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Minutes
Town of Belmont
Board of Selectmen / School Committee
Selectmen's Meeting Room
Friday, May 11, 2018
8:30am

APPROVED
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
DATE: 10/1/2018

CALL TO ORDER

Present were:

Board of Selectmen - Chair Adam Dash, Vice-Chair Mark Paolillo, Selectmen Tom Caputo.

School Committee - Susan Burgess-Cox (Chair), Andrea Prestwich (Secretary), Lisa Fiore, Catherine Bowen, Tara Donner.

Candidates - Michael Crowley, Jill Norton, Mary Boomhower, Sarabinh Levy-Brightman.

Adam Dash called the meeting to order and turned it over to Susan Burgess-Cox. S. Burgess-Cox explained how the interviews and nomination vote would proceed.

CANDIDATE OPENING STATEMENTS:

The candidates provided opening statements to the Board of Selectmen and School Committee.

- Michael Crowley (MC): In second year serving on the Warrant Committee; would give up if chosen for School Committee. Senior Fellow for Brennan Center for Justice in New York. Focus on the budget for the schools, 23 year background in budgeting and government management.
- Jill Norton (JN): Parent, lived in Belmont for past 16 years. Recently ran for School Committee. Classroom teacher, State level policy advisor, ran a research think tank. Managed budgets for non-profit organizations.
- Mary Boomhower (MB): Parent of three, one child currently attending Daniel Butler School. Passion is education, recent graduate with Bachelor's in Early Childhood Studies. Focus on play in the early years, would like to see schools offer more free play for learning, emotional and social development.
- Sarabinh Levy-Brightman (SLB): New to Belmont. Fresh eyes informed by life as an educator inside and outside the classroom. Worked with schools and school districts in a variety of capacities, deep understanding of impact of school committees on financial/cultural aspects of community.

QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES:

1. Tara Donner asked what the candidates think is the greatest strength of Belmont Public Schools, and the greatest challenge.
- JN: Strengths are community engagement in schools, prioritization of schools by the community. Exploding enrolment growth is a challenge, impacts everything across the district in terms of in classroom experience, after school care, teachers dealing with high class sizes.

- MB: Amazing community involvement and great teachers who invest in students. After care is a challenge, trying to find an open spot for every child.
- SLB: Ability of teachers and administrators to engage each child uniquely in a compassionate way is a great strength. Aware of growing enrolment, overcrowding is an issue.
- MC: School have a great and well-deserved reputation, students are well-served. This leads to the challenge of increasing enrollment. Have to cope, without sacrificing quality.

2. *Catherine Bowen asked what the candidates felt was the most important/valuable perspective they bring to the School Committee.*

- MB: As a parent and with a background in education. Play is key issue, son has two 15 minute recesses which will be reduced to one next year; this concerns her. Many studies back the importance of play for child development.
- SLB: Insider in education, see and think through ways in which decisions impact people on the ground in schools. Ability to work collaboratively, think creatively about solutions.
- MC: Background in public policy, budgeting and governmental management. Challenge for our school system, can contribute in this area. Focus on resources/budget.
- JN: As a parent. Career in education from multiple perspectives, contribute to a range of issues. Connections to research, policy, funding opportunities in Massachusetts and across the country. Experience with driving policy in a consensus building way.

3. *Adam Dash asked the candidates if they see the School Committee as a body which should collaborate with other Town bodies, and what they would do to improve collaboration.*

- SLB: Conceptually, fully supportive of collaboration of the School Committee with various other committees. Can't speak specifically on how to foster collaboration with other Town bodies, being a newer resident of the community.
- MC: Need for collaboration. Knowledgeable of collaboration with Warrant Committee. Can envision other collaboration: traffic advisory, CPC in terms of playing fields for new high school, longer term financial plan with the Town.
- JN: Impressed with amount and spirit of collaboration in the Town. Given potential override with High School Building project, think about engaging other people in the community, e.g. seniors (Council on Aging, Senior Center).
- MB: Collaboration always necessary, Traffic and Building Committees with new high school project. Agree that it is important to engage seniors, especially with potential rise in property taxes. Keep the economic diversity in Belmont.

4. *Lisa Fiore asked how much time candidates will have available for School Committee, and how it would fit into other commitments.*

- MC: Prepared to cut back or eliminate other responsibilities if appointed. Resign from Warrant Committee. Research project with Brennan Center is winding down.
- JN: Currently work part-time and recently reduced hours. Flexible schedule, can adjust to make time for meetings.

- MB: Finishing degrees, have more free time; taking time off before continuing education. Work part-time, have a gap of time.
- SLB: Fair amount on plate but flexible schedule. Work half-time, not in evenings; just wrapped up several projects. Travel out of state every other month, but can schedule around these trips in advance. Not overloaded with projects or would not be a candidate.

CANDIDATE CLOSING STATEMENTS:

- JN: Bring multiple perspectives on education and wealth of experience, relevant background. Contribute level-headed temperament to address contentious issues. Understand the importance of communication, ability to disagree respectfully.
- MB: Bring flexibility and desire to work hard on the important issues of School Committee.
- SLB: Love of learning and commitment to education, along with experience in understanding how school environments shape children and cultures around them. Involved with schools undergoing renovations and re-configurations, find these issues exciting to work on.
- MC: Keep an eye on increasing diversity in the school system, important issue. Appreciate and respect the hard decision being made by the Board and School Committee.

VOTING:

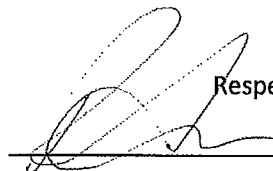
Susan Burgess-Cox invited the Board of Selectmen and School Committee member to share their votes.

- Tara Donner voted for Michael Crowley.
- Andrea Prestwich voted for Michael Crowley.
- Mark Paolillo voted for Michael Crowley.
- Adam Dash voted for Michael Crowley.
- Tom Caputo voted for Jill Norton.
- Susan Burgess-Cox voted for Jill Norton.
- Lisa Fiore voted for Jill Norton.
- Catherine Bowen voted for Jill Norton.

Michael Crowley offered to withdraw himself from the nomination process. The Board of Selectmen and School Committee accepted his withdrawal.

Motion by the School Committee: To appoint Jill Norton to the School Committee. (Vote passed 5-0)

Motion by the Board of Selectmen: To appoint Jill Norton to the School Committee. (Vote passed 3-0)

 Respectfully Submitted,

Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator