



Weare in the World

March 1, 2023

The Candidate Issue

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For Weare Residents, by Weare Residents

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Results

Weare in the World will publish all the local results in a special addendum coming out Wednesday, March 15. To subscribe and receive that issue – plus two issues a month – directly to your inbox, contact us at witwssubscribe@gmail.com, or check us out at www.weareintheworldnews.com.

Editor's Note:

In this special edition of Weare in the World, we feature the candidates for the Weare Board of Selectmen, the Weare School Board and the John Stark Regional High School Board. We developed the following surveys and sent them to all candidates. They were given a word limit and surveys were lightly edited only for word limit, style and mechanics. Since our small volunteer group took up this newsletter in early 2020, we have published surveys such as those you will find here. We considered questions that will help voters learn the qualifications, priorities and goals of the candidates who wish to lead our town and our schools in the coming years. We think it is an important service, and we hope our readers find it informative.

-Karen Lovett, Editor



Candidate Night

Thursday, March 9, 6 p.m.

Weare Middle School

Voting

Tuesday, March 14, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Weare Middle School

Meet the Candidates

Weare Board of Selectmen

Two open seats; three-year terms



Name: Salim Blume

Contact:

facebook.com/BlumeForWeare or
BlumeForWeare@gmail.com

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare and your involvement in the community.

I grew up in New Hampshire and after moving away for college was fortunate enough to meet my future wife as a lab partner while we both earned degrees in electrical engineering. Needless to say, sparks flew! We have since had three children and after years of searching, were able to find the perfect house and community in Weare in 2022. I have spent my career writing software – much of it to benefit our armed services – and am currently a director at a start-up focused on software security. We enjoy being part of some organizations in town, but my favorite involvement in the community is interacting with our neighbors. There is always someone out for a stroll or willing to stop and chat while we head down to the pond with the kids or are outside building a snowman. We met all of Weare's current state representatives in different ways and it has been a pleasure to get to know them and an honor to receive support for this election.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? I am very detail-oriented and my engineering background would complement other members of the board to offer unique insight into technology-related issues, such as the 2017 data breach or the current build-out for emergency services radio coverage. As Weare grows, there will be opportunities to leverage technology to save money or provide additional services; it will be critical that the board is able to thoroughly review each. Throughout my career, I have been responsible for hiring/firing decisions, conducting employee reviews and being a part of and leading teams responsible for developing and communicating new products and procedures, much like what is required of the board of selectmen.

3. What is the town government doing right? It's great to see the Ethics Committee coming back and institutions like the DPW continue to operate well in the face of adversity.

4. What could the town government improve, and how? The town government could improve its responsiveness. In one example, the town is required to publish monthly minutes and that has not happened since October for the selectmen, August for the ZBA and June for the planning board, among other delinquent boards. Perhaps the town could hire interns from JSRHS for catching up the minutes based on the available recordings.

5. What town initiatives do you support for lowering property taxes? Lower property taxes can only come from two places: lower spending or higher revenue from other sources. Over 70% of our taxes go to the school budgets, which are controlled by the school boards. The current Board of Selectmen working with the Finance Committee has done a fine job of trimming what fat they can from the remaining 30% so it is important to look elsewhere. During my career, I have written winning proposals for millions of dollars in government funding and I can do the same to bring grants to the town. As with any outside funding, it is important to ensure no strings are attached and just as we do not want to relinquish company intellectual property, Weare would not want to become beholden to outside influence. For one example, there is money available to expand libraries. Since we are already in the process of considering that, we should be starting that grant process now. If we look instead at how we can lower *residential* property taxes, another option is from additional businesses opening in town. I am not personally in favor of something like a Walmart or grocery store opening in the town center, but there is opportunity for growth while still maintaining Weare's rural character.

6. What town initiatives do you support for retaining employees? In this current job market, money talks. If we are primarily concerned with maintaining current employees, then only compensation (salary plus benefits) will keep them here in the long term. That said, it is also important to consider whether employees should be retained and how to most effectively replace employees who have left. Annual reviews are the first step towards ensuring employees are compensated according to what they bring to the town and those have not been occurring as they were supposed to until very recently.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? We have three young children so I have plenty of experience working with opposing viewpoints. More seriously, this is a constant

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experience in life and it is nearly always a positive. Understanding opposing viewpoints and explaining your own is how a small team can deliver results that will take into account different expected outcomes, such as which customers to target or how much to annually budget for the price of oil.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see set for the town of Weare? I would like Weare to remain the charming town that has drawn so many of us to live here. When it is appropriate for the town government to be involved, I would like it to be mindful about encouraging too much growth too quickly. I would also appreciate voters setting a goal of electing me to the board of selectmen on March 14.



