

**JOINT MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD & SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Scituate Senior Center, 333 First Parish Road, FL 1, Egypt & Minot Rooms
Wednesday, September 8, 2021**

Select Board Members in attendance (4): Karen Connolly, Chair, Andrew Goodrich, Clerk, Maura Curran and Anthony Vegnani

Ms. Canfield was not in attendance at this meeting.

School Committee Members in attendance (4): Michael Long, Chair, Nicole Brandolini, Vice Chair, Janice Lindblom, Secretary and Peter Gates

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER/ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

**Mr. Vegnani made a motion at 6:30 p.m. to accept the agenda for September 8, 2021
Second by Ms. Curran Unanimous Vote (8-0)**

Mr. Long called the School Committee meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Ms. Connolly said this is the first of three joint meetings of the Select Board and the School Committee to fill a vacant seat on the School Committee created by a member's resignation.

We are committed to an open, fair and respectful process and have taken the following steps to make sure this will happen.

In accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 41, Section 11, the School Committee notified the Select Board in writing of a vacancy on the Committee due to a resignation. A process to fill the vacancy was then determined.

On August 5th, we notified the community of the opening on the School Committee through the Town and School websites, the local newspaper, and announcements at regularly scheduled town committee meetings.

We asked interested citizens to submit a resume and a letter of interest to the Town Select Board office. Eight people responded and we thank them for coming forward. We then sent the applicants three questions to answer in writing by September 6th. All complied. We will make all documents available on the Town and School websites on Friday, September 10.

We will interview four people tonight and four people tomorrow night at the same time and place. The interview schedule is in alphabetical order. We will be voting to fill the vacant seat in an open meeting on September 15, 2021.

Our hearings will be broadcast on Facebook live and will be available the next day on Scituate Community TV YouTube.

Our format for tonight and tomorrow night will be as follows:

Each candidate will be asked to introduce themselves, explain why they want to serve on the school committee and if appointed, will they run for a full term in the Spring. This introductory statement should be three minutes or less.

Then each committee member will be allowed to ask a question, alternating between the Select Board and the School Committee. Applicants should keep their answers to three minutes or less. Any remaining time will be used for follow up questions if there are any. No interview will take more than 30 minutes.

Committee members will be given a ranking sheet to be completed and returned to Lorraine Devin in the Select Board Office by end of business day on September 13. She will compile the results into one summary document which will be distributed to Committee Members by the September 15th meeting. A discussion and vote will follow. The applicant appointed will serve the balance of the term until the upcoming Town Election in the Spring.

Ms. Connolly asked if anyone on the committee had any questions?

1. School Committee Vacancy Interviews (4):

- **6:35 – 7:05 p.m. Dr. Carey Borkoski**

Dr. Borkoski is a professor at John Hopkins University. She has three children who attend Hatherly. It was timely that the questions were sent. Collaboration is most important and she jumped into the PTO and became the co-president and a member of the Superintendent's committee. Personalization and work around DEI are related and Dr. Borkoski is committed to this work. Student success is important and she knows what college ready looks like. There are a lot of students not interested in college and we need to think from the technical standpoint. Culture of excellence learning theory, research methods and is committed to promotion of excellence. It is a holistic approach. What it means to create inclusive spaces and is able to learn. Dr. Borkoski is considering running for the school committee seat in the spring.

Mr. Long asked when a divisive issue comes to the school committee how would you handle. Dr. Borkoski is an educator and sees discourse and debate all the time. She listens to the voices of everybody in the town to understand experience. She would consult with various experts. What is the role of the school committee and that needs to be considered. Consulting with individual members of the team and listening and ask lots of questions.

Mr. Vegnani said there were two big topic issues in the school; diversity and masks and what are your thoughts on those two things. Dr. Borkoski is going to be honest and her wife and she decided to keep her kids at home. She falls in the camp of for masks and feels the Governor should make the decision and not leave it on the backs of the Superintendents. She believes the science suggests wear masks. She is pro mask. Remote learning is hard and if they wear masks there is a better chance not to go to remote learning. In terms of diversity, equity and inclusion generally speaking is creating community connection and belonging. Students want to be seen in the classroom. This

work is important. The literature does tell us when you promote belonging in classrooms is encourages deep learning.

