



MINUTES

Thursday, October 10, 3:45pm - 5:00pm
Newton Free Library - 3rd floor rear arc area
(330 Homer Street, Newton)

Attendance: Margaret Albright (School Committee Candidate), Hilary Bialek, Erica Braman, Erwin Chuk, Marcia Cooper, Anndy Dannenberg, Jason Dyett, Kate Esbenshade, Margaret Ford, Heather Friedman, Elizabeth Heilig, Allison Kelley, Coral Lin, Sarah M, Jenn Martin, Brid Martin, Tamika Olszewski (School Committee Candidate), Emily Prenner (School Committee Candidate), Kathy Shields (School Committee Candidate), Becka Smillie, Adam Sterns, Heather Tausig, Kathryn Teissier du Cros, Andrew Thompson, Arshia Verma

Notes taken by Hilary Bialek. Edited by Joana Canedo

1. Regular Business (3:45pm to 4:05pm)

a. Welcome

b. Green Expo activities

School Connections will have a table at the GreenEXPO 2019, on October 20, 10:00 am - 4:30 pm. Joana will be responsible for it. We are seeking volunteers to help at the table and with activities, especially for kids. We will offer help on how to create Green Teams in Schools.

c. Schools: sharing experiences

Pierce:

-Elizabeth Heilig: Members of the Food Service Advisory Committee showed interest in commercial composting. They are talking to DPW about implementing a program in their cafeteria. They would like to hear from the schools that have done it: Angier and Zervas. It involves training the students and partnering with food services provider.

-Becka Smillie: Participated in the STEMWeekChallenge.org training. ZERO Waste design challenge for all K-12 schools in MA. It was very positive. Plans to incorporate STEM work, no idling and textile recycling in this year's Green Team activities.

North:

- Anndy Dannenberg: Received a grant from Newton School Foundation to create a school garden to be installed by the Sustainability class students, with the help of Green City Growers for the education piece of the project. Students have already weeded the existing raised beds, took soil samples for testing, and got the ball rolling. Next up is our "Cold Frame Challenge," and really assessing and planning the possibilities for serious planting in the spring. We'll plant flower bulbs this fall, and try and get a few fall-hardy crops, like kale, to grow before winter sets in. The carpentry department will help. The goal is to use only reclaimed/recycled materials.
- Sustainability Day will be on Tuesday, November 26. Still in the planning phase. Partnering with the Climate Action Club students at NNHS. Idea is to have a student panel, an adult/expert panel and games and or school-wide challenge.



South:

- Andrew Thompson: Sustainability Day. Planning for 02/12/20, around Climate Change.

Mason Rice:

- Heather Friedman: Initial talk with Newton DPW about composting at school.

Students:

- Kate Esbenshade (NSHS) and Coral Lin (NNHS) spoke at a Mothers Out Front Event about climate change and why it's important to students. They highlighted School Connections, the Green Expo, the Newton Farmers Market, and Newton Power Choice.
- Kate Esbenshade: Webster Woods. Students of all grades can write letters to the mayor to Newton City Council and/or in support of the proposal to acquire the portion of Webster Woods land owned by Boston College.

d. Preparation to receive candidates

Joana: The focus of the discussion will be Sustainability in Schools even though we understand that there are many other important issues related to the position

Each candidate will have 2 minutes to introduce themselves, and then we will open for questions.

Each candidate will have the opportunity to comment on each question.

2. School Committee Candidates - (4:10pm to 5pm)

a. Welcome and introduction of School Connections

Joana: All 11 candidates to the School Committee - in contested and uncontested races - were invited by email to participate in this meeting. Galina Rosenblit sent her regrets on not being able to attend. Anping Shen responded he could come, but did not make it. Ruth Goldberg sent a message that she was going to come but something came up this afternoon. Other candidates did not respond to the invitation.

We also sent all the candidates a list of questions to answer in writing, so we can publish the answers on our website. So far, Galina Rosenblit sent her answers.

We thank the candidates who accepted our invitation to get to know our group and to answer our questions in person.

Note: Tamika Olszewski and Emily Prenner are in contested races, but not against each other. Margaret Albright and Kathy Shields are running uncontested.

b. Candidates introduce themselves - 2 minutes each

Four candidates were present and introduced themselves.

Introductions added on 10/25. Edited on 10/27. Please note: candidate's comments are summaries of what they said.

Tamika Olszewski:

Lawyer and super active parent, Chronic volunteer. Cares about schools and community. Former Burr PTO board. FORJ and Harmony foundation board member. Values differences and works to meet the needs of students across the spectrum. Values and appreciates community partnership.

Emily Prenner:

Passionate advocate of public education. Kids went to Integrated Preschool, Angier, South.

Member of PTO Council. Sat on the committee to pass three new elementary schools. PTO needs



to understand how their school fits in the whole. Running for SC since every child needs the best opportunity. Teachers are the best assets and need appropriate pay. Class sizes and programs need to be supported. Closing the achievement gap, ELL, AP classes, professional development, and support for all children is important. Need to reduce stress for students, support moving HS start time later, ensure good use of taxpayer \$ and have it spent wisely. Sustainability should be priority for new building projects. Support composting and food recovery.

