

Sunapee School Board Meeting

SMHS Media Center

April 5, 2017

Call to Order:

School Board Chair Skarin called the School Board meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Roll Call:

Paul Skarin
Brian Garland
Edward Andersen
Jesse Tyler

Others Present:

Russell Holden, Superintendent

Interview Process:

Board Chair Skarin explained that whoever is chosen tonight will serve on the Board until the next election in March 2018. He then acknowledged the three school board candidates for interviews—John Augustine, April Royce, and Gidget Ducharme. Each candidate will have 30 minutes. The order of the interview would be picked randomly with their names being put in a box.

He stated that each candidate would be asked the same questions by the Board members. The Board will then select and vote on the new Board member during the Board meeting tonight; there is someone on ahead to swear-in the new member. There will also be two public comments; one at the beginning and one at the end.

Public Forum:

Francis Harris asked if the Board members whose backs were to the audience could move, so they were facing the audience.

Board Chair Skarin replied that the interview is setup in such a way that it wouldn't be comfortable for the interviewee or the Board members. He recommended she move up to the front row, so that she can hear better.

Jody Manson asked if the new Board member would be sworn in prior to tonight's Board meeting, and if yes, then how will they be prepared without getting the packet ahead of time.

Board Chair Skarin responded that the new Board member will have time before the Board meeting to review the packet. They can also abstain if they feel uncomfortable.

John Augustine:

1. Please take a few minutes to tell us about yourself.

Has lived in Sunapee for 15 years, owns Dexter's Inn (SMHS students are employees), and this is his second year on the Board of Selectmen for the town. He attended public school for his elementary years and comes from a family of teachers. He has his MBA. He also acts as a volunteer admissions interviewer at Swarthmore College; his alma mater.

2. What specific value will you bring to the Sunapee School Board?

He has an analytical mind and a numbers orientation. He is very honest and holds an objective perspective. He has no children or relatives in the District, so he doesn't have an agenda. He brings the viewpoint of a business owner and entrepreneur.

3. What do you see as the Board's role and responsibilities?

To set policy, establish a responsible budget, and hire a superintendent. He believes a board member should set expectations, establish a reward system, monitor those results, and hold people accountable.

4. How would you describe an effective School Board member?

Someone with a business owner's mindset, who sees the big picture and long-term vision for the District. They must understand the inner workings and the three major stakeholders: students and parents, staff, and the community. A board member must have the ability to put themselves in other people's shoes and be a consensus builder.

Edward Andersen asked what area John saw imbalanced. John replied that he feels the taxpayers have not been heard or given the respect they deserve. He would like the District to hold Taxpayer Appreciation Days to show their gratitude.

5. What is your vision for public education in our community?

To fulfill the legal obligation that every student is educated in a manner that fits their abilities in a cost-effective manner. He wants every student to realize their potential by

raising expectations and providing support. He would like to bring more enthusiasm and high hopes to the District.

6. What is the one educational priority that, in a perfect world, you would accomplish during your time in office? How will you go about achieving it? Why is this a priority?

He would like each student to have a PEP (personalized education plan). This would include an aptitude test in middle school, if the parents agree, that would map out high school classes, which would include resume and skill-building, networking, mentors, and internships. The priority should be to launch productive students into the world.

7. How should the Sunapee School Board address the following issues: enrollment, budget, a need to prepare all students for a variety of post-grad choices?

The focus should be on not losing current students. The District can attain this by sending out satisfaction surveys, holding exit interviews, and being data-oriented. The District should focus on getting more tuition students.

8. What other information would you like to share with the Board as to why you would be a contributing Board member?

He is on the Board of Selectmen and ran as a “change” candidate. He believes in looking at the data and making changes where needed. While he is an “outsider”, he is not out to cause problems.

Edward Andersen asked how he would retain staff. John replied that he believes in pay for performance; create a bonus for teachers who are excelling at their job, no matter how long they’ve been with the District.

Board Chair Skarin stated he had read an editorial and email today from Johan that seemed against consensus building and asked how he would build consensus. John replied that you must start a dialogue to acknowledge the truth/reality and not have a personal agenda.

Jesse Tyler stated that John wrote a piece in the Kearsarge Shopper that noted him, calling him foolish. He wonders how that is consensus building. John responded that he felt Jesse was pandering to the electorate and that is wrong.

9. Question the candidate may have for the Board.

John asked the Board if they are individually or collectively willing to look at data and facts to make changes going forward. Jesse Tyler replied yes, in concerns to enrollment and tax impact.

April Royce:

1. Please take a few minutes to tell us about yourself.

She is a former Board member. She moved to Sunapee five years ago for the community and school system. She has two children in kindergarten and fourth grade. She is a proponent of strong schools and that you need to be a part of the community to create strong schools.

She has a BA in accounting and is currently going to school for dual masters in accounting and financial management. She has experience with strategic planning and was a member of the PTO for five years until this past year due to Board meeting conflicts.

2. What specific value will you bring to the Sunapee School Board?

She believes in honesty and civility. She can talk to everyone, while at the same time being able to respectfully disagree. She would like to continue her role on the School Board.

3. What do you see as the Board's role and responsibilities?

The Board must be financially responsible when creating a budget and focus on strategic planning. She comes from a financial background and understands the facilities component. Strong schools help home values and create strong students.

Board Chair Skarin asked if April thought she was an effective School Board member. April replied yes, especially regarding the public comment debate. She understands you must have a thick skin. Plus, she feels she is approachable.

4. How would you describe an effective School Board member?

Civil, unbiased, respectful, objective, willing to make uncomfortable decisions, and can put the time in.

