



WINOOSKI SCHOOLS

We are the future.

Winooski School District
Special School Board Meeting
Wednesday, August 2, 2023 - 6:30pm
Learning Media Center

All students will graduate from the Winooski School District (WSD) college and career ready at a cost supported by a majority of the Winooski community. WSD students will lead healthy, productive and successful lives and engage with their local and global community.

1. **Call to Order:** (5 Minutes)
 - a. Meeting called to order at 6:34 PM by acting Board President Robert Millar.
2. **Agenda Review and Adjustments:** (5 Minutes)
 - a. Interview for open board position due to resignation of former president, Allison Burlock.
 - b. Four applicants; 2-3 minutes per answer. 12 questions total.
3. **Public Comments:** (As determined by Board President per Policy #8312)
 - a. No public comments.
4. **Governance Processes (Policy Section IV):**
 - a. Policy Title: 4.1 Governing Style
 - i. Action: Interview Potential New Board Member(s)
 1. Kamal begins the interview process by introducing the board members.
 - ii. Kamal Dahal asks Potential New Board Member(s) - Please introduce yourself and provide an overview of some of your strengths that can be useful as a board member of the school district.
 1. Joanne Davidman- Lived in Winooski for 39 years. Newly retired educator. Worked in Milton teaching family and consumer services. Has leadership experience and experience working with a school board.
 2. Dana Visser- Moved to Winooski 15 years ago. Felt it was important to remain in the community after her daughter was born. She has experience in Special Education, teaching in Colchester (8th year), taught at CenterPoint. Currently a Co-team leader of her department. Known for helping people articulate and advocate. Able to find ways to communicate with people.
 3. Nicole Mace- Has Lived in Winooski for 15 years. Moved here with a background in education to volunteer. Work pulled into less of a volunteer position after having a daughter. She is a previous staff member and past Exec director for the VSBA. She has a background in strategic planning, superintendent partnership and policy service. Given

WINOOSKI SCHOOL DISTRICT, 60 NORMAND ST., WINOOSKI, VT 05404
PHONE (802) 655-0485 FAX (802) 655-7602 www.wsdvt.org

- the recent turn over of the board and a new superintendent, her clear understanding of the school board, can help admin and staff to get great work done.
4. Elom Kpesse- Lived in Winooski 5 years, then South Burlington, and back to Winooski for 4 years. Elom has been in the healthcare field for 15 years, does not have a lot of education background but is trying to find an opportunity to learn.
- iii. Robert Millar asked Potential New Board Member(s) - Please explain any connections you may have with the work in the schools or with education in general.
1. Dana- Joined a portrait of a graduate group. Worked with Michael Eppolito and community members. Being a parent and attending functions. Being a teacher made it difficult to volunteer with the school during the day.
 2. Nicole- Daughter going into 7th grade, recently, worked for WSD and has numerous connections to the community as a parent and prior staff member. Nicole is familiar with what the staff is working on and the direction they want to move in. She has done school board associate work, and worked in the special education and human services field. Currently, in CCV—still working in education.
 3. Elom- WSD Background is something new. One student is a junior, one is in 8th grade. Kids want to start a student council. Would love to see that happen and help. I want to help ideas come to light.
 4. Joanne- Not a lot of connection to the school. She supported a group of students that wanted to invite Outright Vermont to Winooski.
- iv. Isaiah Donaldson asks Potential New Board Member(s) - How do you deal with difficult decisions, controversy, or pushback?
1. Nicole- When I was with the School board- there was push back on public policy. I was present in communities where people were upset. As long as I feel comfortable with the decision, even if I don't agree with it, I am okay as long as both sides are heard and the process is followed. Education equity is easy when everyone is happy. Again, as long as I feel happy with the process that decision making was done I will stand by a decision.
 2. Elom- Conflict in health care. Dealing with residents and family members. Can't always please people. Have to make a decision that is best for the system. Family or community. Straight forward and be honest. Not everyone will be happy, but you have to do what's best for people. Safety.
 3. Joanne- Not afraid of controversy and push back- health teacher for 39 years. Not afraid of difficult decisions. As long as working towards consensus. I appreciate different viewpoints and coming out with a decision that is the best interest of faculty students and community.
 4. Dana- Who is this really for? It isn't for me or the board, is it for the school and larger community. "As Nicole said- as long as the process is done well" ... Being in special education, dealing with conflict and being uncomfortable. It doesn't feel good when the process isn't done properly. Step back and see where things are coming from if something isn't sitting well.
- v. Steven Berbeco asks Potential New Board Member(s) - What kind of information do you believe is necessary for the board to have before making major decisions or creating policy?
1. Elom- Great to have info necessary for the decision. If a decision needs to be made, you need to have all the info before making a decision.
 2. Joanne- It depends on policy & the decision being made. Data is important. You need information from the Vermont Agency of Education and community. Use Portrait of Student as a baseline of how you make a decision.
 3. Dana- Having something you can go back to. Having stakeholders information and input which is easy to say but hard to do. Accessing and making sure all stakeholders can be heard is hard. Look at the landscape from other schools as to what is working and what is best practices.
 4. Nicole- Strategic planning is necessary as is a well defined vision that the board has engaged meaningfully as a framework to make decisions. Administrative team brings the