Name: Eric Connor

Contact: EConnor629@gmail.com

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare and your involvement in the community. I was born in Manchester, N.H. and grew up in Greenland, N.H. My father was in

the Air Force, so we moved quite a bit. After graduating from college, Robert Morris University (Pittsburgh, PA), I ended up in N.Y./N.J. metro area. I settled into a career in the commercial (property) insurance space working for several companies. Currently, I work for Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection and Insurance Co., which is a division of Munich Re Group. I've been visiting Weare over the last 14 years and recently moved permanently to Weare three years ago.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? In my current (full-time) position, I assess risk, negotiate terms and conditions on Fortune 500 companies. The skills I bring to the position will help the board navigate difficult contract negotiations.

3. What is the town government doing right? Having resided in the town over the past three years, I believe the town does well with the budget. Having to prioritize funding can be a difficult task and I think the town government does a good job at allocating those expenses.

4. What could the town government improve, and how? I believe that even a well-run organization can benefit from frequent assessments of its processes to find areas of improvements and savings. I would

recommend the town implement a review process for this purpose.

5. What town initiatives do you support for lowering property taxes? If I'm looking at some of the town assets (vehicles), I believe we need to stop putting a band-aid on assets that should have been removed from service years ago. In a recent town meeting, I heard that some of our town trucks and vehicles seem to need continuous repair, or they are out of service when we need them the most. The constant repair and man hours used to make those repairs adds to the bottom line. In the same town meeting, I heard that one of the town's employees is leaving and is taking their tools. As a result, the town has to rent tools. This adds to the bottom line. The town should own their own tools. And, although, it's an expense this year, in years to follow we won't have to rely on someone else's tools and the need to rent tools.

6. What town initiatives do you support for retaining employees? To retain good employees is particularly difficult post-Covid. Companies and states are finding it very difficult to find people to fill positions. I think we need to provide a competitive compensation package that is commensurate with other towns of 'like' size.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? In my position, I continuously work with people who have opposing views. I believe that if you explain the facts and the position you're coming from, you're able to avoid a confrontational position.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see set for the town of Weare? I would like to see the town develop some "green" initiatives. This could be putting a solar array on top of town buildings and schools. Lowering energy costs is another way of lowering our taxes.



Name: Mark Nelson

Contact: Nelson.mark@comcast.net

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived on Weare, and your involvement in the community. I grew up in Andover, N.H. and moved to Weare 13 years

ago, now with my wife, when we decided to start a family. I work as an account manager for a construction company covering their services division, which includes steam, water, natural gas,

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paving and vacuum truck services.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? My job leads me to deal with many municipalities small and large, so I understand town government, which also entitles me to the pleasure of dealing with large, diverse sections of the public. I manage the estimating and financials for large-scale projects, so I have a keen sense of budgets and tracking of the financials. Finally, my charming personality.

3. What is the Town government doing right? I can say things have been quite smooth in my dealing with town hall, which has been nice.

4. What could the town government improve and how? Transparency can always improve, and the handling of the highway department, regarding the way the select board appears to deal with it, can dramatically improve.

5. What town initiatives do you support for lowering property taxes? With inflation how it has been, I am not sure about lowering property taxes at this point. Any initiative that would hold the rate at present would be a nice accomplishment.

6. What town initiative do you support for retaining employees? Unfortunately, my answer here contradicts question five. If we are going to retain our wonderful town employees and start to work with younger generations of workers, we need to increase their pay. Our employees are underpaid in relation to surrounding municipalities and grossly underpaid when compared to private sector jobs.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? In my job, I constantly work with people with opposing viewpoints. That is a good thing. Other viewpoints come from other life experiences than mine and I may learn something. This also stirs debate to come up with the best outcome possible. I also have a wife and two daughters leading my viewpoint to be opposed...a lot.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see set for the town of Weare? There is the standard answer of lower taxes, but that seems like a given if allowed to serve as a selectman. I would like to see the town become more desirable for the younger generations to be able to afford to move here and be involved and work in town government, as it should be encouraging more businesses to move into town to lower the tax rate. A strong, caring, financially responsible town that works for its employees and residents.



