

2021 Select Board Candidates

Two to be elected of four candidates, (* indicates incumbent)

John Stevens

Precinct 3

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Community Activities

1. Winchester ABC
2. Democratic Town Committee
3. Council on Aging
4. ENKA Fair
5. Winchester Senior Association
6. Winchester Farmers' Market
7. Planning Board discussions regarding a) the Fells Hardware project, and b) zoning.

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

Real estate development generally, with particular emphasis on increasing low- and moderate-income housing.

What does Winchester do well?

In general Winchester does everything well: Town offices, fire, police, the transfer station, public schools, parks, construction and maintenance of public works, and support for social issue, e.g., the change in "mascot" to "the Red and Black" and recognition of the residency of indigenous peoples.

What could be improved?

1. Decisions regarding real estate development.
2. Traffic generally - vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian. The Town needs: 1) bicycle lanes on its "major" streets; 2) for pedestrians - crosswalks which are more clearly marked with better lighting; and 3) reduced speed limits and traffic calming – both of which will help with bicycle and pedestrian safety.
3. Public parking, especially downtown.

What is the financial forecast for Winchester with the building or renovation of the remaining two schools, and municipal projects in Winchester?

I expect that these projects, collectively, will require an increase in the tax rate. I do not like the idea of paying more in taxes, but however much we dislike them, taxes are a necessary element of life in a civil society. The real issue is whether the money collected through taxation is spent wisely.

What is your opinion on the Winchester Spring Ballot Question, the proposed override for the Muraco Culvert and Muraco School Life Extension?

I support the override. There is no viable alternative.

Richard Mucci

Precinct 6

Rich@electricmucci.com

Community Activities

- Town Meeting Member; Precinct 6
- Member of Winchester's COVID Reopening Committee;
- President, Board of Directors, Council of Social Concern;
- Member & Past President Winchester Rotary Club;
- Board of Directors, Winchester Chamber of Commerce;
- President, Winchester Swim and Tennis Club;
- Coach of youth soccer, flag football, basketball and baseball, and;
- Co-Creator of Winchester Together.

Candidate Statement

I am running for the Winchester Select Board to add a voice for families and small businesses to the town's leadership and I hope to earn your support in this campaign.

I have been fortunate to live in Winchester for twenty years, and my wife Stacy and I chose to raise our children Ben (10) and Katherine (6) here because of the character of this community.

Obviously, the COVID 19 pandemic has turned life upside down for all of us. While the national and state governments attempt to address large-scale issues, we need our Town government to address the everyday needs of the residents of Winchester.

Winchester reacted to the current COVID-19 pandemic by rightly taking advantage of state and federal assistance, reducing fees and restrictions on Town businesses. Now that we have a better understanding of the virus and are on the cusp of a widely available vaccine, we must develop a comprehensive Plan for recovery.

As a member of the Winchester Reopening Committee, I have been a vocal proponent of a town-wide response, community-based testing and school surveillance testing programs. I am happy to see these testing programs recently launch in town. However, Town boards must collaborate and coordinate better. We need more joint meetings to develop that comprehensive local Plan. It is the duty of the Select Board, as the leaders of this Town, to coordinate this call to action, and, if elected, I will make sure that happens.

I will work with my colleagues on the Select Board and lead our work with the Town Manager, the Board of Health, the School Committee and all of our residents to assess the negative impact the pandemic has had on all of our residents (especially our seniors, children and businesses) and help coordinate a safe response that will get us to the "new normal" as quickly as possible.

Recently, I watched as the MBTA boarded up the Winchester Center train station and have seen the vacant storefronts in Winchester Center. Both of these sights are reminders to me that our beautiful community is something we must consciously work to preserve. To do that, we must support our local merchants and businesses and come together to keep our Center vibrant during this time of uncertainty and disruption.

Our biggest traffic issue is a lack of parking and access to the Downtown, especially with the MBTA's Winchester Station construction project. We now expect that approximately 150 parking spaces will be lost to this project as demolition gets underway. On April 1st outdoor dining is scheduled to resume, which will help our restaurants weather this storm but will also claim prime parking spaces.

In spite of these well-known issues, the Town has no short-term parking mitigation plan for the Center. As a member of the Board of Directors at the Chamber of Commerce I have proposed several short-term parking plans over the last year. The Select Board must act with a sense of urgency to address the immediate needs of our residents while, at the same time, engage our residents and businesses in adopting a comprehensive downtown parking and roadway plan to solve this problem for the long-term.