decision to board, connecting the dots. Decisions shouldn't be made the first time the board is hearing about them. Allow board members to ask questions. Important that the admin has an opportunity to discuss. Board members to bring back to the community to get input on decisions to be made. Strongly believe framework is necessary to guide decision and process for evolution.

- vi. Robert Millar- asking if there are additional questions based off of candidate replies and did a time check.
 - 1. No followup questions needed
- vii. Robert Millar asks Potential New Board Member(s) - How do you balance a culture of collaboration and unity within the team while still contributing your unique perspective?
 - 1. Joann- Worked under a lot of different lenses. Picking the lens that best fits seems to help. Making sure you understand who people are as individuals and as a board and the direction that board wants to take the school. Listening to help with problem solving. Remembering to keep a long term perspective is helpful.
 - 2. Dana- Feels that a well established set of norms, developed as a group and agreed upon, sets the table for collaboration. High functioning groups- allow balance with members coming in and sharing perspectives.
 - 3. Nicole- Relationships are important in a small community. Setting aside time to get to know one another as people. Recognizing that people are coming from a good place, care and concern for school. Difficult conversations are easier with trust. Sense of disagreement but understanding others. Political spaces, this has been lost—focus on bringing it back. Hope to have strong relationships.
 - 4. Elom- Everyone has background and ideas. Respect, patience and listening is needed. If you don't have respect not much will be accomplished. Bringing balance and ideas to the table to discuss is as important as remembering that the decision isn't for us but for the community and school.
- viii. Robert Millar asks Potential New Board Member(s) - How do you believe your voice is representative of the voices of the community?
 - 1. Dana- Brings the perspective of an educator and parent as well as the perspective of the only person in a Bi-racial family who identifies as white. I am most interested in supporting a broader perspective in our community.
 - 2. Nicole- Represents a certain segment of the Winooski population. Most mindful of the voices that are not represented. She hopes to build trust and relationships in the community. Nicole wants to ensure this board is engaging in a more meaningful way than I've observed. Belief in the benefit of building with multi lingual/immigrant community members, it is important that those voices are part of decisions made. Looking to the community to be a better person/board member.
 - 3. Elom-Nursing assistant, voice out concerns. Life and death situation. Sometimes you have to voice your opinion. Coming from a different country and learning American culture and migrating the two. Winooski is full of immigrants and she understands how hard it is to fit in without changing your way or culture. Winooski does a good job of not making people change, not forgetting where they come from and adapting to new life.
 - 4. Joann- "Not sure if my voice identifies with the community. I am white, queer." I can represent the elderly. Sometimes that community doesn't like to vote for a budget because they did it already in their younger years (elderly). She believes she can bring in community voices to be heard.
- ix. Isaiah Donaldson asks Potential New Board Member(s) - How are you a good fit to serve on a board that prides itself on leading an unapologetically anti-racist organization?
 - 1. Nicole- I would be thrilled to be part of an unapologetically anti-racist organization. We have work to do to define what that means. How do we move from saying what we are moving towards to showing that we are moving that way. Start listening to students who say it's not working and the families we serve. Very interested in being with an organization that puts action behind its statements.