Name: Benji Knapp

Contact:

knapplogging603@gmail.com

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived on Weare, and your involvement in the community.

I graduated high school and immediately went to work running heavy equipment. I moved to Weare in 2000. In August of 2001, I was hired at the Weare Transfer Station. I moved up through the ranks over the years and in April of 2016, I became the Public Works Director in Weare. I moved on from this position in November of 2022. I did my best to serve the community and the taxpayers over my 20 years.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? I have extensive background in recycling, building and maintenance. I am very familiar with how the budget process works, as well as policies and procedures. I have written many bids and RFPs. I worked with many departments and became familiar with them as well. I will be able to bring actual experience and knowledge to the table.

3. What is the Town government doing right? The town of Weare has the lowest tax rate of its surrounding towns. It provides overall good service to its citizens. I give a lot of that credit to its department heads.

4. What could the town government improve and how? The select board has started to micromanage individual departments. They need to step back and let the people with the knowledge of the job handle the day-to-day operations and oversee the budget and policies.

5. What town initiatives do you support for lowering property taxes? It's hard to lower taxes, especially with the rate of inflation of everything right now. However, it is the board's job to make sure the departments can provide their services they are expected to but without wasteful spending.

6. What town initiative do you support for retaining employees? The way to retain valuable employees is to offer competitive wages with benefits. Along with making them feel valued and giving them the tools to do their job.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? I have 23 years in the public works sector. I have had to address many issues over the years, and it was very seldom that a resolution

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couldn't be reached.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see set for the town of Weare? I would like to see the town work on a plan to provide anticipated timelines and rough plans of future building replacements or large-scale renovations and put money into CRF so it's not such a tax impact when the time comes. There are a number of buildings that are outdated or will be in the near future. I feel coming up with plans in advance and presenting them to the public would be a much more accepted approach than just asking last minute. I was just starting this process for an updated transfer station. We were putting 50% of recycling money away to help with the cost of that.



Name: Jon Osborne

Contact: josborne@weare.nh.gov

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare and your involvement in the community. Lifelong resident of Weare; married 52 years with two grown daughters. I'm retired. I

was on the fire department for over 20 years and also the department of public works for the same time. I was on various other boards and committees for over 20 years. I am seeking re-election to the Weare Board of Selectmen.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? I have knowledge of the town's departments and how they operate.

3. What is the town government doing right? Providing services to operate the town as efficiently as possible.

4. What could the town government improve, and how? Becoming proactive in resolving issues.

5. What town initiatives do you support for lowering property taxes? We need more businesses for the tax base.

6. What town initiatives do you support for retaining employees? Treat employees with respect and listen to what they have to say.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? I listen to all information before making a decision, which I believe will be in the best interest of town.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see set for the town of Weare? My goal would be to redesign the transfer station. This was built when only 2,500 people

lived in town; now there are almost 10,000 and still growing.



Name: Kyle Parker

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare and your involvement in the community. Grew up in New Jersey. Twenty-two years in New Hampshire. Starting eighth year in Weare. Previous 14 years in

Henniker. Two-year AA degree; then an additional two years further college education. Self employed carpenter as well as 15 years experience as a municipal building inspector. Community involvement in Little League and children's Sunday school teaching.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? Fifteen years experience in town hall environment, to include planning and zoning, CIP and yearly department budgets. Twenty-five years experience in business with one-on-one client relationships and management of subcontractors.

3. What is the town government doing right? The current use of a board of selectmen is an asset to the town as well as various other boards that exist. Community outreach such as the recreation department, the old home days, patriotic day and the recent Pine Tree Riot play are all other great examples of community commitment.

4. What could the town government improve, and how? Improvements can always be made but transparency and education on how Weare functions as a governing entity can stand growth.

5. What town initiatives do you support for lowering property taxes? While I am not aware of any specific existing initiatives the town has for lowering taxes, independent educational mailers explaining the composition and distribution of the taxes raised on the town and school end is something I would support.

6. What town initiatives do you support for retaining employees? The town has recently started a conversation about a merit-based evaluation system regarding employees. This is a positive initiative.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? Just going out in public, in today's world, means dealing with opposing views. My experience behind the counter in town hall settings has provided opportunity to deal with opposing

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views on town policy, as well as my experience with planning, zoning and board of selectmen

8. What long-term goals would you like to see set for the town of Weare? Long-term goals I would be in support of working toward would be continued growth with the recreation department, library and community involvement, ie. patriotic day. Expanded outreach to residents in education regarding town government responsibilities.



