



**Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 14, 2020**

APPROVED: October 6, 2020

At 7:02 PM Select Board Chair Wes Fowlks called the virtual meeting to order via ZOOM. This meeting was conducted via Remote Participation, pursuant to the Current Executive Order.

Attendance

(Parties identified herein may not have been in attendance for the entire duration of this meeting)

Select Board: Wes Fowlks, John Markiewicz, Maria Neyland, Les Fox and Bob Stemple

Finance Committee: Becky Neville and Ling Chen [7:10 PM]

ABR School Committee: Tessa McKinley

Library Board of Trustees: Jennifer Campbell

Planning Board: Cindy Markowitz

Other Attendees: Ryan Ferrara, Town Administrator; John Fallon, Moderator; Jennifer Barrett, Finance Dir./Town Accountant; and Peishan Bartley, Library Director

New members

The Group welcomed John Markiewicz as the newest Select Board member.

Minutes

Neville moved to accept the minutes of May 12, 2020, as amended. Seconded by Stemple. **Approved by Roll**

Call vote: 8-0, Neville "aye," Stemple "aye," Markiewicz "aye," Markowitz "aye," Fox "aye," Neyland "aye,"

McKinley "aye," and Fowlks "aye." Campbell abstained.

COVID-19 Updates – AT Ferrara

- The Town has recorded 30 households that have tested positive for COVID-19. We are tracking numbers by households because if one household member is positive the entire household has been exposed. This number has remained stable since Town Meeting. With the encouraging reports coming in from the State the Emergency Operations Center at the Regency has been suspended and all Public Safety operations have returned to their respective stations but are continuing to monitor. Weekly meetings with Acton and A-B School officials are still being held. Based on a parent survey as to COVID-19 educational models for the fall, 80% preferred in school learning. They are working on how to manage educating the 20% that opted for remote learning. All of these plans remain in flux. McKinley would expand on this under AB School Reports. DPW is back to normal operations. Town Hall staff is working at 50% in house capacity; managing operations with flex-schedules and working remotely. This seems to be able to meet the needs of residents while following State guidelines. The safety precautions we had implemented at Town Meeting seem to have worked. He expanded on the metric used to determine the household number versus individual cases. Our local tracking actually puts us a few above the State tracking data. There was discussion about how the Town might be able to obtain the number of "recovered" as reported on the State's COVID-19 dashboard.

Select Board updates – Fowlks /TA Ferrara

- The Board has elected him as Chair for FY 2021.
- We have also updated the liaison assignments.
- Based on last night's discussions it seems the consensus was to make Boxborough more racially accepting;. This will be an ongoing topic for the next few meetings.
- The Route 111/Mass. Ave. sidewalk – the MassDoT recently determined that they wanted the Town to undertake additional construction components, potentially doubling the projected cost. TA Ferrara expanded on this. We are working to bring in our legislators to work through these issues with MassDoT. The project timeline will be determined by how soon our legislators can get this going. It is all dependent on getting

MassDoT's cooperation. These engineering concerns were brought up for the first time by others at MassDoT during the permit review process. We are pushing back. Neyland reviewed the history/background on this project. Our MassWorks grant deadline is pending. There was discussion with the long-term vision of completing a sidewalk to the Acton townline and the roll of the current project. Route 111 limitations always seems to stymie pedestrian improvements for us and other communities.

AB Regional School Committee and School Building Project Committee updates – McKinley

- The Committee was finally able to re-organize after Acton's ATM. Evelyn Abayaah-Issah is the only new Boxborough member. There are two new Acton Members – Kyra Cook and Yebin Wang and Amy Krishnamurthy was also re-elected. She [McKinley] was re-elected as Committee Chair.
- The task before the District is daunting. Multiple committees have been formed to address the various issues with the District's fall re-opening protocols, and constant meetings. She referenced some of those components. They are committed to providing a virtual option and working out the logistics. They are working on modeling the variables of hybrid learning. Massachusetts numbers remain manageable, however, the recent news from the rest of the country has made many families and the MTA concerned about how can we safely allow for a return to the schools. Supt. Light and the ABRSC is working to develop options but everything remains in flux. Then we have to submit the District's plans to the State on July 30th for approval. However, there is no deadline for when the State needs to issue their direction. Once these plans are finalized families will be asked to commit to one of these final options for the academic year. Providing multiple education models will have a significant impact on staffing. They are also being asked to implement anti-bias measures; issues with the appropriation of the District's mascot; promote diversity hiring while dealing with issues that have come up during the closure and their re-opening plans. They anticipate using CARES Reimbursement to purchase laptops for some students [e.g.all high school student] however funding prospective, overall, in dealing with all of these components is still in flux. She knows the overall schedule is under discussion, but she is waiting to be informed on this. The infection/quarantine scenarios are also being discussed but again, this is being addressed by a subcommittee that she is not participating in. However, these contingency plans are required by the State and are being implemented.