2. Elom- Coming from a background of a different culture. Things are progressing in a racial system, there is still work to do. With my background I can bring my opinion as a black person. How can I be supportive of change and help others who may be in the same situation.
 3. Joann- I think it would be great working with an unapologetic and anti-racist organization. People in Winooski- it would be important to post beliefs everywhere and hold those beliefs accountable.
 4. Dana- Appreciate the question. I imagine it is a developing idea. It is something that each person has to reckon with. As I think of my work, with myself, I think I would rather use my background and experiences. That is why I am more interested in raising the voices of others. I'd rather support someone with more experience.
- x. Steven Berbeco asks Potential New Board Member(s) - Considered in SRO in the school. Board meeting ran more than 4 hours. As we reflect on those months. What was missing from discussion back a few months ago?
1. Elom- I think it was to protect the school and students. Should have involved students. Should they have police on duty? They are the ones who come here 5 days a week. Survey community and students too.
 2. Joanne- I agree with what Elom said. Students need a prominent place as to who is in the building and why.
 3. Dana- Wasn't involved, not sure what was missing. When you talk about safety. It means so many things to so many different people. I am a teacher, I am in a school. Teachers and kids feel unsafe. Those are the people who need to come together to describe and build what safety means.
 4. Nicole- Better examples of using consultants and staff processes. Focus groups were used. My perspective, it was a very narrow and specific question to get information on. Could have had more effort and planning on bigger questions. The board reacted to the SRO issue– not that they had much choice. Regular ongoing engagement is important, if we get good at it we will not need to hire a consulting firm.
- xi. Robert Millar asks Potential New Board Member(s) - What do you believe to be the role of schools in our society?
1. Joann- Schools have a large role in society. Because society pushes more on the school. Two-sided answer - Are they giving money to support the stuff being pushed on society? Are they nurturing the center of youth? School represents who we are as Winooski when they travel to different places. Can't imagine not having schools. Get frustrated with what's put on schools.
 2. Dana- Interesting paradigm. A lot of people I encounter as a teacher, school is meant to be something that starts with preschool. What can I get from school? Painted as a one way transaction. I wish there was a give and take and thought went into what the community can bring to the school and give back. Winooski is so different, a community hub. Provides health care, amazing facility- more than what other schools are or could be.
 3. Nicole- Public education is an ideal, really. Ensuring that every single person no matter their background or advantages or barriers has an opportunity to learn about what gets them excited. Allows them to grow in a way that allows access to opportunities. Unfortunately, public schools are not made equally. Funding goes to organizations with more wealth. Believe in the potential of education and the necessity of funding. Winooski is poised to benefit from changes. Huge opportunity to turn ideal public education into a reality.
 4. Elom- Role of school in society is to get our children to grow. Parents teach about life and what to encounter. School teaches about education, career, and job you might have. Coming from a different country, not everyone has that opportunity.
- xii. Isaiah Donaldson asks Potential New Board Member(s) - What makes Winooski fabulous? What is the reason you have lived here so long?

1. Dana- I was doing trail crew. Talking to someone with a two year old. I heard it isn't that great. She encounters it a lot – I share my favorite thing about it, its uniqueness. Its size allows it to try new things- "Petri dish" it can enact things. It's messy and people are mad and happy. People make mistakes. Winooski is kind of messy but in a great way.
 2. Nicole. Grew up in PA, in a diverse community. Can't imagine living anywhere else in Vermont but Winooski. Socioeconomic diversity. Worries that housing stock allows this community to stay rigid. It is important to raise my kid in such a diverse community. I agree that it is a small community that values relationships. Having the space to gather and have community. Not every community tries to preserve that. Relationships. Diversity and Community make it special.
 3. Elom- Likes how small it is. Lived in diff. parts of VT. and feels Winooski is more accepting of different cultures. Put more info out for programs and systems. Not so crazy or violent. Smaller and welcoming.
 4. Joann- Voices can be heard. A while ago, residents used to have to vote at ST. FX School. It bugged a group of us. We decided to go to the town and city meetings. Being able to watch the process and part of that, realizing that our community will rise up. Try really hard to fix problems. People can be who they are here, no one needs to hide.
- xiii. Robert Millar asked if there were any further questions.
1. **No further discussion**
- xiv. Motion to enter executive session by Robert Millar
1. **Motion passes 4-0**
- xv. Motion to invite Wilmer into executive session
1. **Motion passes 4-0**

5. Executive Session:

- a. Discussion: Appointment of Board Member 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3).

6. Governance Processes (Policy Section IV):

- a. Policy Title: 4.1 Governing Style
 - i. Potential Action: Appoint New Board Member 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3).
 1. *Motion to appoint Nicole Mace as new board member made by Isaiah Donaldson
 2. All in favor
 3. Motion passes 4-0

7. Adjourn:

- a. **Motion to adjourn by Robert.**
- b. **Motion passes 4-0**
- c. Meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.