Name: Jesse Renauld-Smith

Contact:

jesse.renauldsmith@gmail.com

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare and your involvement in the community. I received two

Bachelor of Arts degrees from Plymouth State University in 2010: one in criminal justice, and one in Spanish language and culture. From 2013-2016, I attended the University of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce School of Law, from which I received a Juris Doctorate. Currently, I serve as the prosecutor for the Tilton and Sanbornton Police Departments. Prior to serving as prosecutor, I was a police officer, a 911 telecommunications specialist and a youth counselor for children in placement. I have lived in Weare for four years. Community engagement is largely through my daughter in the academic and recreational arenas.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? I am a detail-oriented individual, who has spent my entire career in public service. I am able to solve complex problems, use critical thinking to achieve reasoned and fair results and I seek to find a just outcome in the tasks on which I work. I am organized and thorough. My work ethic is driven by a motivation to do well for the people I serve and I try to find a fair outcome for the entities and people involved in every situation that arises.

3. What is the town government doing right? Weare is clearly a municipality that is community oriented. Throughout the year, there are numerous events put on for the residents of the community, including the children who reside here. Weare also does a tremendous job through its Department of Public Works; roads are maintained in the winter for safe passage and the transfer station is managed in an effective manner to allow for just brief delays on busy

days. Another wonderful natural resource the town boasts is Horace Lake, among other bodies of water, town forests and other parks. The Parks and Recreation Department, though, maintains the public beach and its amenities tremendously for the residents to enjoy.

4. What could the town government improve, and how? One area in which the town government could improve is researching the ability to provide better cellular coverage for its residents. The town could look into the use of satellites and cellular towers through mobile carriers that could improve coverage. Another area of improvement is the updating and modernizing of information available to residents on the town's website. Many of the documents, including the Master Plan, town ordinances, snow removal and ban, etc., seem to be antiquated. The documents have dates from the 1990s and early 2000s, some of which may need updating.

5. What town initiatives do you support for lowering property taxes? The largest initiative I support for lowering property taxes is the use of grants. Companies, the state government, and the federal government all offer the opportunity for municipalities and its individual departments to apply for various grants to help cover the costs for projects otherwise left to the town to cover, in large part, through the collection of taxes from its residents. For example, there exist grants for public service, municipal infrastructure, agriculture, and education, to name just a few.

6. What town initiatives do you support for retaining employees? Employee retention initiatives I support for our town employees are allowing our employees to participate in events. Employees often remain with their employer when they feel fulfilled and appreciated. Therefore, I encourage employees to apply for or express interest in training opportunities that allow them to advance in their career. I also support employee appreciation events to be hosted by the town throughout the year. Holiday activities, events for employees to attend with their families, like barbecues at the beach, and employee outings are all examples of employee-focused occasions that represent how the town appreciates and supports its employees.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? The work I have done for over a decade in the public sector is tailored specifically for this question. Having served as a police officer in two communities and now serving as a prosecutor, opposing views have been at the forefront of my career. Therefore, I submit my candidacy with a

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great deal of experience working in a setting that deals with opposing views. As such, whether I agree or disagree with a particular view, I have the skill to remain professional about the topic at hand.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see set for the town of Weare? Long-term goals I have for Weare cover some of the topics above. Employee retention is one of the long-term goals I have. I want Weare to not only be an attractive community for which to work, but I hope the employees remain employed in this community as a result of opportunity and appreciation. Another long-term goal is the hope of maintaining our local business. Weare offers local conveniences and boasts local artists and agricultural vendors, which is a quintessential amenity to our community. Support for these entities will allow Weare to maintain its community-oriented focus.

