

Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Acton Board of Selectmen, Acton Finance Committee, Acton Public School Committee, and Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee (approved by JT SC 11/1/12)

October 16, 2012, 7:00 p.m., RJ Grey Junior High Library

Pursuant to a notice duly posted with the Town Clerk and with a quorum of members present, the committees convened at 7:00 p.m. on October 16, 2012, to share issues related to long-range planning.

Moderator Bart Wendell introduced the evening, and members introduced themselves. In addition to a quorum of each of the boards, two members each from the Boxborough Board of Selectmen and Boxborough Finance Committee attended, as well as the Acton Town Manager, Acton Finance Director, Acton/Acton-Boxborough Superintendent of Schools, Acton/Acton-Boxborough Finance Director, and Boxborough Town Administrator.

The participants broke into four groups to work through the exercise described below.

The purpose of this exercise is to provide practice in working with members of the other boards/committees as well as seeing issues through their eyes. The conversation, though non-binding, may help to inform actual deliberation in the future.

The Dilemmas

A 'dilemma' describes a problem for which there is no right answer, only some answers that are better than others.

For those of us living in Acton (and likely Boxborough), three dilemmas in particular have risen to the surface. They are:

- A. OPEB vs. Present Services: Do we fund as fully as possible our pension liabilities according to the first analyses published this past year or do we protect present services at minimally their present levels or even increase funding for specific areas?
- B. The Revenue Allocation Split: Do we use funds freed by decreasing student enrollments to fund the needs of the citizens for municipal services or the needs of the citizens for school services (most specifically increased interaction between students and faculty)?
- C. Services vs. Tax Rate: Do we prioritize a reasonable property tax rate or focus on residents' desire for services?

Obviously, to fully vet responses to each of these dilemmas is far beyond the 20 minutes we have this evening. Rather, the task of each group is to:

- 1. Decide which of these three dilemmas should receive the *greatest* emphasis and attention this year.
- 2. Be prepared to present your group's consensus decision to the entire group in 2 minutes or less.

Ground rules:

- 1. The groups' 'decisions' are to be made by consensus, meaning:

- a. All support this decision as the best choice achievable in the interest of the community even though it might not be, personally, their top choice
- b. All views have been heard

Note: The third condition of true consensus, that all agree to support the decision in the future, does not apply to this practice situation.

Each group reported back to the whole, and individuals offered their feedback on the evening.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

School Committee members present:

Michael Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Paul Murphy, Kim McOsker, Maria Neyland, Deanne O'Sullivan

School Committee members absent:

Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce

Others:

Don Aicardi, Steve Mills