

THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Michael McAllister – Candidate for School Committee

Incumbent and Caucus Nominee



Events:

No events scheduled

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Final Campaign Statement - February 25, 2016

When I ran for School Committee in 2013 I stated, “I feel that there exists a group of people who are polite, professional, and dedicated to the schools. I look forward to joining them as a team member who will contribute to the strong work they’ve been doing for years.” Now, three years later, I can confirm that remains the case. It has been an honor to be one of those polite, professional, and dedicated members engaged in the excellent work of public education.

I am proud of the work I have been a part of in my first term:

- Supporting Superintendent Sills as he led our town-wide response to the incidents of bigotry and anti-semitism
- Proactively addressing enrollment trends
- Supporting the teaching and learning of Bedford’s students, teachers, and leaders as they transition to a new state assessment system
- Establishing goals for our revolving accounts (allowing other committees and boards to follow suit)
- Delivering a budget that met the Finance Committee’s recommended guideline
- Working closely with other boards to advocate for the schools’ needs within the town’s financial resources

I look forward to the challenges we have ahead of us as a committee in the next three years:

- Replacing Dr. Henry Turner with a new Principal at BHS
- Overseeing the addition at Lane School
- Depending on the outcome of the Brookline Public Schools' Superintendent search, replacing Mr. Jon Sills with a new Superintendent of Schools

I first ran for School Committee because I hoped to be more a part of my home town. As the current Chair of the Bedford School Committee, I would like to continue that involvement. My father once told me, "Democracy isn't a spectator sport." I respectfully ask for your vote on Saturday, March 12, 2016 to allow me to continue to be an active participant in our community.

Candidate Q&A – February 18, 2016

What major challenges do you expect to face during the next three years?

The needs and challenges for schools are always changing, and the Bedford Public Schools are no exception. In the next year alone there are four major challenges:

1. Replacing Dr. Henry Turner with a new Principal at Bedford High School.
2. Negotiating a new collectively bargained employment contract for Bedford's teachers, as represented by the Bedford Education Association.
3. Continuing to support the work of the Space Needs Task Force as they transition from a task force into a building committee (responsible for overseeing the Feasibility Study, Schematic Design, and securing of public funds for an addition at Lane School).
4. Depending on the outcome of the Brookline Public Schools' Superintendent search, replacing Mr. Jon Sills with a new Superintendent of Schools. While we certainly hope that Jon does not leave us, if we need to replace him then conducting a thorough and transparent search that involves substantial public input will be a primary challenge for the School Committee in the coming year.

Looking a bit further down the road, there are additional challenges on the horizon for the next three years:

1. Welcoming and supporting new member JoAnn Santiago to the School Committee.
2. Continuing the work of the Space Needs Task Force by continuing to monitor enrollment patterns and planning for the changing space needs of the schools. We have already added capacity to Davis School with two additional modular classrooms. Still, there is evidence that they may need to add additional space. Similarly, as the population bubble completes their time at Lane School and enters John Glenn Middle School there

is reason to believe additional space will be required there, too. Continued attention to enrollment and working together with town officials such as the Finance Committee, Selectmen, and Town Manager will be essential.

3. Supporting Lane School, John Glenn Middle School, and Bedford High School as they transition from the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) state assessment to the new MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) state assessment, known as *MCAS 2.0*.

All of these challenges – short term in the next year and longer term over the course of the next three years – are *in addition* to the responsibility the School Committee always carries: Providing the support our school leaders require with the oversight that the residents of Bedford deserve.

How will you advocate for academic excellence within the town's financial resources?