Winchester adopted a housing production plan that charts the right pathway for us to increase our stock of affordable housing and empower us to do so in a fair and cogent way. This is important if we are going to keep Winchester a diverse and vibrant community and, as a practical matter, allow us to control our growth and keep at bay large-scale 40B development projects that do not meet our needs. By following our housing production plan and meeting our commitments, we can safely plan and maintain our increased infrastructure needs, including our roads, parking and schools.

Generating new ideas and creatively addressing revenue sources needed to alleviate the tax burden on residents and continuous overrides while still maintaining top-notch Town services and upgrading a rapidly aging infrastructure is a great challenge to the Select Board. As a longtime resident and small business owner in Winchester, I have the experience, relationships and vision needed to generate new economic opportunities for the town and implement unique solutions to long-term challenges. Whether instituting new fundraising initiatives for the Chamber of Commerce, reinvigorating existing social programs at the Council of Social Concern, or refocusing charitable endeavors through the Rotary Club, I understand our community and how to mobilize and take advantage of the resources already available to us.

I support the Muraco School and Culvert override as a debt exclusion override. The flood mitigation projects over the last 20 years have greatly enhanced the quality of life for the residents of Winchester. The Muraco culvert is the final project in this series of projects and needs to be funded. The funds for repairs to Muraco School are desperately needed for the safety of our children and our teachers. There are no sources of capital for these projects in the near term, therefore I see this override as the only option to complete these two necessary projects.

I believe the Town anticipates a debt exclusion override for the Lynch School building project the following year. I expect to support this override as well, as it is a great opportunity to improve an aging school with meaningful state financial assistance. We were fortunate to have the Lynch School accepted into the MSBA program and we cannot let this opportunity pass us by.

If elected, I will use my seat on the Select Board to insure that we maintain what has made Winchester such a desirable and vibrant community and to take advantage of opportunities that will increase the quality of life for all of our residents.

I ask for your vote for one of two open seats on the Select Board on Tuesday, March 30, 2021.

Roger Wilson

Precinct 1

Email: electRogerWilson@civicdecisions.com

Community Activities

Experience:

- 21 year member of **Town Meeting Precinct 1**
- 9 years on **Finance Committee**
- Co-chair, **Traffic and Transportation Advisory Committee**
- Served on **Personnel Board** and **Capital Committee**
- Co-chair, Traffic and Transportation Advisory Committee
- A founding Board Member, **Wright-Locke Farm Conservancy**
- 5 terms as Vice President and President of Middle and High School **Parent-Faculty Associations**

Professional and personal background:

- 36-year resident with wife, Marilyn. Our two children, **Ethan** and **Sarah**, attended **Winchester Public Schools**, kindergarten to H.S. Graduation.
- MBA in **Finance, University of Chicago**; BA in **History** and **Environmental Studies, Williams College**
- Executive roles in a businesses and non-profits, large and small.
- Founder of Winchester-based consulting and management firm providing executive training for **state and local government, advocacy organizations, and government contractors**

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

On the Board I will offer an **experienced voice for progress**. I will especially push for:

- Collaborative, community-focused **budgeting and planning**
- Clear **expectations** for the Town's professional management
- Careful tracking of progress on **affordable housing**
- Continued progress on improving our **public ways** and **parking** provisions

What does Winchester do well?

Winchester is generally quite well run. Town staff is highly professional, competent and reliable across all departments. We are fortunate to be able to draw and maintain this very capable and committed team.

What could be improved?

Everything we do as a Town can and should be done better. My priorities listed above are especially important for continued improvement. Our greatest opportunity lies in integrating our long-range plans into a careful budgeting process and operational sequence that helps us get more done with every dollar.

What is the financial forecast for Winchester with the building or renovation of the remaining two schools, and municipal projects in Winchester?

A comprehensive and detailed forecast of sources and uses of all funds should be readily available, consistently updated, and shared across boards and functions. The presentation of the impact of the upcoming override, for example, in the context of known future capital projects, known contractual operating expense drivers and known debt retirements, deserves much more than the cursory treatment made public to date. An old saw is that “you can’t manage what you don’t measure.” To manage the big picture of Winchester’s finances, we need always to look at the big picture.

What is your opinion on the Winchester Spring Ballot Question, the proposed override for the Muraco Culvert and Muraco School Life Extension?

The two questions are bundled as one. I favor both. The culvert will reduce the likelihood of damage to a significant number of homes in the current upstream flood plain and probably reduce insurance costs for the affected homeowners. It will also increase the utility of public land by adding to potential building space for a rebuilt school.

