

Precinct 7 Town Meeting Candidates

Eight to be elected, thirteen on the ballot

If no candidate profile is shown, the candidate did not submit a profile.

(* indicates incumbent)

William McPadden

wgmpadden@gmail.com

Community Activities

Supporter of local and national causes, including the Council of Social Concern, Winchester Hospital, National Braille Press, Perkins School for the Blind, American Red Cross, Boston Children's Hospital and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. I am also a past Winchester recreational soccer coach (5 years).

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

Excellence in Academics; Sound Financial Management & Condition; Appropriate Long-Range Planning.

Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?

Schools are the bedrock of Winchester. Education budgets are approaching \$60M in annual expenditure, representing ~42% of Winchester's gross annual expenditure. This is a significant amount, and we must always choose to spend wisely. Schools draw people to the Town, support real estate valuations and mold future leaders. Many pressures are placed on students, teachers, facilities, administrators, and support staff to achieve academic excellence. It is a delicate balance to ensure curriculum is met and varied enough to meet the needs of all. Extracurricular activities provide opportunities to further develop our children and we need our facilities to support these activities. That said, we must further ensure the remaining ~58-60% of gross annual expenditures provide for adequate and appropriate levels of support for Municipal, Capital, and other budgetary needs. My focus is to support the long-term stability and viability of Winchester.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved?

We are fortunate to have a top tier school system, a world class Hospital, and supportive residents. My chief concerns include a lack of affordable housing for seniors and families, as well as a small commercial tax base. There exists the opportunity to solicit and work with partners to support development which advance these objectives and promote a vibrant Winchester.

Do you support the proposal to build a stand-alone administrative building for the Winchester Public Schools, to be developed by restoring the Carriage House adjacent to the Sanborn House?

Maintaining and using Town lands & buildings is always an economic challenge. The Carriage House, under the purview of the School Committee, sat vacant and neglected for years. The School Committee has proposed to move its Central Office from Parkhurst, since the space is much larger than needed, and the facility faces large capital and replacement needs. The

estimated construction costs plus contingency are ~\$5M for the Carriage House, plus another ~\$1M of soft costs. While the gross square footage is cited as 8,100, the design provides 4,330 square feet of space for offices, workstations, meeting rooms and support areas. This is an exceptionally large price, with all costs funded by the Town.

An alternative considered by the School Committee is to relocate into the Lynch School as part of its redevelopment. That construction cost estimate is slightly less and occurs in 2025 vs 2023. Going to Lynch provides an opportunity for potential reimbursement from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, although not guaranteed. There is always the opportunity to remain at Parkhurst. It would be good to understand what, if any plans there are to address the capital needs there. Lastly, in these days of remote working, it is difficult to tell if virtual and/or mobile opportunities within existing facilities, were considered.

I do not support this proposal. Becoming a Member of Town Meeting will provide me the opportunity to ask questions and stake reasoned long-term positions on matters such as this.

Bradford Otis

Michelle McCarthy*

Sally K. Dale*

Community Activities

Vice Chair, Winchester Planning Board Town Meeting Member Precinct 7

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

- Civic communications plagued by lack of access to facts and real data, and by dissemination of disinformation
- The impacts of development pressure, including loss of mid-price housing and loss of smaller historic homes, rising home prices, and exclusionary outcomes
- Climate of cultural and political divisiveness undermining deeply vetted town-wide strategic plans and policies
- Inadequate funding – both town-funded and grant funded -- for town-wide initiatives

Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?

Climate of cultural and political divisiveness undermining deeply vetted town-wide strategic plans and policies.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved? Does well:

- clean streets, well maintained sports fields, schools, library, Wright Locke Farm Needs

to be improved:

- enforcement of our Town Bylaws and Zoning Bylaws; protection of trees; preservation of existing mid-priced housing stock; expand safe sidewalks and create designated bike routes all across town;

Do you support the proposal to build a stand-alone administrative building for the Winchester Public Schools, to be developed by restoring the Carriage House adjacent to the Sanborn House?