Weare School Board

Two open seats; three-year-terms



Name: Christine Heath

Contact: christine.heath@sau24.org

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare, whether you have children in the school system, and your involvement in Weare schools and the community. I moved into the Weare community 20 years ago with the hope of growing roots and starting a family. I received a Bachelor's degree in Communication and a Master's degree in Elementary Education from UNH. Presently, I am in my 26th year of teaching at the elementary level. During the past 20 years, I have had the opportunity to work with many New Hampshire colleges and universities in hosting student observers and student teachers. I am the liaison for SNHU, coordinating both experiences for my school. But the most important experience I have received has come from being a mom for the past 14 years. I have two children who started at Center Woods Elementary and are presently at Weare Middle School. I have enjoyed any opportunity to volunteer or visit the schools. I am

finishing up my first term on the Weare School Board, serving this past year as chairperson.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? Specific skills that I bring to the position are preparation and experience. Before running in 2020, I spent a few years attending school board and finance committee meetings in order to learn the expectations of a board member. Over the past three years, I have negotiated two teacher contracts, one paraprofessional contract; I sit on multiple SAU-wide committees; and I have worked with both schools on their wellness committees, supporting various school projects and initiatives. I also feel that my experience as a parent and a teacher are skills that support my ability to serve.

3. Which school board committees would you be most effective on, and why? Because I have experience in education, I have enjoyed being a part of negotiating contracts and getting our staff closer to a competitive wage. I would like to continue working on the community outreach and SAU-wide facilities and resource planning group. Both committees are working towards ways to connect more with the community and find areas to improve efficiency across the district.

4. What are Weare schools doing right? The Weare Schools work hard educating and supporting our children. They have been very willing to listen to and take suggestions from the board, SAU and community. Climate and culture in the schools are improving and pre-COVID activities are back. The commitment of the staff in both schools is evident in the relationships they have grown with their students.

5. What could Weare schools improve, and how? A big focus of the Weare schools is staff retention and learning progress. These two are directly related. As a community, we need to support our schools through voting in contracts and budgets, which then supports the education of our students. Weare has become a training ground where money and time is spent and then qualified teachers go elsewhere to receive higher compensation. When there isn't consistency and experience in our staff, education can suffer. I would like to support retention by continuing on the negotiations committees.

6. What initiatives do you support for retaining employees? Retention is usually based on two things: compensation and professional respect. We need to continue to encourage retention and the application of qualified candidates by offering both. Compensation comes from negotiating a fair and competitive contract and professional respect comes from treating our staff

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as professionals. Trusting them to do what is best for our students and supporting their decisions.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? During the school year, I have multiple opportunities to conference and meet with parents, administrators and colleagues. Often there are varied viewpoints and events throughout the school year that need attention. I feel that when people have opposing opinions, it opens up the opportunity to learn from each other and find a common ground. Then more people are represented by decisions.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see SAU 24 set? I would like to see more sharing across the SAU 24 community. We have a lot of resources that could be combined and strengthened and possibly relieve some tax burden on community members. I would also like to see the continued improvement of our students' progress.



Name: Toni Parker

Contact:

savedthrufaith99@protonmail.com

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare, whether you have children in the school system, and your involvement in Weare schools and the community. I am Toni Parker, and have lived in Weare with my husband, Kyle, for the past seven years. I have four adult children, and nine grandchildren, but no children currently in the Weare school system. I and all of my children were educated in the public schools of New Hampshire. Following my education, I entered the New Hampshire workforce, where I have held numerous positions, with an emphasis on customer relations and support as well as general office functions. As a taxpayer, I have been a regular attendee at Weare School Board meetings, both in person and via Zoom. I am deeply involved with my church family at Weare Bible Baptist Church, where I participate in a variety of community outreach programs.

2. What specific skills would you bring to the position? For over 20 years, I worked in the corporate sector, providing administrative support in relevant areas including organizational management, record keeping and accounting. I am proficient in computer applications and website design. I had primary responsibility at several firms for customer support and gained experience in listening to, understanding and

meeting each customer's individual needs; thinking strategically to solve problems with workable plans; and functioning proficiently in an extremely difficult and fast-paced environment. I am organized and analytical. For the past 15 years I have served as a personal assistant and home manager for a family of two medical doctors with five children. This work experience, in particular, has given me familiarity with current curricular issues in New Hampshire schools.

3. Which school board committees would you be most effective on, and why? My collaboration with my husband, who is sole proprietor of a construction company in renovating and refurbishing properties, would enable me to function effectively on the facilities committee. In addition, at the heart of my candidacy for the school board is a commitment to serve as an advocate for students, parents and taxpayers -- the "customers" of our educational system. The board itself has emphasized the need to "demonstrate openness to parent feedback and involvement" in the first of its 2022-23 goals. My background in customer service -- listening in order to understand and meet the needs of constituents--will enable me to serve effectively in communications/public relations initiatives.

