

Precinct 4 Town Meeting Candidates

Eight to be elected for 3 years, seven on the ballot

If no candidate profile is shown, the candidate did not submit a profile.

(* indicates incumbent)

Jared Cumming

Brian McCarthy *

My Linh Truong *

Susan Schwartz *

sschwartztownmeeting@gmail.com

Community Activities

Formerly: Board member and president NCNS
Co-Founder, board member and president FAN
Board member and president WFEE
Board member and Commodore Winchester Boat Club
Founding Board member Winchester Got Lunch

Winchester Boat Club Long Term Planning committee member and former chair
Blue and Gold Officer, United States Naval Academy
Incoming board member Friends of Winchester Public Library (anticipated)

Our family has lived in Winchester since 1987 and our 4 children were raised here. All attended Winchester Public Schools. I am an attorney and am married to Patrick Dinardo. I have served several terms as a Precinct 4 town meeting member, and my son also served a term while he was a resident here.

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

Winchester public schools should continue to provide an excellent education for all children in an environment and in buildings that support faculty, staff and students. It's important that we continue to develop and implement initiatives in housing and community to promote and support cultural and economic diversity. We must at the same time maintain and continue to improve our infrastructure and our downtown businesses and common space.

Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?

All of the above issues rely on funding and community involvement, and so we need to continue to be fiscally responsible and efficient to allow for strategic and ongoing funding of important projects and budgets. I understand the competing interests and generally support funding a responsibly developed school budget. The quality of our schools and availability of housing drive property values in town. Since our revenues are primarily based on property taxes, we must maintain our tax base to allow us to continue to grow as a community. We also must maintain our beautiful downtown so as to continue to attract small businesses that encourage vibrancy and community.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved?

We are lucky to have an involved community that strives to be educated about issues in town. With the loss of a good local news source, we must communicate in ways that enable opportunities for residents to participate in discussion of current issues. At present, many or even most residents have no easy or direct way to know what's going on. The Town Manager weekly report is useful and a great, necessary start. Perhaps an electronic notice board at the Transfer Station would be used to notify residents of issues that they could then find in more detail on the town's website.

The Town Meeting Communications Study Committee has recommended that a written communications plan be prepared and a town communications manager be appointed by FY2025 (https://www.winchester.us/DocumentCenter/View/9219/Communications-Study-Committee_Final-Report_Recommendations). Do you support both recommendations, even if they would involve adding a new full-time position (salary and benefits) to the town budget? If not, what alternative ideas do you suggest?

I do support the development of a communications plan which, when implemented, will allow more involvement and understanding of issues and programs in town. The written report linked above is thorough and a useful roadmap to developing strategies, and I look forward to its effective implementation. Training for town staff seems to be key, as does communication pushed through various channels (instead of limiting information to the town website). Before I would support a new full time position in order to implement a plan, I would want to know what other position would be cut, if any, or what new funding would be required to be raised, whether the position requires full time work, and whether the position would be permanent or for a predetermined term.

Stephen Engel *

Steven Bonnell *

Brian Vernaglia *
brianvernaglia@gmail.com

Community Activities

Current

Finance Committee 2013-2018, 2021-present

Retiree Health Insurance Advisory Committee 2021-present
Town Meeting Member, Precinct 4, 2012-present

Past

School Committee 2018-2021
Field Management Committee 2018-2020
Capital Planning Committee 2014-2019
Energy Management Committee 2014-2018
WHS School Council 2017-2019
McCall School Council 2014-2017
McCall PTA Co-president 2015-2017
Lincoln School Council 2012-2014
Town Wide Girl Scout Cookie Coordinator ca. 2010-2018

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

Addressing social emotional health of all our residents
Maintaining excellent schools
Supporting our seniors
Passing the Community Preservation Act
Continued prudent financial planning

Of those important issues, which one do you feel most passionate about, and what is your position on that issue?

The social emotional health of our residents of all ages is crucial, and multi-faceted.

For our children, we should support the school's continued roll out of social emotional learning programs. We lose too many of our young people to death by suicide or overdose and we owe it to our kids to do what we can.

For our seniors, we need to work hard to make Winchester affordable. Adopting the Community Preservation act, with exemptions for seniors, would allow us to raise funds for important projects along with matching funds from the state while limiting the impact on our seniors on fixed income. At the same time we should budget smartly and avoid unnecessary spending where we can so as to avoid overrides occurring too frequently.

Lastly, we should continue to support the work of the Coalition for a Safer Community in bringing to light many of the social emotional issues facing all of our residents. This group based out of the Health Department has been a valuable resource to the whole town.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved?

Our schools are the shining light in our town. We hear time and time again that our students are among the best prepared when they arrive at college. Our teachers are dedicated, knowledgeable, and caring. Our athletic and academic teams are among the best in the state. At all levels, we have engaged families and students. Maintaining our excellent schools should always be a top priority. That said, excellence requires continuous attention. We should always be looking to improve our schools. The moment we stop looking for ways to improve is the moment of the start of their decline.

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would involve adding a new full-time position (salary and benefits) to the town budget? If not, what alternative ideas do you suggest?

Until recently, residents were forced to search for information about our town and its governance often on an antiquated web portal. Our new town manager prepares a weekly newsletter which has been very well received. I don't think we are in need of a new FTE for communications yet, and my preference would be to build on the newsletter success and take the time to modernize our website as well.