The repairs at Muraco will reduce the risk of failure of the roof, electrical, plumbing and heating systems and should reduce maintenance cost for the balance of the life of the building. I recommend, however, that the project be conducted with an eye toward reducing actual outlays if it proves prudent to do so – e.g., if the risk of future failure appears lower than is currently assessed for a particular system or portion of a system.

However, with the passage of this override, with both a Lynch School and a general override looming, will make my priorities listed above even more critical.

Michael Bettencourt*

Precinct 6

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Community Activities

Mike is the current Chair of the Winchester Select Board and the longest serving member of the Board. Mike is the current President of the Massachusetts Select Board Association and Executive Board of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, chosen unanimously by his peers. Mike is a Precinct Six Town Meeting Member and a Board member of the Network for Social Justice. Mike is an active member of the Winchester Democratic Town Committee and the League of Women Voters.

Mike currently represents the Select Board on the Capital Planning Committee, Housing Partnership Board, Climate Action Committee and Chamber of Commerce, and led the Town’s Reopening Committee efforts this past year. Mike also coaches Winchester Youth Soccer and Basketball teams.

Candidate Statement

Winchester needs to be a place that works for everyone. We must be ready to emerge from an unprecedented public health crisis with experienced leadership and careful planning. From our schools, to our public works, to our local businesses, we must develop a comprehensive plan to support each other as we continue to feel sustained economic pressure from sustained growth.

Our first priority must be to continue the vigilance of our COVID response, delivering the vaccine, testing and keeping our loved ones safe and healthy. Returning kids to school safely should be a priority of the Town and will require all hands on deck. Protecting our teachers, staff and municipal employees is an essential component of releasing the pressure valve on our restrictions. While Winchester has kept positivity rates low, we must be committed to measures that protect all our residents, especially the most vulnerable.

On a parallel track, we must be committed to fiscal discipline. It is no secret that as Winchester grows, it becomes more expensive and chips away at the economic and social diversity that is the fabric of our community. While we have made significant gains in creating affordable housing in Winchester since I was first elected to the Board six years ago, Winchester cannot become an economically-gated community. This starts with our budget process. Currently the growth in our budget is unsustainable. The more we spend, the more overrides will be necessary to support wants--not just our needs. This is increasingly destabilizing for our residents and threatens our excellent credit rating. Creating a budget through careful forecasting is our obligation, but sticking to that budget is our greatest shared challenge.

Over the last twenty years, Winchester has embarked on one of the most ambitious public works projects in the Commonwealth--the Flood Mitigation Program. It is necessary that the community support the final culvert project and repairs to the Muraco School with the Spring Ballot Question. Delaying the project will cost the Town millions in escalation costs, and put the health and safety of our residents and youngest learners at risk. Our excellent credit rating puts us in a position to finance this project very inexpensively.

The rebuilding of the Lynch and Muraco schools have been in the queue for several years and are behind the schedule of the School Facilities Master Plan. We are grateful that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has agreed to partner with us on a new Lynch School and we must put ourselves in a position to address the needs of the Muraco School over the next several years. Supporting a Lynch override in the coming years and the Spring Ballot Question are both absolutely necessary to ensuring our kids have access to a quality Winchester education.

The development of the Town Center through the MBTA reconstruction and new mixed use housing projects are essential elements to a growth strategy that has developed over the past twenty years. While this means the future of the Town is bright, the changes will impact our residents and valued local businesses in the short-term. We must anticipate, respond and deliver on strategies to support our local businesses and make certain that they thrive, not just survive.

As with communities throughout the Commonwealth, our infrastructure continues to age. We must continue our careful Capital Planning process and restore our bridges, roads and utilities to meet standards of safety and excellence. This takes vast financial resources and patience from our residents while we implement reconstruction plans that have been in the works for years.

Delivering quality municipal services is essential to the safety and wellness of our residents. We must continue to provide resources to our staff and departments to ensure that our roads, traffic, and safety are not short-changed as new opportunities divert our attention. We must continue to pursue creative revenue generation opportunities that meet the demands of increased operation costs and service needs.

While we focus on needs at the local level, we cannot neglect our responsibility to mitigating the impacts of Climate Change and reversing the troubling trends that threaten our very existence. We must continue to think *globally* and *act* locally to preserve our world for future generations.

As we explore these great challenges, what I know is that Winchester is ready for the challenge. Citizen engagement is one of Winchester's greatest strengths and we must create further transparency in our government as we inspire action.