5. What is your vision for public education in our community?

Successful and sustainable. She would like to see more community involvement and reinvestment.

6. What is the one educational priority that, in a perfect world, you would accomplish during your time in office? How will you go about achieving it? Why is this a priority?

For the District to connect with all students. She would like to see everyone trying hard. Currently, there are a lot of extra-curricular activities, but there are still students being missed. She would like to see the District connect with kids who don't fit in the "normal" activities offered.

7. How should the Sunapee School Board address the following issues: enrollment, budget, a need to prepare all students for a variety of post-grad choices?

She believes enticing more tuition students and students abroad is a good start. She would like the District to consider bussing students from Croydon as she feels it would attract more families. The District should be a little more aggressive with tuition contracts; it's a challenge to draw in more families and there aren't that many.

The budget needs to be thorough, prioritized, and transparent. She would like to see more outreach, technical, and alternative paths for students other than college.

8. What other information would you like to share with the Board as to why you would be a contributing Board member?

She feels she has the support of the taxpayers. Also, she did not originally seek re-election due to a family medical issue, but that is no longer a concern.

Brian Garland asked if she has any issues with combining all her activities. April responded that she has just started working from home, which is helpful. Also, she thrives on chaos and loves being an active participant.

Edward Andersen asked at what point April thinks the teacher's pay is a breaking point as Sunapee is one of the highest paid in the State. April replied that you must look at skills and experience. Sunapee's teachers have more higher degrees than most districts. Plus, many of Sunapee's teachers volunteer their time to students.

Edward Andersen asked how April feels about pay for performance and opportunities for advancement. April stated teachers come to Sunapee for a reduction in stress. They stay in Sunapee because of the respect they receive from students and how involved parents are in the school system.

Jesse Tyler asked her to expand upon her comment on alternative paths for students being treated equally with college. April replied that she liked John Augustine's idea about the

middle school aptitude test and showing students other options. She would like to see electives emphasized more and for alternatives to college not being stigmatized.

Board Chair Skarin asked if any of the shops she work with at her company are union and if she has been involved with union negotiations. April replied yes to both.

9. Question the candidate may have for the Board.

April asked the Board what their plan is to bring the community back together to move forward. Edward Andersen replied that he wants to look at the areas where policy is lacking and to be good listeners. Jesse Tyler responded that he wants to have true discourse and be more inclusive. Board Chair Skarin stated they need to build trust and listen to those who attend and those who don't attend.

Gidget Ducharme:

1. Please take a few minutes to tell us about yourself.

She has lived in Sunapee for 11 years. Her son is a junior at SMHS. She used to work in human resources until she had her son. Currently, she works as a pediatric manager at DHMC. She has volunteered at Cleanup Day, Nature's Classroom, and the Chowder Challenge. She was the treasurer for the PTO for five years. She was also elected as the School Board clerk for several years.

2. What specific value will you bring to the Sunapee School Board?

Humor, honesty, inquisitiveness, openness, and understanding. She is certified as HIPPA compliant for privacy laws. She seeks to understand first and to not take things personally.

3. What do you see as the Board's role and responsibilities?

To focus on the achievements of all students, allocation of resources to needs, being mindful and accountable to the community (measure the return on investment), engage the community, so they have input into policymaking, represent the values of the community, and offer full transparency.

She feels a Board needs to create the goal, determine value to cost, define parameters, and then measure the success or failure of it.

4. How would you describe an effective School Board member?

Being present, collaborative, and a team-player. Someone who is respectful of the community and each other. Someone who will cast a sincere vote; not a consensus vote. Being able to work towards a common goal and ask tough questions, while maintaining confidentiality.

5. What is your vision for public education in our community?

Strong, quality leadership. Enhancing the working relationship with teachers. Having high expectations of teachers and students through ongoing evaluations and meeting goals. Being fiscally responsible and having diverse methods of education.

6. What is the one educational priority that, in a perfect world, you would accomplish during your time in office? How will you go about achieving it? Why is this a priority?

She would like to see bilingual education started in the elementary school, segmented throughout the day. She mentioned that VLACS or the Rosetta Stone might be options. She noted that bilingual education at a young age enhances cognitive abilities and furthers student's options in the future.

7. How should the Sunapee School Board address the following issues: enrollment, budget, a need to prepare all students for a variety of post-grad choices?

Keeping tuition costs low to get more appealing and competitive tuition students. Digging deep into budget costs. More internship opportunities and expanding advisory to incorporate guidance to help expand student's strengths.

8. What other information would you like to share with the Board as to why you would be a contributing Board member?

She asks a lot of questions and is very open to other perspectives.

9. Question the candidate may have for the Board.

Gidget asked why the long-term Board members find their board work fulfilling. Brian Garland responded he likes to give back and feels you need to try to be involved. He believes in paying it forward. Board Chair Skarin replied that he enjoys volunteering and having the opportunity to be engaged. He is here for the kids.

Gidget asked the Board what they wished they had known prior to becoming Board members. Jesse Tyler replied that it might have been better if he lived Sunapee longer before running. Edward Andersen stated he wished he had attended more Board meetings.

Public Comment:

Mike Geneses commented that he has sat on corporate boards where people don't get elected; the board members choose them. He stated it is hard to choose people not like you, but that is what is best for the board. He hopes the Board keeps that in mind.

Chris Passage thanked the Board for the interview process. He believes the Board will make a good choice.

Adjournment:

Paul Skarin adjourned the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Kate O'Connor
School Board Secretary

DRAFT