Ms. Lindblom asked if she is prepared to give up her position on STRIDE. Dr. Borkoski said she would step back from STRIDE leadership roles and she would still be interested in attending those meetings.

Ms. Curran thanked Dr. Borkoski for coming forward. Ms. Curran asked what type of leadership skills she would bring to support the Superintendent. She teaches a leadership course and it is important that everyone feels valued and has contributions. She would like to learn what the Superintendent is already doing and what is working and how she could help. The analytical side would listen and see what he had to say.

Ms. Brandolini asked what her understanding is of the budget process. Dr. Borkoski has a lot to learn with budgeting, she is really good with numbers. She understands that the school committee role is to be a good steward of the budget. In terms of priorities she would lean on her colleagues and it sounds like some expenses around curriculum there will be debate and discussion.

Mr. Goodrich asked about the balance and confidentiality of the position. Dr. Borkoski was grappling with the issue of confidentiality and how she would manage it. If a parent came to her on an issue with her student she would keep it in confidence. If it was a topic that applied to others, she would bring the conversation to the school committee.

Mr. Gates questioned if Dr. Borkoski was aware of the liaison and committee roles required while serving on school committee. She said that would be fine. Our district has had three different superintendents over the past 10 years. Dr. Borkoski would be guided by the students, policy and mission of the school committee.

Mr. Long asked what Dr. Borkoski sees as the relationship between the school committee and superintendent. Communication is important and you can't communicate too much. Creating norms and setting the stage for questions and exploration are important. It is co-constructing and is a mutual partnership.

Mr. Goodrich asked what do our kids need? Dr. Borkoski said they need a safe place to go, be seen, be heard and the things that they learn need to be what they experience. The ways they learn need to be taken care of, need to have fun, be challenged and be heard.

Ms. Brandolini asked about her interactions with staff. Dr. Borkoski said she is authentic and she says, she is here as so and so's parent not a "school committee" member. She would be clear and what role she is speaking to the staff member.

Ms. Curran asked what she thinks the staff needs. Dr. Borkoski said she had the pleasure of doing online professional learning with them. The staff are human beings and we should be caring for our staff the same way we care for our students. They are human

and she wants to know what the teacher is interested in and how they want to grow in their profession. It is good for our students when our teachers are happy.

Mr. Vegnani said Dr. Borkoski is clearly busy and it takes time. She has not run for school committee in the past. Was there an aha moment or what is causing her to get involved now. She started to run and collect signatures and then the pandemic started. As hard as the pandemic has been having access to the school committee via zoom is an amazing gift. It permitted her to get involved in the town in a public way. She feels very drawn to come onto the committee now. What we know is going on right now she thinks she can be a resource to the school committee and her family is in full support.

Dr. Borkoski thanked the boards for the opportunity and she enjoyed the conversation.

- **7:10 – 7:40 p.m. Thomas G. Esch**

Mr. Esch thanked the boards for the opportunity to be here. He comes from a family that believes in public service. Fundamentally he is a parent and it was a great joy to drop them off at school and be greeted by their first-grade teacher. The motivation is to see his son has the best possible education available for every child and all schools. He has spent a lot of time as a fundraising executive and an admission officer. He sees the result of education while reading college applications. He has learned a lot about consensus building, different contributions from staff, faculty, administrators, etc. All of that experience brings him to a place he can contribute. He fully intends to run for the school committee opening in the 2022 election.

Mr. Long asked what his approach would be to deal with a divisive issue. Mr. Esch would understand the ins and outs of the issue itself. He looks for opportunities to see the both and not either or. We need to embrace difference in background and experience. He would look to his colleagues on the school committee, administration and teachers. He thinks its important to come with a sense of humility and learn from each other and support teachers.

Mr. Vegnani asked about his opinion on diversity and the pandemic. Mr. Esch's child was fully remote on the advice of their pediatrician. Their child thrived. As far as masking, he is pro mask. The science indicates masking, testing, proper distancing and ventilation are necessary. He thinks it is clear and it is the sensible thing to do. Children want nothing more that to be with their friends. Diversity and Equity, he has seen the value of diversity in action. He has seen the benefit of different backgrounds and the need for cultural agility. He sees no reason not to introduce that thinking early on.

