 1% and subject to the uncertainties of the state budgeting process. Currently Boxborough's proportion of the regional assessment is declining due to demographic changes. For the next several years, we are likely to see a decreasing regional assessment if we do nothing. But this is not, and should not be only about the money.

It is recognized that Blanchard educational quality has been and remains very high. The appeal of full regionalization must be to ensure that in future, Boxborough school children will continue to receive outstanding education that is at the highest levels to be found throughout the Commonwealth. But, full regionalization comes with the risks of having 2/3 of the town's budget, and your tax bills, determined by external assessment from a new, expanded regional school committee.

The workings and constitution of the expanded regional school committee are unknown at present. They would be defined in a regional agreement that has yet to be written, and approved by both towns. The devil is in the details, and while there are risks and uncertainty, we believe the regionalization proposition should be explored to see if an agreement can be drafted that equitably addresses all the interests of Boxborough – both taxpayers and children. We would ask that the regionalization committee strive for adequate public input with frequent forums. We would hope to see a new model for regional committee membership take shape that gives a stronger voice to Boxborough than under the current agreement for ABRSD. We would like to see a strong role for the Boxborough Finance Committee in scrutinizing the expanded regional budget.

We can't say whether an acceptable new regional agreement can be developed – there are too many unknowns. But, we do believe it is worth a due diligence effort to give it a shot, and let the voters render judgment when they can see the final product.

A minority of the Board of Selectmen does NOT recommend moving forward with drafting a new regional agreement. The BoS recognizes that Boxborough, Acton, and AB all offer a wonderful educational experience. Currently the Boxborough School Committee and the Board of Selectmen work cooperatively to set budgets and in tight budget years, they work together to make smart budget choices. The regional assessment currently makes up 1/3 of the town's budget, and it is just that, an assessment. To push back on the assessment is very difficult in a two-town region. It ultimately would come down to a joint town meeting, in which the citizens of Boxborough would have very little say. If Boxborough were to regionalize, 2/3 of the town's budget would be an assessment which would mean that the only places to cut the budget in tight fiscal years would be the Council on Aging, the Library, the Fire Department, the Police Department, the DPW, and Town Hall.

## ATM Statement re BoH Amendment

- The Board of Selectmen recommends 5-0.
- At last year's town meeting, the Board of Selectmen supported this amendment and I personally delivered a statement supporting the restitution of \$7,000 to the Board of Health budget for Eliot Community Human Services. My point last year was that the economic slowdown had, in fact, affected Boxborough with foreclosures and people seeking help from social service organizations, including mental health organizations.
- This year the Board of Selectmen again supports reinstatement of this funding and has endorsed this recommendation. In doing so, we note the following points:
  1. Over the past year, during meetings of the Boxborough Well-Being Committee, it came to our attention that stress in our community, particularly in our school-age children, has increased significantly. The Committee was advised by counselors from Blanchard and A/B that in the process of conducting surveys of Blanchard and A/B students, a number of children indicated that they were feeling high levels of stress, AND (here's the kicker), a number of students had contemplated suicide AND (further) several had actually attempted it! This is happening to our 6<sup>th</sup> grade students as well as our high school students!
  2. Furthermore, the FY 2011 statistics illustrate a 57% increase in the number of families served by Eliot Center. From FY 2010 to FY 2011, the number of served families rose from 23 to 36. Not only that, but in 36% of the 36 families given help in FY 2011, the help was for children under 18.
- We don't know about you but the Selectmen find these points quite disturbing.
- Eliot Community Human Services exists to help people in need of mental assistance and their policy is to not turn anyone away, regardless of ability to pay or insurance coverage.
- If we do not continue our annual support for Eliot, their services to Boxborough residents may not terminate immediately but this cut will have an impact on Eliot's ability to provide those services over time.
- We clearly have a need for Eliot's services in Boxborough and, for that reason, we support this amendment to restore the sum of \$7,000 to the Board of Health budget for Eliot Center.