Margaret Albright:

On SC for 6 years. First time running unopposed. Member of the transportation steering group. Focus on cutting back on traffic around elementary schools and promoting safe walking and biking. Emissions, microparticules and long term health are issues. On board of Newton Conservators and working on preservation of open space.

Kathy Shields:

Running for second term. Kids at Ward and Bigelow. Ward PTO and School Council. Part of the recycling policy working group, as the policy could improve chance of getting grant funding. Part of school building committee for preschool. Would ensure that design features and sustainability are addressed for many of the aging, inefficient buildings that need attention. Equity working group focused on eliminating funding disparities as a result of PTO fundraising abilities. Trial lawyer at U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

c. Q&A and open discussion

Answers added on 10/25. Edited on 10/27. Please note: candidate's comments are summaries of what they said.

Heather Friedman: Newton schools lack a comprehensive approach to teaching environmental topics across grades K-12. The curriculum ought to do more to educate students about the science of climate change and how it is impacting all life and ecosystems on our planet. Students should also learn about green technology innovation, in order to prepare them to work in a clean energy economy. In your view, how might the School Committee prioritize education on environmental topics in our schools? Would you support a policy by the SC on implementing a comprehensive approach to teaching sustainability and climate change?

Margaret Albright: This would need to be added to the curriculum at the state level. Adult behaviour is a greater concern.

Marcia Cooper: Students need to be able to answer basic questions such as where their electricity comes from.

Tamika Olszewski: Need to align policy goals with curriculum. Practices can be woven into the curriculum. For instance, a school garden provides the opportunity to weave in lessons about history, science, math and other teachings.

Emily Prenner: Student empowerment. Students feel the need to do something for the environment. How do we as a district support this? Programs like Generation Citizen, funded by Newton School Foundation - many students focused on climate change last year.



Kathy Shields: 6th Grade classes are studying the UN Global Goals, and 8th grade Generation Citizen. The challenge is to emphasize sustainability through many classes, holistically, across different subject areas.

Marcia Cooper: Important to teach kids new technologies coming up. Teachers need training on technological innovations and solutions, similar to how they were trained about computers. Terminology, like EV and embodied carbon, should be taught along with mathematics and other subjects.

Jason Dyett: Is there any data on # of people who drive their kids to school? Carpool to save time and gas? How can the School Committee prioritize/encourage biking, walking and bus rides?

Margaret Albright: Member of Safe Routes to School, part of MassDot, and Transportation Steering Group. Trying to maximize use of buses to eliminate car trips. Creating walking maps, promoting walking school bus. We need to make it more convenient to walk and bike to school and less convenient to drop off by car. Walking brings independence too. We have been trying out new things to see how they work.

Kathy Shields: Need to encourage, show the value of walking in elementary and middle school.

Emily Prenner: Incentivize bus ridership in high schools.

Tamika Olszewski: Family walks to school every day. Make Blue zone smaller to reduce hazards and idling.

Someone suggested, could buses be free and parking expensive? How can we incentivize people to change their behavior?

Heather Tausig: Our group defends that it is necessary to hire a dedicated Sustainability Coordinator for Newton Public Schools, in order to institutionalize sustainable practices in our schools, such as recycling, as those practices are now being carried on by volunteers (who come and go), and the district cannot rely solely on a few well intended parents or dedicated educators. What is your position on hiring such a professional?

Tamika Olszewski: Look to work across schools and with the city in a collaborative mindset and have aligned sustainability goals. Not sure if it should be one person or cross-promoting to ensure all departments are aligned. Money may not be available, but the will to make it happen is there.

Emily Prenner: What would be the role of this city-wide sustainability hire? Who is responsible for it - schools or city -can be problematic and challenging. What would the school committee's role be in this? There are yearly system-wide goals which drive the budget and priorities. For FY20 transportation and sustainability were added to the goals.

Margaret Albright: Member of Safe Routes to Schools, which relies on volunteers. Could see roles merging together due to shared used of grounds. Need to break down the silos and bring groups together. City + School.

Kathy Shields: Now that sustainability has been elevated in system-wide goals, there may be an opportunity to propose a FTE or part time, but staffing has been focused more on mental and physical health. Need to look at the trade offs during every budget cycle.



Closing:

Joana: Candidates, please send us the answers to the questions we sent last week by 10/19, so we can publish all the answers in the School Connections and Green Newton websites before the elections. Thank you.

Reminders:

- GreenEXPO 2019: October 20 @ 10:00 am - 4:30 pm
- Election day is November 5, 2019. Residents can vote for all school committee candidates regardless of ward. Vote for (up to) ONE for each ward throughout the city. Learn more about the School Committee here: www.newton.k12.ma.us/schoolcommittee.
- Next Meeting: November 14 @ 3:45pm - 5:00pm, at the Newton Free Library