

School Board Candidate Survey

After soliciting feedback from the community over the past several months, we have created a questionnaire that we hope all school board candidates will complete, to better help ExeterPACT and our community understand where candidates stand on these important issues

Email *

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What are your reasons for running for school board this year? *

My family has lived in Stratham for a little over two years now and we absolutely love the town and school. Currently, we have three kids at SMS in grades 4, 1 and K, and we have a fourth child who will attend in about 5 years. This means we will consistently be a part of SMS for the next 11 years. Selfishly, I have a vested interest in the school system, but I want the best for the staff and students of SMS now and in the future. We moved to Stratham for the highly ranked school system, and I want to be a part of maintaining and improving a system of excellence.

What do you see as the main challenges facing the school district and what do you want to change? *

First, the school rankings within SAU16, including SMS, are falling year over year. This has not triggered a review of the current curriculum or discussion of how it's success is being measured. As a board member I will pursue academic excellence through an academic curriculum actively overseen by the school board. The curriculum must be monitored for success and adjusted as necessary.

Second, there is a lack of transparency and communication between the school board, school staff, administration, parents, students, and the community at large. I will insist on maximal transparency to the public for curriculum, budgeting, grants, expenditures, bidding, academic outcomes, school environment, etc. This information must be made public through more than board meetings, emails, and Right-To-Know requests.

Third, the year over year rising costs to taxpayers with declining student population is a huge concern. I will seek to determine the long term drivers of both of these metrics to determine what policies can be adopted, updated, or removed to ensure students want to come to and stay at SMS and do so without constantly rising costs.

Fourth, there is a lack of skepticism towards proposals from the administration related to many topics from academic programs and safety protocols. I will demand more transparency and accountability from the administration and hold them accountable when they fail to uphold high standards expected of them.

The School District Budget is always heavily discussed and debated. What changes are necessary to the budget and the budget process if any? *

First, I will require the budget to not be inflated beyond what is necessary causing large sums to be returned to the community; if this is unavoidable then the school board must pass a measure to prevent the expenditure of these funds.

Second, the draft and final budgets should be posted online as soon as they are available from the administration, even in draft form

Third, the BAC meetings must be broadcast with recordings available for viewing by the public after the fact. This is required to avoid the public, administration, and school board from being out of the loop on why the BAC makes the recommendations they do.

Fourth, boards must start reviewing the current budget vs actuals each month instead of waiting till the yearly review process.

What is your opinion regarding the SAU16 policy responses to Covid and what, if anything, would you change? *

Generally the school boards failed to provide oversight for the loose guidelines and decisions provided by the administration, both when originally presented and on an ongoing basis. This resulted in much angst, anxiety, anger, and division in our community that was dismissed and rarely acknowledged.

I would have demanded a weekly public meeting to discuss the current situation of Covid with regards to the proposed and adopted policies; defined clear goals and expectations sooner; document and track the consequences, good and bad, resulting from the policies. Additionally, a forum for ongoing parent, staff, and student input while providing responses to concerns and suggestions.

Why do you believe animosity has increased during in interactions between the school board, the administration, and the public, and how can the current climate be improved? *

A lack of humility and personal communication is driving the animosity. I believe most community members would get along and have a lot in common outside of the topics that divide different groups within the community.

The current process of holding meetings with the board/admin on one side of a room and the public on the other with one sided conversations will never resolve the current issues. Claiming to listen better and never sincerely acknowledge a person's point of view isn't helpful.

When the public raises concerns there needs to be a conversation, and maybe more than one. From that there should be compromises and/or humility to say "I was wrong". There needs to be more "let's do this right rather than 'my way'".

What would you use as a model to gauge academic success? *

I will advocate for a model using reading, writing, and arithmetic as foundational to academic advancement. The model should have measurable points for success for both students and teachers. The model should be consistently used to provide short and long term insight into the academic success of the school.

Would you support the addition of more teachers and para positions? *

Yes

No

Do you believe our SAU has the appropriate number of administrators? *

Yes

No

If elected, what approach will you take in responding to parents' questions and concerns as it relates to their children's educational experiences inside the classroom? *

I would provide prompt acknowledgement to a parent and include an expectation of when I can follow up with additional information. Depending on the topic the parent may need to be redirected to specific staff within the school to provide a more comprehensive response. Regardless of the path required to address the questions and concerns I will keep in touch with the parent to ensure there is some resolution provided.

Do you see yourself primarily as a representative of the community or as a representative of the school system? *

Representative of the community

Representative of the school system

Are you committed to a yearly survey of families, students, community residents, and school staff about what they see as major strengths and shortcomings of the district and its schools? Are you committed to publicly sharing the results? *

- Yes I am committed to a yearly survey and yes I am committed to publicly sharing the results
- Yes I am committed to a yearly survey but I believe the surveys are information for the school board and administrators
- No I am not committed to a yearly survey
- Undecided

What makes you the most qualified person for the school board? *

Prior to moving from Texas to Stratham, I served on the board of directors for two volunteer organizations where I dedicated myself to the betterment of those we served. If selected to serve on the SMS board of directors, I would bring the same dedication to serve the community, the staff, and the students. I believe my background in prior board service and life experiences brings both a unique experience and skill set to help the board of SMS be successful for the remainder of the term.

First, from 2009 to 2019 I served on the board of Texas Husky Rescue, which was and remains the largest husky rescue organization in the world! The board of directors handled much of the day to day work ourselves, and managed many volunteers. During my 10 years on the board, I held many roles and responsibilities: modernizing the organization's technology (google workspaces for nonprofits, finance software, website, etc), organizing and running numerous volunteer meetings, adoption events, and fundraisers, assisting with finance upkeep, not to mention personally fostering over 150 huskies. We held monthly board meetings to review finances and service providers, and discuss the state of our short and long term goals.

Second, I was on the board of directors for my neighborhood's HOA from 2012 to 2019, serving 755 families with a core goal of protecting their investment. The board was "hands on" in that we met at least monthly with the HOA management company to review finances, the status of capital projects, maintenance of amenities, and held non-public sessions to handle specific issues as required. We also met with the residents and homeowners once a year to review the state of the HOA, collect their input (and respond immediately or as a follow up), and convey goals for the upcoming year.

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