

Precinct 8 Town Meeting Candidates

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

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

(* indicates incumbent)

Rebecca Slisz*

Candidate Statement

I've enjoyed living in Winchester for 8+ years with my husband, son (current McCall 6th grader) and daughter (current Lynch 4th grader). We initially rented on Middlesex Street and our kids were at Creative Corner; we met families there who shared our values and with whom we are still friends today, through Lynch Elementary school and many different activities from sports to theater.

Service leadership is an important concept to me. Some of the organizations in town where I've volunteered include Town Meeting (multi-term member), Winchester Soccer Club (coach), the Network for Social Justice (Steering Committee) and Temple Shir Tikvah.

One aspect of Winchester I really appreciate is how often one is likely to run into a familiar face when going about town. I love connecting with people when I am running or walking around Horn Pond, going in and out of schools and local businesses, and participating in events from Enka Fair and Town Day to Pride Fest and the Farmer's Market.

Helping to cultivate a sense of belonging and civic engagement in Winchester is one of my goals. As a community, I think some of our strengths are safety, schools, and a spirit of volunteerism.

Some areas where I'd like to collaborate, with Town Meeting members, elected officials and community members, and improve are: diversifying our housing inventory, encouraging sustainable commercial development, and ensuring excellent educational opportunities are available for all our young people.

As a multi-term Town Meeting member, I've been impressed overall with the caliber and commitment of people who serve our town in elected and staff roles. I pledge to listen to my Precinct 8 neighbors and constituents and endeavor to voice both our concerns about and support for upcoming initiatives. I appreciate face-to-face communication as much as possible; in a town like Winchester, it's likely that we'll encounter each other again, and I look forward to those opportunities.

Catherine "Casey" Bauer*

casey_bauer@yahoo.com

Community Activities

Town Meeting, Member, Precinct 8, since 2017

Town Common Task Force, Board Member, since 2017

The Town Common is a non-partisan, community based organization whose goal is to provide actual and virtual gathering spaces to promote respectful listening, critical

thinking, and constructive conversation; inspire community action and engagement; and facilitate connection, collaboration and individual and organizational initiative.

Winchester News Group, Member, since 2022

The Winchester News Group is a group of residents (so far, mainly members of the former Communications Study Committee) researching and laying the groundwork for creating a non-profit, on-line, non-partisan community news outlet.

Town Meeting Communications Study Committee, Member, 2021-2022

Past active volunteer at Lynch school, FAN

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

As a Town Meeting member and resident of Winchester, I favor funding for capital maintenance projects, particularly things like building and bridge maintenance, and water and sewer repair projects. I am also sensitive to the health of our environment. However, despite my strong personal interest in reduced noise and pollution, and my appreciation for the hard work and objectives of the proponents, I recently voted to postpone consideration of a partial ban on gas-powered leaf-blowers, largely because the tech is just not there yet, plus an array of logistical and financial concerns. I also recently voted in favor of a zoning amendment, to increase homeowners' leeway to build accessory dwelling units, with the limited objective of enabling aging residents and disabled children to remain living at home. In fact, I would have liked to see the changes go further - hopefully that will come.

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

With respect to questions of spending, I believe it is critical to distinguish "needs" from "wants", and to prioritize long-term sustainability. Deferred capital/infrastructure maintenance and repair can cost the town dearly in the long run.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved?

Winchester is full of smart people, and many of them are committed volunteers in this town. I would like to see more people finding ways to be engaged – hence, the community activities I am involved in!

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?

As a member of this Committee, I strongly support our recommendation that the town prepare a written communications plan. With respect to the town communications manager, I support the Town Manager in thinking creatively about how to consolidate, support, and benefit from this important function. I do not support adding a new position to the budget as a first option.

