

LWV



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOTER

★★★ **GUIDE** ★★★

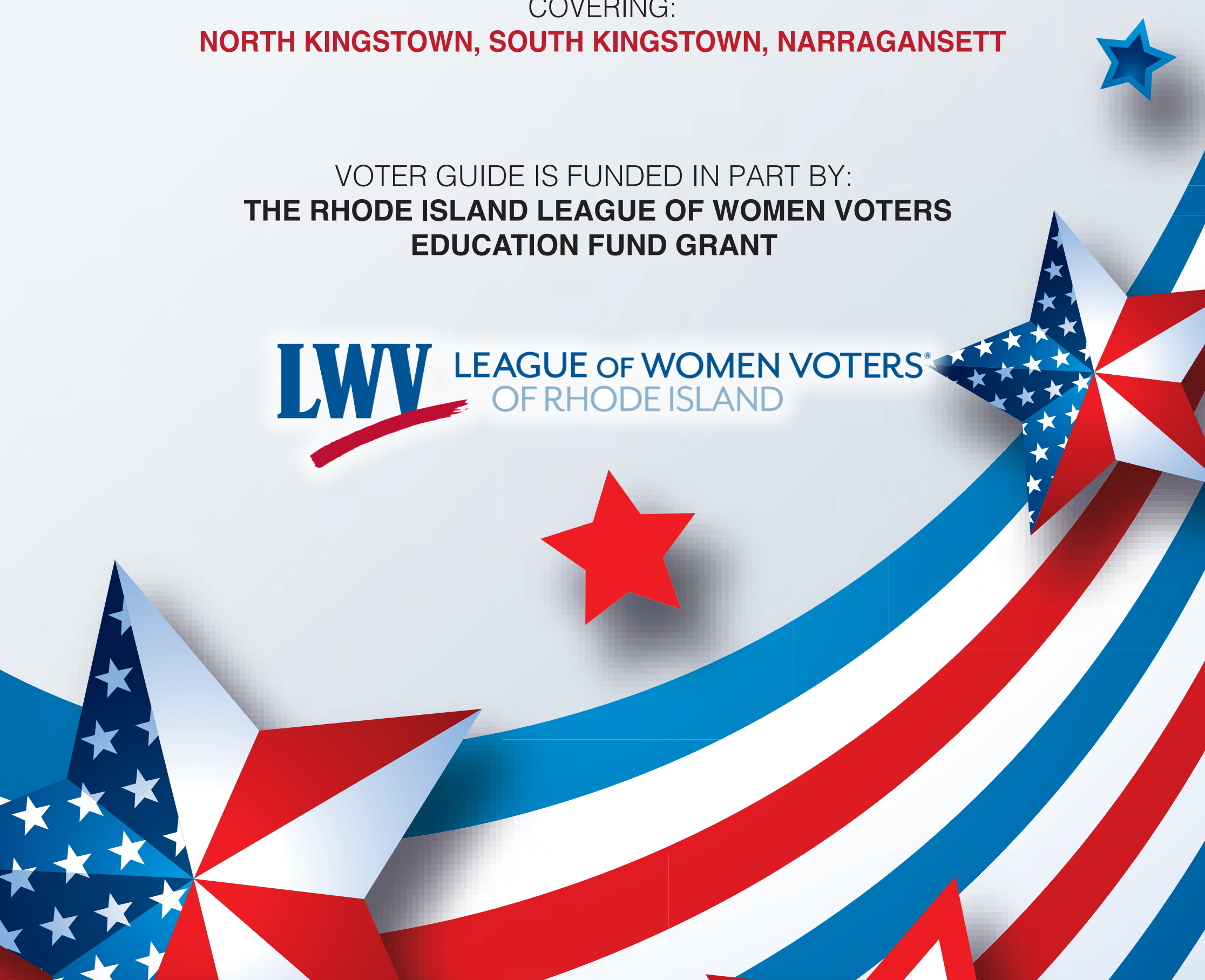
2024

COVERING:

NORTH KINGSTOWN, SOUTH KINGSTOWN, NARRAGANSETT

VOTER GUIDE IS FUNDED IN PART BY:
**THE RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
EDUCATION FUND GRANT**

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF RHODE ISLAND



2024 LIST OF CANDIDATES

STATE SENATORS - Elect 1/District - 2 year terms

District 35 - North Kingstown, South Kingstown, East Greenwich
BRIDGET G. VALVERDE - D (Incumbent) - uncontested

District 36 - Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham
ALANA M. DIMARIO - D (Incumbent) - uncontested

District 37 - South Kingstown
RAYMOND E. GARDNER - R - no response
VIRGINIA S. SOSNOWSKI - D (Incumbent)

