

## Questions for School Committee Candidates:

- 1) Did you attend Hopkinton's 2013 Annual Town Meeting?

Yes, I attended both nights of the Annual Town Meeting in person.

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

Yes, I voted in support of the Feasibility Study. I was happy to see that it passed without opposition. It signals that the community is willing to trust the ESBC and its leaders. This is in large part due to the thoughtful presentation of Mike Shepard and Joe Markey. It is important to take a hard look at Center School and what options we have to utilize the existing structure efficiently, whether it is for a school, municipal, commercial or other options. I am starting with fresh eyes on this issue, and want as many facts presented to the School Committee and taxpayers as possible, so we can consider all viable options for how to best proceed with the build-out of Center School.

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

Again, I am open-minded on this issue. Like many people in town, I hope to see a school at our center. That said, I am not committed to any particular solution and would consider either renovation or rebuilding as an option. I like the Center School building. It has historical significance. How that factors into the solution, I do not know. But it must be honored. We also must be mindful of the growth of our town with developments such as Legacy Farms. We need to make sure our solution is forward looking and flexible. I am confident that, together with the ESBC, we can find a solution that is in the best interest of both our students and our taxpayers.

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

Ultimately, I do not think the presentation of the budgets, combined or otherwise, has an impact on how we vote or budget. What is important is that the people present at town meeting get **full visibility** into the segmentation of the budget. We need to see the actual numbers broken down. This should happen regardless of whether the budget is presented in the same article or separate ones.

It is also important that taxpayers are educated on the mechanics of how to affect one budget and not the other. For instance, taxpayers must be able to call for and propose an amendment, let's say to increase or decrease the school budget, without affecting the town budget. It is up to both BOS and SC to ensure we are clear about how this works, and the taxpayers are comfortable with their ability to propose and vote for changes to one budget and not the other.

For the community, the most important thing is visibility/transparency of the numbers and process by which they can be changed at town meeting – and this can be accomplished either way they are presented.

All that said, having the two budgets combined this year made for disjointed debate. It would be more efficient to allow people to focus on one cost center at a time and really drill through to the concerns. There may be multiple ways to fix this, one being to return to two separate articles.

- 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 do not think we should think of the school budget in this fashion. The two (the town's total budget and the school budget) are somewhat unrelated. On the one hand, the town needs to determine what level of service they want on the town side and then on the other, we need to determine the level of funding for our schools. It should be disconnected as percentages. The

school budget should be a dollar amount -- how much taxpayer money is required to run our schools, and how to best spend that money to result in a "best in class district." Do I hope the total school budget becomes more manageable? Yes. What will that mean as a percentage of the town's budget, I do not know.

I want to do my homework before I answer a question cart blanche, of this magnitude. By that I mean, get into the guts of the budget, understand what is possible, where we might find efficiencies to save tax dollars, and potentially use any surplus to fund new and better initiatives. My hope is that we can renegotiate to save dollars in areas already committed to (laptop program, contracts, etc.), while putting in a tighter process for future initiatives, to ensure we are getting the best value for our money going forward. I also hope to look at the process by which we budget to look for ways to find efficiencies. Each year's budget should be based on the actual expenditures from the prior year, not the budgeted expenditures, as I understand has been customary.

So, net/net, there is no right answer to this question in my mind until we take a collective hard look at the budget as it stands today, find any areas where we can save money, identify areas where we can combine resources and decide on any new initiatives we need to fund to keep our schools at top tier.

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

Based on the attrition over the last year and the time, energy and money the town has expended in filling vacancies, the one area I think we need to focus on immediately, is retention and succession planning. As an initial matter, we need to work with the new superintendent to make sure she is invested and supported. The School Committee may be her employer, but she is the professional. She has the skills to manage the schools and the administrators, and we need to act as her mentors and *help* her do that.

With respect to succession planning, we need to look at who we have in administration and what their personal goals are; do we have a future high school principal in mind? Can we start training one alongside our existing principal? Same process with the principals in the other schools. Same process with teachers. We should be preparing and assisting in career development and investing in our resources in a way we have not done before. We want the best and brightest teachers and administrators. We owe it to all of our educators and administrators to invest in their careers, which in turn should motivate them to stay in Hopkinton.

- 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?

I support an initiative such as the 1:1 laptop program but I think we may be able to do it better. If that means taking a step backwards and a complete redo, I am not afraid to suggest it. We need to assess impact on parents, students and teachers. We should not be a "keep up with the Joneses" type of town. We should make a decision based on what is right for our parents, our students and our teachers.

We need to look at how we can support the 1:1 initiative or something similar with less of a financial impact on individual families. I would prefer that the program be funded at least in part by the school operating budget. I cannot say where the money should come from until I do my homework, but we need to look hard at what we are offering and make sure there is equal access to all families. This is a public education system and equal access for all is of prime importance.

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

- I am a fresh perspective with an open mind. I will look at things differently and bring a different background to the committee.
- I am tireless. I will not quit in my advocacy for our town or our children. I will respect the budget and search for cost effective, forward thinking solutions.
- I am a strategist. I will not get in the weeds, but will always focus on the big picture.