I do. The costs associated with this project are not ONLY to create 18 workstations inside an office building, but to also renovate and preserve an historic structure that is a key component of an historic property owned by the town. I endorse the strategy to provide for our School Department –

- one of Winchester's defining enterprises – a headquarters location that does not use up space in any of our school buildings. It keeps the school's space flexible and available for growth, and provides our schools' leadership with purpose-built space that supports their goals and work plans.

Donnette Peltier*

Community Activities

We have lived in Winchester for almost 30 years and have raised two children here.

I've been an active member of the En Ka Society for 20+ years. I've held many positions in the society including President and Society Treasurer.

I've been a Town Meeting Member for 5+ years and I am generally impressed with how the town is governed and with the hard-working, thoughtful individuals who volunteer to serve on the various town governing bodies. I attend the Town Meeting sessions, I come prepared, and I listen carefully to all sides of a debate before casting my vote.

Candidate Statement

I am an independent thinker and welcome input on town issues from all Winchester residents and from Precinct 7 residents in particular.

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

I believe that we must continue to maintain, support, and improve our excellent public schools because I believe that will keep Winchester a desirable place to live, to raise a family and it will support property values.

I also believe that we must grow responsibly and balance the needs for more affordable housing and economic diversity with fiscal responsibility – a tough thing to do. I would like to see us strive to maintain Safe Harbor to prevent hostile 40B development that I believe has a negative impact on the town's ability to plan for increased traffic, increased public school enrollment and which adds more pressure to our infrastructure and to our parking problems.

I also think we need to improve the town-wide dissemination of information. This needs to be done in a fact-centered, non-biased and respectful manner.

Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?

I would love to see more community engagement in town-wide discussions. It seems like many residents don't know where to look for information regarding issues facing the town. I'm very excited about the newly formed Communications Study Committee whose mission is to address this issue. I'd also like to see a more respectful and positive tone to all civic engagement –

particularly when it is conducted on Facebook. I would also like to see more precinct-focused discussions to solicit resident feedback on articles coming for a vote.

In addition I believe that controlled, well-planned and fiscally responsible growth is very important. Much time and effort has gone into developing the town's Master Plan. Fine tuning it and executing the plan will be trickier and will continue for years to come.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved?

Our strengths;

- Town governance and quality leaders
- Academic Excellence
- Beautiful town center with great small businesses and restaurants
- Direct access to the commuter rail and buses.

To improve;

- Affordable housing planning process
- Public parking and traffic safety;
- Community engagement in the issues facing the town in a fact-based, non-partisan, translucent way.

Do you support the proposal to build a stand-alone administrative building for the Winchester Public Schools, to be developed by restoring the Carriage House adjacent to the Sanborn House?

I will wait to see the results of the study being done to assess this topic. This has not yet come before Town Meeting for a vote on funding. I am very interested to hear from our elected boards as well as from our town meeting members when it does come for a vote.

Linda M. Baba*

P7lindababa@yahoo.com

Please list your Community Activities:

“Attend” various meetings via WinCam
Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church – member
Support Swim Winchester
Town Meeting Member – Rules Committee

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

Safety: Improvements have been made, but need to do more.

Schools: Support plans to rebuild Lynch and support initiative to rebuild/renovate Muraco.

Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?

Safety, which impacts our entire community, young and old.

Two items of critical importance:

- 1) Crosswalk Safety: Need to install more flashing crosswalk signals.
- 2) Intersection Safety: Lake Avenue, Main Street, and Cross Street. Since the intersections are in Woburn, we need to cost-share to improve traffic safety.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved?

Does well: Winchester provides excellent youth athletic programs.

Need to improve: Need to develop a successful strategy to support affordable housing.

Do you support the proposal to build a stand-alone administrative building for the Winchester Public Schools, to be developed by restoring the Carriage House adjacent to the Sanborn House? Town Meeting has approved funds to study this issue. I will review the results of this study, but more importantly, I'll also listen to the favorable and unfavorable recommendations from the elected boards.

