

**Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee Workshop**  
**Approved Minutes**

October 29, 2020 7:00 p.m.

Via zoom: <https://abschools.zoom.us/j/91041287020?pwd=M0FaRDJ6K3lLWGH3aE9BN2lOUjBQQT09>

**"People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed."**  
*(Samuel Johnson, English author, critic, and lexicographer (1709-1784))*

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Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang

Members Absent: *none*

Others: Peter Light, Beth Petr, member of the public

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**I. Opening Comments**

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:11 p.m. by Chairperson Tessa McKinley. She noted that the workshop was being conducted remotely via Zoom per policy BEDJA and that all 11 members were present. She stated that although it was a posted public meeting, because it was a Committee workshop, she would not include public participation. Tessa reminded everyone that the next regular School Committee meeting would be on November 5<sup>th</sup>, via zoom as usual.

Tessa welcomed Tony Bent who looked forward to facilitating the discussion of School Committee members' roles and responsibilities in light of the partnership of the Committee and the Superintendent working together for the benefit of the kids.

**II. Roles and Responsibilities**

The School Committee is responsible for "The BIG THREE" (MGL. 71 Section 37) which includes: hiring and evaluating the Superintendent, creating and presenting the School Budget and creating and maintaining School Policies.

The Superintendent is responsible for: managing the system (MGL. 71 Section 59), implementing school committee policy, and adhering to State and Federal Laws.

**III. 7 Signs of Effective School Board Members**

Members discussed this article.

1. "Going solo's a no-no" & "Respect the team"

Members talked about the importance of the "12<sup>th</sup> member" that represents all 11 committee members. Not respecting this shows disregard for leadership. An interesting point was made about the difference between Congress and School Committee members. The Committee is like a board of governors representing all children whereas Congress represents the taxpayers that elected them.

2. "Understand the difference between board and staff" & "Share and defend your views, but listen to the views of others"

The difference between board and staff can be difficult for new members. Members shouldn't "wander into school operations" and if they do, they should be told not to. This can be tricky when some members have specific expertise. A balance must be struck at meetings between including enough member discussion/community perspective and efficient decision-making so it doesn't appear that decisions have already been made.

3. “Do your homework and ask tough questions”, “Respect your oath” & “Keep learning”  
This depends on a member’s definition of homework, and how long a meeting should last. Sometimes hard work is done outside of the meeting, such as with the mascot. Members spent countless hours reading and considering the public input and that may not have been obvious at the meeting. Just because someone disagrees does not mean they did not listen. Communication is essential. Tony offered that if something is not communicated, people will often make up what they think should have been said. The Open Meeting Law can make this complicated and the general public is not aware of the law. Things often need to be repeated three times. Important details can be included in meeting minutes.

#### IV. **Acton-Boxborough Operating Protocols**

Members discussed the existing protocols. Comments included:

- Support the educational welfare and well-being of ALL students in a positive district culture and climate
  1. Bullet #2: “assure *administrative* accountability”
  2. Bullet #3: “... and staff *and hold them accountable* in their implementations of policies and operations *that are inclusive and equitable.*”
  3. Include “equity” in this protocol, but it should be defined. Mr. Light offered that “equity” has an element of resource allocation that things get to the students who need them and opens access and opportunities to groups of students. Ultimately they are looking for students outcomes but some are also opportunities.
- Demonstrate professional and collegial relations at all times
  1. How do members maintain their individual convictions as part of a group?
  2. As decisions get made, there is a history of the process so the Committee can review that and see what worked well and what did not and adjust.
- Dedicate ourselves to establishing and maintaining effective communication
  1. How can Open Meeting Law information be shared with the public so they understand why committee members cannot always answer a question?
  2. Bullet #2: “...from the public, AND FROM SCHOOL COMM in shaping...”

It was agreed that Tessa, Beth and Mr. Light would incorporate these into a draft for consideration at a future School Committee meeting.

#### V. **Closing Comments**

Members were asked why they do this work. Responses included: it’s interesting, important, enriching, fun, I like the people, it keeps me connected to education, it helps me exercise my leadership muscle, I want to share my technical knowledge, I like to study models and how they’re effective or fail, I want to give my energy to the children including my own, teachers helped me when education was not working for me and I want to help make it work for others. The most common response was that members want to give back to the community.

John Petersen moved, Adam Klein seconded and it was unanimously,

**VOTED by roll call:** to adjourn the ABRSC at 9:13 p.m.

(YES: Abayaah-Issah, Baum, Cook, Klein, Kremer, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Petersen, Shine, Tso, Wang)

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: Agenda, 7 Signs of Effective School Board Members (*Kathryn Blumsack and Terry McCabe*, 2017), ABRSC Operating Protocols voted 9/20/18