4. What are Weare schools doing right? The district, with support from the board, provides meaningful and significant extra curricular activities to improve student achievement outcomes.

5. What could Weare schools improve, and how?

Both www.publicschoolreview.com and <https://my.doe.nh.gov/> report significant deficiencies in reading and mathematics proficiency among Weare students. That requires substantial improvement. The board needs to work with teachers and parents to establish and implement district-wide performance goals to improve basic skills and then monitor trends toward achievement of those goals. At the same time, I believe there is a current emphasis on such controversial curricular issues such as CRT and transgender matters being implemented without parental input or even knowledge, deflecting attention from the core purposes of education. And to me, the proposal made by board members at their Feb. 8 meeting to amend policies so that the board does not have to respond to concerns expressed by parents on these issues flies in the face of the board's own goal of "demonstrating openness to parent feedback and involvement" and borders on an abrogation of board accountability to the community. Also, reining in the budget, making line-item adjustments to reflect

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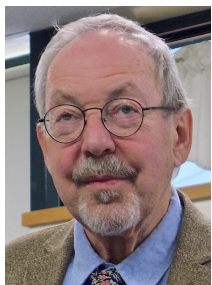
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accurate numbers regarding surplus monies etc., are important for taxpayers. The district constantly requests budget increases without providing a mechanism for taxpayers to evaluate whether such increases are appropriately related to key factors, such as enrollment and academic proficiency.

6. What initiatives do you support for retaining employees? Employees want to work for a “winning team.” Collaboration by teachers, administrators and parents in setting, implementing and monitoring shared performance goals will improve Weare schools and enhance employee satisfaction and retention. Exploring best practices and supporting professional development opportunities will enhance teamwork among colleagues, improve employee performance and increase retention.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? As explained above, my professional work in customer support has given me substantial experience in listening to constituents, who often had problems or complaints with the corporation, and developing plans that, to the extent possible, focus on common ground and provide workable solutions that resolve conflicts and accommodate the needs of as many people as possible. Listening, creativity, and a spirit of compromise are central to the success of such efforts.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see SAU 24 set? Goals that focus on improving academic performance and transparency are needed for both short and long term. But goals, without specific, measurable objectives, do not provide the roadmap needed to evaluate achievement. I believe that setting both goals and objectives is needed.



Name: William Politt

Contact:

billpolitt4weareschools@gmail.com

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare, whether you have children in the school system, and your involvement

in Weare schools and the community. I am a 38-year Weare resident. My wife is a retired 30+ year teacher at Center Woods Elementary and before that Weare Elementary School. Our two daughters attended Weare schools, including graduation from John Stark in 1988

(the first graduating class) and 1992. Our four grandkids followed in their footsteps, receiving a high-quality education here in Weare. I received my Bachelor's degree from Boston University and, later in life, a New Hampshire teaching certificate. Virtually my entire working life has been in sales, mostly self-employed. When our oldest grand entered high school at John Stark, I took time away from my business to become a substitute teacher there and stayed on for 11 years. I treasure the time I've spent there as a member of the John Stark community, and I believe I have been a positive influence in the lives of the many hundred students with whom I've interacted over the years. In retirement, I have also substituted at Henniker Community School, Concord High School and I continue to sub at Hopkinton Middle-High School. I was elected to the Weare School Board for a one-year term last March, and I am currently running for reelection to a full three-year term.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? Parenting and grandparenting have taught me the difference between wants and needs and how important it is to stand firm regarding needs and be willing to negotiate the wants. Above all, one cannot succeed in sales or in parenting without being willing to listen.

3. Which school board committees would you be most effective on, and why? I currently serve on the wellness and legislative committees, and if called upon I would be pleased to work on policy and/or curriculum. Those are the roles I feel match my character, education and experience.

4. What are Weare schools doing right? Our schools have been wonderfully successful at focusing on the people for whom they exist: our students. Not administrators, not teachers, not me as a school board member, not anybody else. And they do their job, probably the most important that any civilized society undertakes, with a positive attitude and very high level of professionalism.

5. What could Weare schools improve, and how? I believe class size is a strong determinant of student engagement and performance. If I had a magic wand, I would wave it to make sure that no teacher ever has more than 15 or 16 students at a time. The magic wand unfortunately doesn't exist at this time. Until it does, I would concentrate on maintaining and improving professional skills while constantly updating and upgrading curriculum and materials.