Ms. Lindblom said they have had a lot of hot topics. How does Mr. Esch see them focusing on student achievement. Methodologies in ranking shifts from year to year. Student achievement can be measured by the MCAS but it's not the only place to look. Measuring outcomes and let's learn what we can from remote learning. Measuring student achievement, physical plant and budget are important.

Ms. Curran asked what issues he thinks are most pressing today and how he would address this. Mr. Esch said the physical state of the schools has to be addressed and it is clearly on the agenda.

Ms. Brandolini asked what a school committee member's relationship should be with the superintendent, parents and staff. Mr. Esch said the role is 360 and he would be an active listener and bring their messages to the school committee. His relationship with the superintendent and approach would be good communication both formal and informal. Mr. Esch would not step out of a line as defined by policy and he would be in listening mode the entire time with staff.

Mr. Goodrich asked if he thought we are spending money wisely. Mr. Esch said he would like to take a deeper dive into the budget and benchmark that against other communities. He has managed staff and team level budgets. He knows how to get down to the granular level.

Mr. Gates asked if he was comfortable serving as liaison's and committee work and Mr. Esch said he was. Mr. Gates asked how he would balance issues brought to him while supporting the superintendent. Mr. Esch said his commitment is to his constituents, parents, students, staff and administration. His role is to help all students and support the schools. He would respond and let people know when he can get back to them. He would operate in good faith.

Ms. Curran said collaborating with other school committee members is important. She asked what constituents he feels he would be representing. Mr. Esch said he won't agree with everybody on everything but he can take in different opinions and hear them out. He would come to this looking for opportunities to learn from other folks. The fact that the school committee conducts business on zoom is incredibly positive. It provides much more opportunity for participation regardless if they agree.

Mr. Long asked when he thinks observing other towns vs. doing what we do in Scituate. Mr. Esch said there is always something that can be learned from best practices but that doesn't mean we have to do it that way. He would want to learn what he can from those things. If there is something to be learned he is open to that and there is some value.

Mr. Goodrich asked why now? He has watched on zoom and takes things in. The pandemic and what is going on interested him. Were it not for the pandemic he would want to be involved in the physical planning.

Mr. Vegnani asked if he would run again if he loses. Mr. Esch said it would depend on how they did on the job and who it is. It depends on what happens in the next ten months. Mr. Vegnani asked what his thought was putting an override in front of the town. A lot of this is maintenance of the buildings and it is needed. He is a believer in Superintendents Burkhead's positivity that we want to be the best school district in the world. He has lived here 11 years and the town has to ask themselves tough questions. Mr. Esch thanked everyone and the other candidates.

- **7:45 – 8:15 p.m. Thomas Generazio**

Mr. Generazio has two children and is a business owner in town. He runs a bakery out of his barn. He has over 1,000 customers and feeds over 250 people a week. He was an executive at a financial services firm. He graduated from law school and has a degree in history with a minor in philosophy. Ms. Connolly asked him why he would like to serve on the school committee. Mr. Generazio said he came to the US at 2 years old and his family came with nothing. His father made sure his children received a good education. He knows what it is like to live in an unsafe and underprivileged area and he knows what it is like to struggle. He would like to do a better job advocating for children. There are a lot of families who struggle. He believes in a well-rounded education for all. If appointed he would run for the position in the 2022 election.

Mr. Long said the committee has to deal with things that are divisive. How would Mr. Generazio handle this. Mr. Generazio stays away from Facebook and communication is key. It is hard to see the thought process behind some of the decisions. He believes asking for public opinion is key and a good school committee member has to be open with their opinion. All these arguments have to be laid out. Removing Columbus Day from the school calendar is a big question but he wonders how this impacts the curriculum. As a student of history, it is important. It should be flushed out more in a public setting. As a minority people think they know how he feels and he is not afraid to speak his mind.