Paul C. Casey*

Cynthia Dedo Kelley*

Steven Cucinatti
Candidate Statement

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Steven Cucinatti and I am running for Town Meeting in Precinct 7. I feel very fortunate to have grown up in Winchester and have matriculated through the public school system here while playing on various sports teams throughout my youth and in high school. I recently moved back to town with my wife and our four young children, and we look forward to raising them here. I have been a proud member of the Winchester High Hockey Alumni Association for years and since moving back have coached both youth soccer and hockey. The decision to run for Town Meeting is rooted in my love for the Town of Winchester and the desire to continue to give back to a community that has given me so much.

Winchester has long been a community with a strong strategic vision, however, recently that vision has shifted, and I am concerned with the direction the town is going. Decisions regarding fiscal responsibility, economic development, school policy and management of town operations should be made to reflect the community's values and priorities as a whole. We must work together with full transparency and communication to make the right choices that will allow us to attain the short-term and long-term goals of the community; allowing Winchester to prosper for years to come.

If given the opportunity to represent precinct 7, I will work diligently to produce results that meet the needs of the community while making the best use of our resources. A vote for me will help to bring back the Balance, Transparency and Accountability that the residents of this community deserve.

Nancy Jones

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

As a long-time Winchester resident who had three children in the school system, I think that fiscal responsibility and academic excellence remain two of Winchester's most important issues. They are not mutually exclusive issues. Winchester tax payers, both young and senior, can expect academic excellence from our schools. Winchester students tend to perform well because Winchester families place a high value on, and are closely involved in, their children's education. It is a reason why many families move to Winchester.

Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?

I feel most passionate about academic excellence and parental involvement in our schools. I believe that students and teachers should be rewarded for academic excellence and that parents need to be closely involved in their children's education.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved?

Winchester has excellent fire, police, and public works departments, as well as an excellent senior citizen center. My children were very well prepared academically by our Winchester schools. We need to continue to make academic excellence a priority.

Do you support the proposal to build a stand-alone administrative building for the Winchester Public Schools, to be developed by restoring the Carriage House adjacent to the Sanborn House?

The Lynch and Muraco schools are scheduled to be updated. I believe that the parents of students in both these schools would prioritize updating their schools over the restoration of the Sanborn Carriage House, as nice as I am sure that restoration would be.

Megan Blackwell

megan.n.bill@gmail.com

Community Activities

I am now serving as Chair of the Winchester Finance Committee, of which I have been a member for the past seven years. I have also volunteered at Ambrose Elementary School and helped coach Town Soccer teams.

Candidate Statement

I have lived in Precinct 7 for over eight years with my husband Bill, son Zach (age 11, 6th grade student at McCall), daughter Cici (age 6, kindergartener at Ambrose), and Golden Retriever Charlie (age 16 months). We have enjoyed the beauty and small-town feel of Winchester, the amazing library, strong schools, and indomitable town spirit.

My primary goal, if elected as a Town Meeting Member, would be to improve communication of key issues to the residents of Precinct 7. I want to ensure that my vote echoes the opinions of my constituents. One idea is to establish a Facebook group or regular zoom/in-person meeting for all Precinct 7 members who wish to join. This could serve as a two-way channel of communication between residents and Town Meeting Members.

As a member of the Winchester Finance Committee for the past seven years, I have learned a great deal about the Town's finances and inner workings. Although the Town is in a healthy financial position right now, several overrides are on the horizon – one for the new Lynch school, another for operational expenses, another for capital expenses, and another for a new Muraco school. The Town Manager's Office, the Select Board, and Town Meeting Members have difficult choices ahead and must prioritize the needs of Winchester while preserving its financial health and AAA bond rating. For example, careful consideration should be given to how the Town's more than \$6 million share of federal stimulus funds should be used in response to the effects of the pandemic.

Another example of prioritizing needs of the Town concerns options for where to house the Central Office for the Winchester Public Schools. The Educational Facilities Planning & Building Committee, who is sponsoring the warrant articles concerning options for the Central Office, should present a full comparison of these options, including detailed schedules, budgets, and impact to the students at Lynch, Parkhurst, and Ambrose. Only after this information is compiled and vetted by the Town Manager's Office, the Department of Public Works, and the Finance Committee could I make an informed decision and advocate for or against renovating the Carriage House for the purpose of housing school administrators.

I welcome any questions and hope to have your vote on March 19!

Ben Albani

Amy Leigh Wrenn*