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6. What initiatives do you support for retaining employees? Having spent much of my time in the company of teachers, I can say with little fear of contradiction that teachers' and support staff salaries must be commensurate with the importance of the job they do. Beyond the paycheck, they must be shown respect and valued as the professionals they are, not merely treated as "the help."

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? Parenting, grandparenting, and working with reluctant customers have taught me the value of losing ego and never losing sight of the objective.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see SAU 24 set? I believe we ought to continue our study of building/utilization options at the John Stark campus. I would welcome, within the limits of sane budgeting, a concerted effort to make ALL our facilities as energy-efficient as technology permits. The first group of electric buses is an excellent start.

John Stark Regional High School Board

Two open seats (one for Weare, one for Henniker); three-year terms



Name: Wendy Curry

Contact: wcurry66@gmail.com

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in Weare, whether you have children in the school system, and your involvement in local schools and the community. I have been a resident and taxpayer in Weare for 22 years, during which I spent approximately 10 years on the Weare School Board. I have experience balancing the school requirements (state-mandated costs, student needs and ensuring reasonable salaries for our staff) with the desire to keep Weare taxes at a minimum. My daughter graduated from JSRHS last year. I am familiar with the school from a parent's perspective. My husband is a teacher (and former paraeducator) at Center Woods. I understand these roles from a spouse's

perspective. I am a software engineer by trade (at Dell). I have been a Girl Scout leader, a cheer mom and a lacrosse mom.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? As former chair of the Weare School Board, I worked with the finance committee, listening to the diverse perspectives in our community, collaborating with the administration and making difficult decisions. I have experience with the annual budget process, having to say "no" to items we need in order to keep budget increases "in check." I negotiated contracts with both teachers and paraeducators. As someone who has been in the technology sector, I am able to assess technology needs.

3. Which school board committees would you be most effective on, and why? On the Weare board, I spent significant time on the SAU 24 policy committee, understanding changes to state law, reviewing existing RSAs and collaborating with the JSRHS board to identify potential policy changes. I have worked with Patti Osgood on the community outreach board and would welcome an opportunity to do that again. All committees require collaboration with staff, parents and other school boards; it would be my job to represent the board and communicate what is proposed.

4. What is JSRHS doing right? JSRHS provides an impressive curriculum. They build leadership, whether through DECA, student government or the outdoor leadership class. Students are taught not only traditional math but practical math as well (i.e., the actual costs of renting an apartment). The advisory program, which allows students to build a relationship with a specific teacher for all four years, helps students stay connected. I have been impressed with the food services. Their meals are certainly better than what I got in high school. Student representation on the school board brings an important perspective to discussions. At the larger level, the district brings students from two distinct communities and merges them; students graduate as JSRHS students - not Weare or Henniker students. The ability to adapt to a new community, while incorporating your past culture and experiences, is a skill our students can use as they move forward.

5. What could the school improve, and how? From a parental perspective, I have a wishlist of changes. (For example, the dress code could use some review). But I

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also understand I may not be privy to background information. Rather than list any complaints, I will hold these concerns until I can fully understand the reasons why these situations exist. I think the district can cut costs by sharing resources with other districts. Much progress has been made here in the past couple of years; we could do more.

6. What initiatives do you support for retaining employees? A fair teacher's contract is step one, which includes wages, but also paid time off, tuition reimbursement, paid time for planning and health insurance. This is not enough. There will always be another district that pays more/has better benefits.

It's important our employees feel valued, supported and part of a community. Center Woods is particularly good in this area. We might want to partner with CWES to see if we can adopt some of their programs. Possible activities could be bagels and coffee, a handwritten letter campaign of thank you notes, raffles for teachers, a teacher spotlight on the web page, a teacher's wish list (with a donation form attached), or gift certificates to fund teacher group outings. Cost can be offset through parents and local businesses.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? I lead design teams at Dell. Whenever software is being designed, there are usually a couple of people who have "the right" solution. These solutions never match. When we get past those debates, our ultimate design is better than either of the originals. Chairing the Weare board during COVID was a constant exercise in opposing viewpoints. Whether it was policies around masks, vaccines, or being remote, diverging viewpoints resounded. There were no solutions that matched everyone's choices; every board meeting included some constituent's perspective. We listened to them all. Ultimately, we made decisions based on all inputs.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see SAU 24 set? Strategic planning for larger cost items is critical to balance out taxes. Examining the costs of the entire SAU holistically to see how we can lower costs is important. Identifying a permanent home for the SAU, rather than renting, may be fiscally responsible. Revisiting the websites to make them more user-friendly would be nice. Can we find a way to better recycle older tech and possibly get reimbursed for equipment that is no longer functional?