Mr. Vegnani asked what the aha moment was or what is that thing that had him apply. Mr. Generazio said the older his children get the more he wants to be involved. He grew up with the automatic expectation that he had to do well. The older he got he was removed from his child's education. His child did not do well in a remote setting. Diversity Equity and Inclusion is a surprising issue and not a person of color on the committee. He is a stickler for policy and procedures. He was in charge of policies and procedures at his firm and he can contribute looking at the current policies and procedures and improve upon them. If students within our school get in trouble they should be entitled to transparency. There are too many rumors and speculation. He would like to work on this.

Ms. Lindblom asked how he would determine priorities when it comes to the budget. Mr. Generazio said he is not going to pretend he understands the budget but he is a fast learner and as far as the budget is concerned the more we can put toward academic programs and helping students who are struggling the better. Academics are important.

Ms. Curran asked about being part of the negotiating team for teacher contracts. What role can Mr. Generazio bring to help. Mr. Generazio said there is a tremendous amount of tediousness in contracts. He would look for advice from the Superintendent and other committee members. He is a good writer and good at analysis and would bring this to the committee.

Ms. Brandolini asked what he sees as the primary objective of this board. He views the Superintendent as the CEO and members as the board of directors. We are in a position we can learn from mistakes. There is no issue that is that divisive that we can't compromise. He is proud to live here in Scituate and there is nothing we can't overcome.

Mr. Goodrich said academic quality was brought up and what do we need to do. Mr. Generazio said in life you have to follow your passion. Teaching kids that success comes in many different forms whether they are learning a trade, heading to university, etc. Simple finance, entrepreneurial skills are important. Every child should have the confidence to find their path.

Mr. Gates asked if he was aware of other responsibilities of school committee members. Mr. Generazio is aware of the committee meetings and liaison meetings and being self employed he has the time. Mr. Generazio said the role of the school committee is not to just support the Superintendent. As a member of the public balancing the needs of the public and the needs of the Superintendent need to be considered. The Superintendents job is a very difficult position. We need to hold each other accountable.

Mr. Vegnani asked if he had unlimited resources what would he choose to deal with. Mr. Generazio said Cushing and Hatherly schools falling apart and this would be his top priority. The environment children learn is very important. It is going to be a difficult issue. Infrastructure is a nagging issue with this town. Offering opportunities to underprivileged children is a worthwhile endeavor as well.

Ms. Curran asked Mr. Generazio to define his leadership style. Mr. Generazio said we are all professionals and we're here because we are capable. The more we can excite each other and our students about our school district goes a long way. He likes to speak bluntly and not dance around issues. He thinks its great to play devils advocate and let it play out so people can watch and feel their concerns are being addressed.

- **8:20 – 8:50 p.m. Lee Harms**

Ms. Harms is currently a 1st grade teacher in Cohasset and has three children in Scituate Public Schools. She would run for the elected position in 2022. She has always wanted to be on a school board. Mr. Long said the committee has to deal with divisive issues and what would her thought process be. Ms. Harms said everything should be a collaborative process. She thinks that information and data should be taken into consideration and people need to be heard before deciding.

Mr. Vegnani asked what things could school committee's do better. There were three superintendents in Cohasset over the last few years. As teachers they take direction from the Superintendent and School Committee. She agrees in keeping masks. Airing on the side of safety is the best. She felt the teachers need to be vaccinated for safety to not impact others. She said teachers in Scituate are some of the best she's ever seen. It is hard to be a school committee member when you hear the public comments. Ms.

Lindblom asked how to stay focused on student achievement with all the hot topics going

on. Ms. Harms said looking at hot topics has to be dealt with before you can talk about student achievement.

Ms. Curran asked what the most pressing issue is facing Scituate schools. Ms. Harms said the facilities are important and there are a lot of issues. This is an important factor as it impacts students and staff. Salaries are important to retain teachers and keeping salaries competitive. Curriculum needs to be updated every few years and teachers have to be trained.

Ms. Brandolini asked what Ms. Harms thinks about the budgeting process. Ms. Harms said the facilities are the number one concern. It is hard for parents to know about the curriculum. Keeping our curriculum updated is important.

Mr. Goodrich asked why she is interested in the school committee. Ms. Harms said it has always been a personal goal and she has years of teaching experience and served on many committees.

