



Northbridge Public Schools

Northbridge School Committee

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Northbridge Public Schools

Joint Board of Selectmen and School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, November 14th, 2023 5:30PM

Northbridge High School Media Center

I. Call to Order (5:40PM)

In attendance were:

School Committee:

Shannon Canoy

Jill Leonard

Heather Alden

Jonathan Canoy

Board of Selectmen:

Thomas Melia

Charles Ampagoomian

Russell Collins

Brian Paulhus

Thomas Begin

Also in attendance were Superintendent Amy McKinstry, Director of Business and Finance
Melissa Walker, and Town Clerk Linda Zywiec

II. Explanation of Procedure

A. Only one candidate in the room at a time

B. Each will be asked the same question by the same person in the same order.

III. First Candidate: Carl Cowen.

A. What are the Main Priorities Facing the District?

- i. The District runs well overall. Over the last few years, the main issue has been attracting and retaining talent. This seems to be an ongoing problem across many districts. This isn't something that a quick

infusion of money will fix. Good teachers seem to move on, and if it is not because of a major increase in pay, it is because of the culture in the district. The district needs to focus on attracting and retaining quality staff.

B. Most Important Characteristics of a School Committee? Of a School Committee Member?

- i. Working in a collaborative and cohesive manner. They are responsible to the community and need to have the best interests of the community and students in mind when making decisions.
- ii. Being a good team member. Known how to switch between being a leader and a follower at times. Your view point isn't the only one and everyone has their own and needs to be able to discuss it.

C. What do you understand the role of the School Committee to be and how will you communicate that to the Community?

- i. Oversight of the office of the Superintendent, Oversight and setting priorities of the Budget for the district, Overview and Development of Policies for the district.

D. What Past/Present connections to the district do you have?

- i. Daughter is currently a Senior in the District, and has been in district for her whole education. Pleased with the experience she has had. He has tried to be involved whenever possible. Was part of the committee to help find a new NMS Principal, was on School Council, and the Strategic Planning '21-'24 parent council. Was an assistant track coach.

E. What is the most important aspect of your personal or professional life that you will bring to the position?

- i. After Military service, worked in the JRTC program in a RI high school. Was on the Leadership team at the High School and worked alongside teachers and Admins in the school to face many challenges.

F. What Core Values should be imparted to the students? How should that be implemented?

- i. The main thing that should be imparted is the rule “Treat others the way you wish to be treated.” That should be the Core Value at all levels.
- G. Do you Support or not Support having a Police Officer act as the Resource Officer?
 - i. The intent to make the connections is a good one, and police should be used as resource officers. Does not think a uniformed police officer should be posted at a school every day, as it might give off the impression that the school is not a safe place.
- H. Are there any Grade levels that it is more important for a Resource Officer to interact with?
 - i. No one grade is more important in terms of what the resource officer can provide. It is important for all students of all grades to see the resource officer, both in and out of uniform at the schools.
- I. What is your Educational Philosophy and how does it align with Demographic Changes?
 - i. Does not want to change much from how the district is working currently, as the current programs have been made to support the current students.
- J. What are some of the most positive things you have seen about the district? What are some of the biggest issues that need to be addressed?
 - i. The positives of the district is the Culture in the schools. The main issue is needing to retain quality workers and getting parents involved at every level of the district.

IV. Second Candidate: Beth Tek

- A. What are the Main Priorities facing the District?
 - i. Recovery from the Pandemic as well as Social/Emotional Health of the students and Staff. Students are behind academically and developmentally by about 3 years, according to experts. Supports Wholistic Development of the students and supporting a change in mindset to accelerate the rate of growth to recover from the Pandemic.

- B. Most Important Characteristics of a School Committee? Of a School Committee Member?
- i. 1) District and School Mission/Vision focused. Comes from Leadership, but needs whole community buy in. 2) High Expectations for district 3) Tools and Measures to make sure the District is meeting the goals. 4) Effective and Effectively implemented Curriculum and Instruction. 5) Finance and Operation Oversight and Efficiency. 6) Helping shape Staff and Student mindsets to meet the District Mission.
 - ii. Passion for Kids. Job is to support and Guide system. Need data to be able to do so. Need to get a feel for the school yourself and be present at the schools. Need to listen to families.
- C. What do you understand the role of the School Committee to be and how will you communicate that to the Community?
- i. Not here to push individual agenda, but what is best for the students. Need to get information from all sources to help guide the decisions the School Committee makes.
- D. What Past/Present connections to the district do you have?
- i. Moved here 12 years ago. Children are not at NPS. One goes to a Private School and another is School Choices out. Not here for her children, but for the district in general. Has seen more support for schools in recent years. Has not heard talk about student misbehavior at NPS and is ready to take the district to the next step.
- E. What is the most important aspect of your personal or professional life that you will bring to the position?
- i. Has been studying the Analytics of schools for 20 years since No Child left Behind. Has done work at the Federal, State, and Private levels to work with schools and how to improve needed areas. Has a PhD in Education. There is no one fix, but several effective pieces for continued improvements in Satisfaction and Achievement she can bring in.
- F. Develop Plan to comfort Fears the Students may have about School/Life?

- i. Asked if there is a Curriculum in place for Social/Emotional Learning. Knows of PD for staff to help set a safe and welcoming climate to accept others. Once this is implemented, see how the students react to it and what needs to be aligned to allow the outcomes to be the most positive impact.
- G. Do you Support or not Support having a Police Officer act as the Resource Officer?
 - i. Sees the Pros and Cons. Pros: Establish feeling of Safety between students and Police. Cons: Some students may feel unsafe depending on their prior contact with the Law and their families. In this district, the cons do not outweigh the pros of having the officers in the buildings. Would like for the weapons to not be on school grounds.
- H. Are there any Grade levels that it is more important for a Resource Officer to interact with?
 - i. All are important when it comes to having the resource officer be present.
- I. What is your Educational Philosophy and how does it align with Demographic Changes?
 - i. ILP (Individual Learning Plans) at Scale. Giving the Younger Students more time to learn about the things that interest them to accelerate learning. Giving them more freedom to choose what they learn helps them to learn faster. Also offering the ability to shadow and have internships at local businesses/trades. Helping to understand what the students are looking for and how to efficiently help them do it.
- J. What are some of the most positive things you have seen about the district?
What are some of the biggest issues that need to be addressed?
 - i. The most positive thing about the district is the very dedicated teachers in the district. Wants to see them given opportunities to be leaders and receive more organic recognition, as that will help retain talent.

- ii. Reading comprehension from K-4 because of the Pandemic. It is a difficult skill to learn and the students need support and resources pro-actively to build them up. Structured supports feel more “Fail before Support is received”, but we should be giving supports before failure happens.

V. Voting

Both candidates were brought in and it was determined that with a total of 9 people between the voting members, the first to reach 5 votes would be the next member of the School Committee.

A Motion was made by Jonathan Canoy to appoint Carl Cowen to the open position. This was seconded by Tom Begin. Carl Cowen received 6 votes: 2 from the School Committee, and 4 from the Board of Selectmen.

XV Adjournment