Name: James Newcomb

Contact: jnewcombnh@gmail.com

1. Tell us about your background: your education, line of work, how long you have lived in your town (Weare or Henniker), whether you have children in the school system, and your involvement in local schools and the community. I have

a doctorate in biology and have been a professor of biology at New England College since 2006, which is when I moved to Henniker. My oldest child graduated from JSRHS in 2021; my youngest is currently a sophomore. As a college professor, I do numerous K-12 outreach activities at local schools, including HCS, JSRHS, and WMS. I am currently finishing up my first term as a member of the JSRHS Board.

2. What specific skills do you bring to the position? I have over 13 years of post-undergraduate education, so I feel that I bring more than the usual student perspective to this position and, of course as a teacher myself, I also bring educational experience from the other side of the desk. As a scientist, I am very data-driven, so I am well-versed in data analysis and information-based decision making. Personally, I also consider myself an excellent listener and a respectful collaborator – two very important traits in a well-functioning board member.

3. Which school board committees would you be most effective on, and why? I currently serve on the curriculum, legislative, professional growth, transportation, and wellness committees. I am also Vice-Chair of the SAU 24 board and an active participant on the SAU 24 facilities and resources planning committee. All those committees keep me pretty busy, but they are all important and I would like to continue working in these areas. I believe that I bring important experiences to these groups that help to make me an effective contributor. These include experience with comparable committees at the college (there is significant overlap in education between the high school and collegiate level), and a strength with working with data and spreadsheets (there were almost 200 education-related bills proposed at the state house this year!) Being involved in so many committees also means that important synergy occurs, such as being able to connect state legislative proposals with

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curricular, professional development and wellness efforts in our SAU.

4. What is JSRHS doing right? JSRHS is doing many things well, including (but not limited to) an emphasis on individualized career paths and student-centered learning, providing multiple diploma options, revitalization of the athletic and co-curricular programs and support for career-impactful opportunities for students such as Advanced Placement, Concord Regional Technical Center and dual enrollment courses.

5. What could the school improve, and how? I think that the biggest areas for improvement are with the social-emotional health of our students and continued fostering of a safe and inclusive environment for all community members. JSRHS has recently been taking important strides in these areas with the first post-pandemic Challenge Day event this year. I was able to participate as a school board member, and I can honestly say that it is the most effective personal development training that I have ever participated in during my professional career. The positive impacts on students that day were tremendously obvious. Such events can go a long way towards improving the social-emotional well-being of the JSRHS community and developing a more safe and inclusive environment for all. The newly formed SAU 24 Advisory Committee, working with NH Listens, is another big step in working to improve these areas across the SAU.

6. What initiatives do you support for retaining employees? I support competitive salary and benefits, and effective professional development opportunities. Of course, these must be balanced with budget and tax impacts, but I believe that there is a fertile middle ground that can be reached. Retention can be improved if employees work in a collegial environment, where their development needs are met and success is noticed. I believe that recent efforts on mentoring and instructional coaches can have huge impacts on the development and satisfaction of our employees.

7. What experience do you have working with people who have opposing viewpoints? I currently serve on committees at the college, as a board member for a local non-profit, and as a JSRHS Board member. All of these settings give me almost daily experience working with people who have differing viewpoints from my own. I believe that some of my strengths include a willingness to genuinely listen to others, and an ability

to respectfully collaborate to achieve both short- and long-term goals. I am proud of the work of the JSRHS Board over the last several years because, even though we do not always individually agree, we are all able to respectfully discuss any subject and work together for our goals.

8. What long-term goals would you like to see SAU 24 set? I have been an active participant in the SAU 24 Facilities and Resources Planning Committee, which was begun a little more than a year ago. The goals of this committee are to help determine short- and long-term goals for the SAU, while simultaneously realizing efficiencies and cost-savings that can be achieved as a multi-district SAU. We are still in the early stages of this process and will soon be seeking community input, which will be a very important component of this work. I look forward to hopefully working with the community to determine together, what the goals of this SAU should be over the next 10+ years.