Mr. Gates asked how she would balance the needs of the school committee and superintendent. Ms. Harms said their superintendent and school committee members work very well together. She would hope that information would be taken from everyone including staff.

Mr. Goodrich asked what best practices in Cohasset would translate here. Ms. Harms said she has been impressed with the teachers her children have had in Scituate. The facilities in Cohasset are amazing and that would be needed in Scituate. Teacher training there is dedicated professional development and a best practice. They recently received training on dyslexia that was very good. Technology and hybrid learning and keeping the school infrastructure going is important.

Ms. Curran asked how you would bridge the gap with teachers. Ms. Harms asked if there could be a teacher representative on the school committee that would be helpful. Someone that could be the voice of the teachers.

Mr. Gates asked what she thought of a K-2 school. Ms. Harms said it works great and it would need to be looked at. Neighborhood schools are the hub of the neighborhood and is a great model also.

Mr. Vegnani said she would give a good perspective on the board being a teacher and asked how she would respond when a teacher disagrees. Ms. Harms said they would respect the reasons she voted and made an informed decision. Ms. Harms said she is fine with that. She's worked on all sides as a parent and a teacher and she likes the different perspectives and lenses.

She had a principal once who did not do what she wanted because she didn't think it was best for the school and she still respected her for that.

Mr. Long asked about the connection between the teachers, the superintendent and the school committee. How does the school committee remain as transparent as possible to the community? Ms. Harms said there should be a protocol involved in the decision-making process. Ms. Harms said she is an open book and when someone comes to you, you need to make the most thoughtful educated decision that you can. Ms. Connolly thanked her for coming in tonight.

2. Discuss any other issues that may reasonably come before the boards
Mr. Gates said that Yom Kippur begins at 6:52 p.m. on 9/15 and Ms. Connolly discussed starting at 5:30 p.m. Ms. Connolly suggests if they cannot decide they could consider a different date. The meeting will be changed to a start time of 5:30 p.m.
3. Adjournment of Meeting
**Move to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. motion by. Vegnani second by Mr. Goodrich
Unanimous Vote (8-0)**

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorraine Devin, Recorder

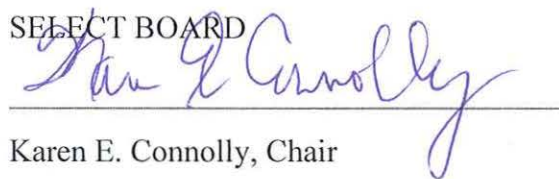
**List of Documents for Select Board & School Committee Joint Meeting Minutes for
September 8, 2021**

Agenda

- **Dr. Carey Borkoski letter of intent, resume and answers to questions**
- **Mr. Thomas G. Esch letter of intent, resume and answers to questions**
- **Mr. Thomas Generazio letter of intent, resume and answers to questions**
- **Ms. Lee Harms letter of intent, resume and answers to questions**

Select Board & School Committee Joint Meeting Minutes for September 8, 2021

SELECT BOARD



Karen E. Connolly, Chair

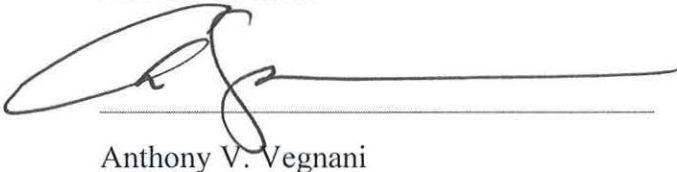
not in attendance

Karen B. Canfield, Vice Chair



Andrew W. Goodrich, Clerk

Maura C. Curran



Anthony V. Vegnani

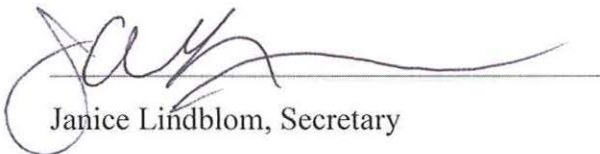
SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Michael Long, Chair



Nicole Brandolini, Vice Chair



Janice Lindblom, Secretary



Peter Gates