

**ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
Minutes (SC approved 6/16/11)

Room 204  
Acton Town Hall

June 6, 2011  
7:15 p.m.

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*Members Present:* Michael Coppelino, Xuan Kong, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, John Petersen  
*Members Absent:* None  
*Others:* Janet Adachi (BOS), Lili Early, Michael Gowing (BOS), Pamela Harting-Barrat (BOS), Steve Ledoux, Beth Petr

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At 7:18 p.m., the Acton Public School Committee was called to order by Michael Coppelino, Chair. The Acton Board of Selectmen was called to order by Michael Gowing, Chair to begin the joint meeting.

The meeting was called, per state law, to fill the vacancy on the School Committee created by the resignation of Terry Lindgren on May 12, 2011. By joint agreement of the Chairs, the deadline for application to fill the vacancy was June 2, 2011. Two applications were received. Two BOS members were recused from the meeting due to a conflict of interest (Dave Clough, John Sonner).

1. Introduction

Dennis Bruce and Adria Cohen were welcomed and introduced by the Chairs. They each made introductory remarks about their desire to serve on the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committees.

2. Questions from the Committees

• **What do you perceive your role to be as a School Committee member?**

Adria emphasized that she has sat at both sides of the desk as a parent and a licensed educator. Budgetary concerns are paramount to her, with a focus on quality education. She has extensive experience in immersion classes, initiating and funding new programs and working with English Language Learners with over 35 years of experience working in school environments.

Dennis described a focus as a collaborative member of the Committee, looking forward to working on a wide variety of issues. His professional background is in auditing and sales, working with numbers and processes. Serving as the Gates PTO Treasurer has given him valuable insight.

• **One of the concerns that people have with the School Committee is whether committee members act as an advocate for the students or an advocate for the town overall. Who would you advocate for?**

Both applicants said that although elected by the people to represent the children, school committee members must also look at it from the expense side, from the taxpayers' side. They emphasized the need to spend wisely and be fiscally responsible while ensuring the best education possible for students.

• **Some policies are specific to Acton and some apply to many communities. What is the best decision-making process for creating policy?**

Dennis felt that it is good to have benchmarks, but just because towns are similar, doesn't mean their policies make sense for Acton. He emphasized talking to people on the boards, committees and in the community.

Adria cautioned about how the word policy is used. She looks at how other communities of similar demographics and size have handled issues because it is not always necessary to reinvent the wheel. It must kept in mind that our policies must stand up to the scrutiny of our parents and our taxpayers.

- **There is an increasing burden on parents with children in the schools to raise money via their PTOs and other groups. What percentage of the school budgets should be impacted by this fundraising, if any?**

Adria emphasized how much the schools appreciate the PTOs and felt they should fund materials and activities that can't be funded through the regular budget. She suggested that 10% of the budget, or maybe a little less.

Dennis has spent a lot of time fundraising for Gates with his wife, with much of it going to fund assistants. He feels that the percentage should be left to the principals and administration of each school to decide, based on their own philosophies. He mentioned the difficulty that parents feel when their fundraising feels like it is required.

- **Please describe your involvement in the Acton Public schools and how many School Committee meetings you have attended.**

Dennis has children at the Gates School and has served as PTO Treasurer and has been very involved there. He has attended many School Committee meetings.

Adria moved to Acton in 1987 and her son is now in college. She was involved when regionalization was looked at years ago and spoke with curriculum directors about getting more foreign language programs in the schools. She is very active in the school system where she works and would like to get more involved now because her son benefited so much from our schools.

### 3. Closing Statements and **VOTE**

After closing statements, the chairs thanked Dennis and Adria for volunteering for the School Committee and wanting to get involved.

It was unanimously **VOTED** by roll call that Dennis Bruce should fill the vacancy on the School Committee. (Xuan Kong - Dennis, Paul Murphy -Dennis, Kim McOsker - Dennis, John Petersen - Dennis, Mike Coppolino - Dennis, Mike Gowing - Dennis, Pam Harting-Barrat - Dennis, Janet Adachi -Dennis)

The Chairs thanked everyone involved. Adria was urged to stay involved in the community where her considerable experience and skills would be very valuable.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr