

* * * * Special Edition * * * *

BRS PTO Meet the Candidates - April 19th, 2007

Mike Ewing, Incumbent
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Top Three Concerns:

This past January Dr. Gaeton Stella celebrated his first anniversary as the Superintendent of the Woodbridge School District. In collaboration with an energized administrative team and a staff of talented and dedicated teachers, Dr. Stella's vision of Beecher Road School as a model 21st Century School is becoming a reality. Current initiatives include an ambitious upgrade of the District's use of technology in the classroom, an emphasis on teacher development and a strengthening of our core curricula. The District has embarked on piloting a Global Knowledge Building Community project that connects students with local and international partners to work collaboratively in a project-learning environment.

The principal challenge facing Woodbridge and every single school district in Connecticut is how to fund an educational model responsive to the demands of the times through an outdated system of educational funding based on local property taxes. The Woodbridge School District receives minimal funding from state and federal sources. With steep increases in the costs of insurance and energy, the Woodbridge School District depends on local tax dollars. The Board of Education has a responsibility to be creative and efficient in the use of the tax money that it receives and maximize the dollars that have a direct benefit on the education of children. To that end, the Board of Education developed and submitted a zero-based budget for the 2007-2008 school year that supports the above-described initiatives that are aligned with the District's educational mission and goals.

Although the Board of Education's request for funding for the 2007-2008 year has not yet been fully realized, we remain hopeful that a substantial portion of it will be restored through the Town Meeting process, and that our mission to build a 21st Century school will continue unabated.

The continued success of the school and the accomplishment of its mission, however, remain with you. On behalf of the Board of Education, I thank you for your volunteer efforts this year and the support that you have given the teachers, the administrative team and the Board of Education. One of the many significant accomplishments during this school year has been the continued beautification of the school grounds. The energy for this project came from the volunteer efforts of several parents. I invite you to remain interested volunteers in the work and the mission of the school. I also invite you to take an active part in the discussion of the budgetary and educational issues that will be had during the course of the Town Meeting and election processes.

Thomas J. Handler, MD
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Top Three Concerns:

1. Educational needs of the children

I strongly believe that Beecher Road School is one of Woodbridge's foremost assets and that we must continue to strive to make our school one of the outstanding schools in Connecticut. BRS must provide our children with a solid foundation of skills and knowledge

Candidates for Woodbridge Board of Education

Handler, continued

and, equally as important, must foster a lifelong love of learning. We should focus on curriculum development with a conviction that improvements can and should be continually made. As success in these endeavors is dependent on our ability to attract and retain the highest quality of teachers, attention must be paid to professional staff development and to ensuring that there is an optimal working environment.

2. Fiscal responsibility

Despite what we may want to put in place, the reality is that the Town of Woodbridge does not have unlimited resources. It is up to the Board and school leadership to ensure fiscal responsibility and financial efficiency. Hard choices must be made but should not come at the expense of diminishing the excellence in education. The key is to develop an understanding of wants versus needs and to work to see that an acceptable balance of the two can be obtained.

3. Communication

If we are to reach the goal of providing the highest quality education to our children, it is essential that there be open communication and cooperation between parents, teachers, school leadership, the Board of Education, the Board of Finance, the Board of Selectmen, and the rest of the community. We should strive to make the processes as transparent as possible so that all understand why certain decisions are made. Without such an understanding, the various stakeholders often find themselves in adversarial positions. With good lines of communication, we can develop an environment that permits healthy discussions and disagreements but in the end creates solutions that are best for our children's education.

Carl W. Lindskog, Incumbent

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Top Three Concerns:

1. Improve Students' Performance

There are a variety of indicators that show that while our performance is solid, there is plenty of room for improvement. In his exit interview in early 2006, the interim principal, whom I would characterize as an interested outside observer, defined quantifiable targets that

he hoped his successor would meet. Dr. Stella has accepted the challenge to build on the revelations of the Tri State Commission, remedy systemic deficiencies, return Beecher Road School to a high performing status, and create an innovative 21st Century school. I endorse that campaign and have high hopes that his goal will be achieved. Having finished Dr. Stella's required reading for the members of the Board – his recent gift to celebrate Board of Education Day - my confidence in his success is enhanced. I endorse Dr. Stella's commitment to count among his resources the educational insights of Dr. Schmoker and deliver *Results Now*. The literacy skills of my three youngest grandchildren who attend Beecher Road School will depend upon it! The 6th grade team, responding in the fall to my public statement that the recent CMT results were not acceptable, acknowledged its validity and had already identified deficiencies, agreed upon remedies, and implemented a program to improve results. Change for the better is underway!

2. Improve the Business and Managerial Policies, Procedures and Skills of the District

We on the Board of Education are in the business of educating children. I believe I have used my 45 years of experience in business to have a positive, direct impact on the district. I played a critical role in the hiring of two business managers, each of whom was a professional with demonstrated skills and a record of accomplishment. During his tenure, Steve Sirico launched a number of initiatives to improve our understanding of how our costs operate and to assign accountability for their control. Chuck Zettergren has hit the ground running and contributed significantly to the best budgetary presentation we have ever made. His introduction of zero based budgeting gives us the basis for insuring that we are getting current value for the funds that are being spent. But there is a lot of work to be done. We need a monthly budget presented to the board in a format that promotes overseeing but not over-managing. We need a system of internal audits to analyze our systems, outside resources and vendors, and internal practices and procedures to ensure that we are at the frontier of modern practices. We must make better use of the historic data that for too long have been left to lie in the basement so that we can describe in a more detailed, illuminating and incisive way what is going on in the district. In order to realize the improvements that Dr. Schmoker is recommending we need better job descriptions, and greatly improved skills in collaborative goal setting, and performance evaluations that hold all of the staff accountable from top to bottom.

Candidates for Woodbridge Board of Education

Lindskog, continued

3. Achieve a Balance in Excellence Between and Among the Arts, the Academic Curriculum, Physical Training and Healthy Social Development

The success of the oversight by the Board of Education cannot be captured in financial data and budgetary reports or in an academic testing. The huge success of the school's music program invites us to emulate their prowess in all of the aspects of school life!

Mark Livesay

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Top Three Concerns:

1. Academics

As we aim to improve the tradition of excellence at BRS, there is a need to refocus on student achievement by strengthening core curriculum and setting high expectations for our children and educators. The Administration should continue to focus on hiring and retaining excellent teachers, and further develop plans to ensure that BRS teachers are consistently demonstrating excellence in the classroom. High expectations and achievement for our children will follow if we provide them with constant exposure to outstanding and motivated teachers as well as a solid foundation in core curriculum. While early exposure to foreign languages, the arts and technology is absolutely essential, we should make certain that our children are receiving a proper foundation in Reading, Writing, Math and Science. Although it may be debated whether they are the best indicators of student success, CMT scores are the most widely accepted measures of academic achievement and, therefore, impact the reputation of our students, teachers, school and community. Test performance in recent years supports that command of core subjects is not where it should be for our community. We need to work together to strengthen our commitment to teaching our children core curriculum not only because such a focus will improve CMT scores, but, more significantly, because it will provide our children with an essential foundation for learning that they will carry with them throughout their lives.

2. Individualized Instruction

It is important for our teachers to provide each

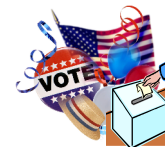
student, regardless of ability, with the specialized attention that he or she needs to achieve his or her full potential for learning. Each child should be individually challenged in the classroom as well as at home with homework assignments that provide appropriate challenges. Keeping class sizes small is a key component of effective individualized instruction.

3. Facilities Maintenance

Budgetary constraints are the norm, so it is important that we find a way to continue to maintain our school facilities in a fiscally responsible way. Failure to include in the budget each year a reasonable expense for routine maintenance of our school facilities will have the undesirable consequence of leading to a large capital expenditure for replacement of a failed facility. That large expense will almost always be significantly more expensive than the total savings in maintenance costs avoided.

BRS PTO presents

"Meet the Candidates Night"



Co-sponsored by League of Women Voters Amity
and *the Bulletin* newspaper

Thursday, April 19th at 7:00 pm
in the Beecher Road School Café

Come hear 4 candidates for the Woodbridge Board of Education and
2 candidates for First Selectman as they debate the issues

All are welcome and encouraged to attend

Refreshments provided

Municipal Elections Monday, May 7

Candidates for First Selectman

Edward Maum Sheehy
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Top Three Concerns:

1. Communication: Improve on the communication among the Boards of Education, Finance and Selectmen.

I have had the responsibility of serving as First Selectman since Amey Marrella resigned, when I was appointed by my fellow selectmen to complete her term.

Soon after I was appointed First Selectman, Dr. Guy Stella, Woodbridge Superintendent of Schools, began appearing at the monthly meetings of the Board of Selectman to inform the Board of the activities and programs of the Board of Education. In addition, I meet often with Dr. Stella, Chuck Zettergren, Beecher Road School Finance Director, Tony Genovese, the town's Finance Director, and Matt Giglietti, Chair of the Board of Finance to discuss the programs and needs of the Board of Education. I plan to continue these meetings.

I will implement an ongoing dialogue among the Boards of Education, Finance and Selectmen in regard to the Board of Education's annual operating budget early in the next fiscal year to improve an understanding among the Boards of the needs of the Board of Education and of the fiscal constraints facing the town. This dialogue will concern such issues as declining enrollment, mandated special education costs, mastery test scores, professional development and curriculum revisions.

2. Long range planning: Develop a long range plan for the capital needs of Beecher Road School.

It is imperative that we develop a long range plan to assess the need for and if appropriate, incorporate the Board of Education's Capital Plan into the Town's overall Capital Plan on a financially prudent basis. The Board of Education has submitted a six year capital improvement program totaling \$6,894,235 including technology replacement and improvement, various repairs and replacements to the Beecher Road School building and grounds.

The Board of Education has had a study prepared in regard to the replacement of heating and ventilation systems (HVAC) and equipment at Beecher Road School. Much of the HVAC equipment dates back to 1960. The study provides various options for its replacement ranging in cost from \$1.8 million to \$3.5 million.

3. Continuity of leadership:

Since September 2000, the Beecher Road School has had four superintendents and five principals. For the success of the district it is important the Boards of Education, Finance and Selectmen work together to provide for a continuity of leadership to assure continued success at Beecher Road School.

Chris Dickerson
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Top Three Concerns:

1. Communication – We must define consistent, open lines of communication between the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Board of Education and Superintendent. I applaud Dr. Stella's initiative in appearing monthly at the Board of Selectmen meetings. This provides the BOS an opportunity to understand and support the efforts of the Beecher Administration. As a Professional Learning Community, our school system needs town-wide support, from parents, teachers and students. I feel strongly that one of the most effective educational tools is teamwork. We as a community must recognize and accept that, for our school system to succeed at the highest level, we must work as a team, sharing ideas and concerns, with an eye on the common goal: high achievement. We must acknowledge our weaknesses, using them as an opportunity for success, and work together to correct them.

2. Accountability – Each team member (BOS, BOF, BOE, administration, teachers, parents and students) will be held accountable for their role on this team. As First Selectman, I will be responsible for building consensus between BOS, BOF, BOE, administration and taxpayers. It is vital that we all recognize our roles and not lose sight of our goal. The three boards, especially the Board of Education, must recognize their role as overseers and not as managers of our school system. Dr. Stella and the Beecher administration's success will be measured by student performance. Dr. Stella provides leadership focused on results. In my experience as a coach, I expect the best out of our student-athletes and they consistently rise to that level. Working together, we can challenge our students in the classroom in the same way.

3. Educational Funding – Educational costs account for approximately 2/3 of our town budget. We need to find more creative ways to help fund our educational needs and wants, so as not to overburden the taxpayers. Woodbridge needs to engage a professional grant writer to work with our school to find more grant opportunities. I pledge to work with our state legislators to hammer home our need for more state funding and eliminate unfunded state mandates. We will also pursue sharing resources with neighboring towns wherever possible. Finding ways to include townspeople in this process, either as volunteers in school, on fundraising committees, etc. is the better choice.