Raegan McCain*

Alison Swallow*

Donald Bradford*

kc135rpilot@gmail.com

Community Activities

- Town Meeting Member since 2011
- Youth Soccer
- Winchester Boat Club
- Winchester Swim and Tennis Club

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

I have served Winchester as a Town Meeting Member for 12 years and Town Meeting is just as critical now as when I first joined back in 2011. The unique needs of Precinct 8 have evolved during my time serving Winchester. In 2011, as a new resident with a young family representing a district with a highly diverse constituency, a significant number of renters, and an elementary school in dire need of replacement, my focus was on ensuring Precinct 8 had a strong voice in town-wide issues and to advocate for the unique needs of my precinct, including responsible re-zoning, Lynch repairs, and affordable housing. Today, I believe the critical issues facing Precinct 8 and Winchester have evolved but are no less challenging:

- With the successful passage of the Lynch override, we must ensure that the families with children currently at Lynch and the immediate neighborhood surrounding Lynch are minimally impacted by the upcoming construction. Furthermore, the rebuild is the largest capital project since the High School renovation and will require Town Meeting oversight to ensure that it completes on time, within budget, and with minimal disruption to our children's educational experience.
- The Lynch project highlights a second critical issue for our town—our budget. Maintaining Winchester's AAA bond rating in an environment of increasing interest rates and inflationary pressures is paramount for Winchester to successfully manage growth, maintain our infrastructure, and ultimately serve its citizens. This will require all Town Meeting members to help the Select Board, committees, and town departments prioritize the long list of projects that are deserving of funding.
- A third challenge facing our town remains housing. Affordable housing – both for new residents who want to join this wonderful community as well as older residents who are looking to downsize – is an issue faced by many towns. Today in Winchester, several of our neighborhoods have 40B projects underway or projects that are likely to be approved in the upcoming months and years. On this issue, I strive to balance the character of our town and the avenues for progress, both of which deserve equal footing. Ultimately, I strongly believe that there is not one answer to the challenges facing our town and that the only way to move forward is to hear and represent as many voices as I can.

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

Ensuring that the Lynch rebuild project is completed on-time and on-budget is an issue I will focus on if I am re-elected. Our school system is foundational to Winchester and we should be proud of the excellent educational opportunities we provide our children. The teachers, staff and

parents involved in creating those opportunities and the children attending Winchester schools should do so in a modern, safe, and environmentally sustainable space.

What does Winchester do well and what might be improved?

Winchester is an amazing community with resolute and passionate residents, a vibrant town center, a rich history, and a town government that delivers for its citizens. The volunteers and town employees who lead, manage and fix everything in Winchester deserve our thanks. That said, we have an engagement challenge in Winchester. It is concerning that only ~25% of town residents voted in the most recent town election that approved the Lynch override – a vote that will raise property taxes on all homeowners in town. The Communications Study Committee noted that many town residents are not very engaged with town government. As Town Meeting Members, we need to be much better in both sharing information and listening to Winchester residents – this is the only way that Winchester will remain the vibrant and dynamic town it is today.

The Town Meeting Communications Study Committee has recommended that a written communications plan be prepared and a town communications manager be appointed by FY2025. 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?

The Town Meeting Communications Study Committee completed a comprehensive review of Town Government communications and made excellent recommendations on how to improve information sharing town-wide. When this report was reviewed at Fall Town Meeting there was agreement that we could do better by improving transparency, timeliness and formalizing how important information is distributed. Before delegating the responsibility for implementing these improvements to a new town employee, I recommend that we first implement improvements we can make as an elected body. There is a strong tradition of Winchester residents recognizing and solving problems. My recommendation is to focus on those improvements we can make across town government by changing process or setting standards before hiring a new full-time employee. I believe that with an appropriate roadmap we can evaluate our success in implementing the committee’s recommendations and make a more informed decision over the next 12 – 18 months.

Wei Chen*

Community Activities

- * Contributed to Winchester Climate Action Plan
- * Sitting in Climate Action Advisory Committee to help with EV transition
- * Town meeting member since 2019

Candidate Statement

What Winchester issues do you think are most important?

- * Finish Lynch school on time within the budget
- * Encourage residents to sign up WinPower 100 and use 100% clean electricity

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

*I'm passionate about moving Winchester into a green community. It's quite easy and cheap to sign up WinPower 100 to use 100% clean electricity.

The Town Meeting Communications Study Committee has recommended that a written communications plan be prepared and a town communications manager be appointed by FY2025. 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 support the first one but not the second. I think alternatively a volunteer committee can help Town manager and government to implement the communications plan.

Michael Creane

Russell Gay*