Library updates – Dir. Bartley

- Pursuant to the current directives of the Governor's re-opening plan, libraries are allowed to let patrons in to browse, however after considering many factors, staffing levels, how comparable public libraries are not, as yet, re-opening it was decided that they would not open at this time. Acton is looking at August.
- In the meantime, thanks to Bldg. Insp. Herget and the DPW we have removed public seating and installed various safety barriers.
- They will continue with curbside pick-up initiated in June. It has been well received by patrons and seems to be a success. Their virtual programs [e.g. story time, Town Meeting 101 discussion group] have also been very well received and they continue to look for ways to expand these offerings and workshop suggestions are welcomed. There was a more expanded discussion on the Town Meeting 101 program and that they are hoping to make this part of a series and attendees spoke to possible ways to expand our civic engagement, overall.

Planning Board updates - Markowitz

- They welcomed two new members – Robin Lazarow and Mark Barbadoro.
- Thanks to the Planner they were able to participate in a pro bono training session conducted by Atty. Costa.
- They will be meeting with the EDC this week to review the UMass study materials.
- They have had discussions as to community outreach and communication, specifically the input that, for many, the first time they hear about an item that impacts the Town, e.g. zoning changes, is on Town Meeting floor. She personally voiced her support of the Select Board's efforts on this.
- All four Town Meeting articles passed. At Town Meeting there were lively discussions for "specialty foods" article. Participants discussed the COVID-19 allowances currently in place and the impact of the final bylaw language on these allowances. The Board of Health would likely be the arbitrator if the "curbside" service is sought under similar emergency provisions.

Finance Committee updates - Neville

- Kushner has been re-elected as Chair and Lyons as Clerk.
- They approved all of the Year-end Reserve Fund and Interdepartmental Transfer(s).
- They do need new members. It is not an exciting committee; but it is a necessary committee. We'd like to see more diversity.

Participants discussed that it would be nice to see more diversity on all boards. There is also a concern about the cost to move to Town; not just taxes but the sale prices themselves. The school system is what makes us so attractive. If we want a diverse community we need reasonable, moderately priced housing, maybe exploring atypical housing solutions, including cluster and increased density. It is a balancing act. This is a bigger, more holistic conversation.

Town Meeting Review - Fallon

He thanked those involved in making this ATM possible. The physical set up and processes seem to have worked out well. He felt pretty safe. The positive was how normal discussions were, once everyone got used to the setup – business as usual. Even with reducing the number of articles, a fall special town meeting will not be needed. All of the necessary items were taken up. Pleased with the input provided by some that were speaking for the first time. Historically attendance was down by just 25%; with a 118 in attendance night one; with 75 on the second night. The surprise of the night was the squirrel invading the room. Participants relayed the positive feedback they received from voters as to the set-up and protections put in place. Today is the two-week mark from Town Meeting. It went very well. With our pair seating lay out, we were able to fit 200, properly distanced, seats in that space.

He has been receiving input from other communities about outside Town Meetings. Mass. Moderators and Select Boards were wrestling with this from early on during the crisis. The State didn't issue their outdoor venue recommendation until mid-June. Overall it worked for most but there were two communities that had significant issues. The key seems to have significant and effective "Tech support." Three outdoor meeting models were implemented– voters in vehicles; tent seating; and the last is open air seating. Prime motivator for outdoor venue was capacity. As we are smaller than most other communities so we could provide sufficient seating for our anticipated turn-out at the Regency. These outdoor communities lucked out with the dry weather. 50% of these outdoor Town Meetings had issues with voting. However, it seemed that outdoor voters were very judicious in commenting. Overall these outdoor events went much quicker than anticipated. It is going to take a huge amount of planning and significant tech support. Communities re-scheduled these outdoor meetings to the daytime unless they had stadium lighting and generators would have been too noisy. Participants provided input – overall attendance was down in most communities. Acton's dual indoor/outdoor model cost over \$30,000 and tech was managed by five fulltime staff members to work the event. Conditions remain fluid with this pandemic. The Representative town meetings were allowed to meet virtually but there were still some issues.

Meeting Dates - The consensus was that the next meeting will be determined by the ABRSC Chair McKinley and TA Ferrara as many concerns are influx over the coming months. [*To be Chaired by ABRSC*]

Adjourn

At 8:23 PM, Neville moved to adjourn. Seconded by Campbell **Approved by Roll Call vote: 10-0**, Fox "aye," Neville "aye," Campbell "aye," Markowitz "aye," Neyland "aye," Markiewicz "aye," Ling "aye," McKinley "aye," Stemple "aye," and Fowlks "aye."

Exhibits

Agenda

Regular Minutes of 5/12/20 – Draft

BLF leadership schedule