I referenced in my caucus speech a quote from former School Committee member Noreen O’Gara that read: “Good school districts like ours are nurtured by great communities.” Indeed, the support of a school system is not solely the responsibility of a group of five school committee members or of parents of Bedford students, but of the entire community. One of the things I have been very proud of this year is our work with the Finance Committee to produce a budget that met their recommended guideline. That process involved regular communication, a clear articulation of our needs and challenges, and a willingness to work within the town’s financial limitations. I promised Steve Steele and his committee “an uneventful budget season” and I was proud to deliver on that in a way that continued to allow the schools to sustain a level of high achievement and ensure opportunity for all students. We are lucky to live in a town of substantial resources, but those resources are not unlimited. Therefore, the schools need to work within the town’s budget and not on its own. Despite those limitations I remain confident that a top tier educational experience is something that all Bedford residents want. This year’s budget is a great example of the work we are all capable of when we work together on this common goal. I was proud to advocate for academic excellence within the town’s financial resources. I see no reason we cannot continue to do that next year.

2016 Citizen’s Caucus Statement

It seems that regardless of what position nominees are running for tonight –Assessors, Health, Library Trustees, all of them – everyone faces the same few questions: Why is he running? What qualifications does she have? Can he *really* make the time commitment? What impact will she have? I’ll try to answer all of those in my 3 minutes.

Why am I running? I am running because Bedford is my community. It is where I grew up. It is where I met my wife. It is where I choose to raise my children. It is where I choose to have my children educated. I am fortunate to have options when it comes to their education: As an employee of the Belmont Public Schools I can bring them with me to Belmont, where I believe they will receive a world-class education, but I send them to Bedford because I believe it is a system that is equally excellent. It is also *their* community. When I was their age I grew up in a neighborhood next door Lora Goldenberg, who paid me every Tuesday evening to babysit her children while she attended Selectmen meetings. Her husband, Bruce Murphy, was just as busy with FinCom meetings, Assessor responsibilities, and other civic duties. On the other side of my house was Julie Turner, who is now – but really has always been – *the* source for Bedford civic news. A few houses down the street was Mike Rosenberg, one of our current Selectmen. I am running today in their mold because they are great community members to emulate. I guess I am doing my part to fit into the neighborhood!

What qualifications do I have? I believe that my qualifications are strong. Public education is something I feel that I understand exceptionally well. It is something that I have dedicated the last 17 years to learning about – as a classroom teacher, as a curriculum director, and as a principal – and something that I expect to spend the next 20 years learning more about. There can be a lot to learn when a new member joins the School Committee because public education can be like a language unto itself, complete with more acronyms than you can imagine: RTI, NCLB (now known as ESSA – the Every Student Succeeds Act), DESE, NAEYC, and ELL, just to name a few. Fortunately, it is a language I speak fluently. My day-to-day work prepares me well for this. However, there are unique things to Bedford that I have learned by serving on the School Committee that my work in the Belmont Public Schools did not prepare me for: McKinney-Vento laws for educating homeless students, Impact Aid for Hansom residents, and the 1:1 iPad initiative at BHS. I am proud of the work we have done over the last three years, and especially proud of my leadership of the committee this year as it's Chair as we address surging enrollment, the changing needs of families, and the need to develop more school spaces. It is work that I hope to continue for another three years.

As a public school Principal, I will admit that I am not swimming with extra time but I'm sure none of us are. I try to be the first one at school in the morning, and, as it turns out, I am generally the last one to leave. But if long hours are a disadvantage, K-4 Principals have one advantage: our nights are generally free because most of our students are in bed. As a parent I'm not proud to say I can't attend every school event in Bedford – I can't leave school to attend my kids' concerts, it'll be hard to be there to see after school games, and I try to request parent-teacher conferences in the evening. But night School Committee meetings are one way that I *can* be involved.

When I first inquired about running for the School Committee three years ago, Noreen O’Gara said to me: *“Good school districts like ours are nurtured by great communities.”* I’m running for School Committee because Bedford is my community, and I hope to continue to make our school district even stronger than it already is.

Thank you.

[Click to read Michael McAllister’s candidate statement in The Bedford Citizen](#)

[Click to read Michael McAllister’s statement of intention to run](#)