

Questions for School Committee Candidates – Responses from Amy Ritterbusch:

1) **Did you attend Hopkinton’s 2013 Annual Town Meeting?**

Yes, I attended town meeting and stayed until the end on both nights.

2) **Did you vote to support Article 17: Center School Feasibility Study at Town Meeting?**

Yes, I voted to support the Center School Feasibility Study (Article 17). I thought Mike Shepard of the ESBC did a great job of explaining to voters the cost and the reason for the study. I have attended four ESBC meetings and have been impressed with their work to date.

3) **What solution do you prefer for Center School? Renovation or rebuild?**

I think it is important that both options are researched and presented to the public as part of the feasibility study, including the opportunity for residents to give their feedback, before either option is ruled out. Many pieces of information will need to be considered such total cost, length of time until project completion, impacts on student safety and learning, flexibility to accommodate enrollment changes over time, and most importantly the preference of the majority of voters. The solution should be centrally located in town so that we can maintain our current grade configuration. I cannot state a definite preference for a new building over a renovation without first seeing cost estimates, proposed timeframes and feedback from the public for each scenario.

4) **What do you think about the way the town and school budgets were combined into one article at Town Meeting this year?**

I am in favor of this as a measure to increase efficiency at town meeting and to conform to the standards that most other towns use. I thought a good explanation for the reasons was given at town meeting. However, I think it is important to communicate changes like this to committee members and the public well in advance.

5) **Do you think the percentage of the town’s total budget allocated to the Hopkinton Public Schools should decrease, increase or stay the same?**

I think that depends both on the ratio of the number of children in the Hopkinton schools versus the total number of residents, as well as the ratio of business taxpayers to residential taxpayers. Assuming our ratios stay the same, I think the percentage allocated to the schools should stay approximately the same. Factors that could cause the percentage to change would include an influx of new businesses to town, or an influx of new residents without children. In recent years Hopkinton has had a high percentage of children (per total town population) enrolled in the public schools compared to most other towns. (Sources <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/> and <http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/>)

6) **If elected, name one area where you think improvements and/or changes are needed. Please be as specific as possible.**

I think improved communication is an important goal, both communication with the public, and communication with other town boards and committees. These are some examples of positive changes that could be made to improve communication.

1. Press packets including details on School Committee agenda items should be posted to the district website for the public to view, instead of only specifically shared with members of the press. Agenda items should be indexed, so that a resident concerned

with only one item on the agenda can find that one item easily. This will lead to decreased public frustration at having to specifically request each public document they want.

2. A brief "Actions Taken" document should be posted to the district website promptly after each School Committee meeting. Not everyone has time to watch the full School Committee meeting on HCAM and this would enable them to quickly read a brief summary.
3. When the board has difficulty coming to a consensus and disagrees on the prevailing public sentiment about a particular topic, public input should be solicited via a survey so that the board has more data on which to make their decision.
4. Communication lines with the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen must be kept open, so that there are no details that come as a surprise to either board just before Town Meeting. All boards and committees must maintain a professional demeanor both toward the public and toward each other, keeping in mind that we all share the common goal of working for the best interests of our town.

7) Do you support the 1:1 laptop program at the high school and do you think this should be a parent funded initiative or included in the school operating budget? If included in the budget, where will the money come from?

Yes, I do support the 1:1 laptop program at the high school. I think it should be a parent-funded initiative with a sliding scale of financial aid available to families in need. Outside grants should also be considered, but I do not think the cost of individual student laptops should be added to the school operating budget. I was very pleased to see in the December 2012 survey results that parent, teacher and student responses to the new program were overwhelmingly positive (Source <http://educatehopkinton.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/HopkintonHS-1to1Laptop-Update-12-20-12.pdf>). I was also pleased to hear that students who brought a laptop from home, rather than lease a Macbook through the schools, had a positive experience and I hope that many families will consider sending a device from home as a more cost-effective solution next year.

8) Name three qualifications/strengths that you think will make you the best choice for the open seat on the School Committee.

1. I am well-versed in a variety of school and town budget issues. I have been attending meetings and paying close attention for the last several years, so that I am already up-to-speed on the most important topics.
2. I am an effective communicator. I have a track record of following the issues, honing in on what is important, sharing that information and convincing others to voice their opinions. I have brought fresh ideas for group communications to every professional and volunteer role I have ever had. We live in a fast-paced world and I make it a point to stay current.
3. I am a dedicated volunteer with a long history of working hard for Hopkinton community groups. When I sign up for a volunteer position, you can count on me to get the job done. The decision to run for School Committee is not one that I took lightly. I know the School Committee puts in many long hours and I gave it a great deal of thought before deciding to commit that much of my time to this role. I cannot wait to get started.