District 38 - South Kingstown, Charlestown, Westerly
VICTORIA GU - D (Incumbent)
WESTIN J. PLACE - R

STATE REPRESENTATIVES - Elect 1/District - 2 year terms

District 31 - North Kingstown, Exeter
JULIE A. CASIMIRO - D (Incumbent)
LISAMARIE LEAVITT - R - no response

District 32 - North Kingstown
ROBERT E. CRAVEN, Sr. - D (Incumbent) - uncontested

District 33 - South Kingstown, Narragansett
JESSICA DREW DAY - R
CAROL HAGAN McENTEE - D (Incumbent)

District 34 - South Kingstown, Narragansett
JOANNE R. FORTI - R - no response
TERESA TANZI - D (Incumbent)

District 35 - South Kingstown
KATHLEEN A. FOGARTY - D (Incumbent)
JENNIFER P. NERBONNE - R

District 36 - South Kingstown, Charlestown, Westerly, New Shoreham
TINA L. SPEARS - D (Incumbent) - uncontested

TOWN OFFICES

NARRAGANSETT (NON-PARTISAN)

Town Council - Two Year Term - Vote for up to 5

JASON COLONIES
JAMES P. DURKIN
EWA M. DZWIERZYNSKI (Incumbent)
STEVEN J. FERRANDI (Incumbent)
RUPERT FRIDAY
WINTERS B. HAMES III
JILL A. LAWLER (Incumbent)
ALEXANDER T. MENZIES
RYAN J. TORREALDAY
DONNA VIGNALI

School Committee - Two Year Term - Vote for up to 5

JENNIFER E. ARMSTRONG (Incumbent)
GREGORY V. LATO
TAMMY J. MCNEIECE (Incumbent)
DIANE S. NOBLES (Incumbent)
DAVID PAVONE
JUSTIN WOLF SKENYON (Incumbent)
CAROLYN J. TUDINO

NORTH KINGSTOWN

Town Council - Two Year Term - Vote for up to 5

LINNEA M. DREW - D
BETH HILL ROSS - I
GREGORY ANTHONY MANCINI - D (Incumbent)
LAWRENCE C. MANDEL - D (Incumbent)
MATTHEW B. MCCOY - D (Incumbent)
KIMBERLY A. PAGE - D (Incumbent)
JOSEPH MANUEL TEIXEIRA, JR. - I
RICKEY LEE THOMPSON - I
RICHARD A. WELCH - I

School Committee - Top three (3) vote getters serve a four (4) year term. Next top vote getter serves a two (2) year term. Vote for up to 4

ROBERT DAVID CASE - D (Incumbent)
SHERI L. KENNEDY - I - no response
JUSTIN R. KINNES - I
DONNA M. LICO - D
JENNIFER S. LIMA - D (Incumbent)
DEBRA LEE LUKACSKO - D (Incumbent)
PAMELA R. PINHEIRO - I
MEGAN M. REILLY - I

SOUTH KINGSTOWN

Town Council - Two Year Term - Vote for up to 5

PATRICIA A. ALLEY - D (Incumbent)
DORALD W. BEASLEY - I
DEBORAH D. BERGNER - D (Incumbent)
MICHAEL E. DAY - R
DEBRA MacDOWELL - R
MICHAEL K. MARRAN - D (Incumbent)
RORY H. MCENTEE - D (Incumbent)
SEAN O'DONNELL - R
PETER PHELPS - R - no response
CHARLES GREGORY SWEET - R (Incumbent)
JAY G. WEGIMONT - D

School Committee - Four Year Term - Vote for up to 4

MICHELLE BROUSSEAU - D (Incumbent)
JOHN BUEHLER - R
STEWART A. LANDER - D
BRADLEY SHEAR - D (Incumbent)
PAULA J WHITFORD - D (Incumbent)



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF SOUTH COUNTY

Dear Readers,

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging informed and active participation in government. We never support or oppose a political party or candidate. Our goal has always been to educate voters so that they may make informed choices when they enter the voting booth. By providing a Voter's Guide to your community, we hope that you learn more about the local candidates who are seeking offices and understand their positions more clearly.

Be informed before you vote! Check the RI Secretary of State's Office website to learn more and become familiar with the ballot you will see when voting. Most importantly VOTE!

Thank you to all the citizens who anonymously submitted questions for consideration. Thank you to all the LWVSC volunteers who contributed to this guide. Special thanks to all the candidates who responded in a timely manner with your answers.

This Voter Guide is paid for, in part, by a grant from the Rhode Island League of Women Voters Education Fund, a 501(c)3 entity, established by a generous donation from Susan B. Wilson, a past local LWVSC member.

Warmest regards,

Etta Zasloff

Etta Zasloff
Project Co-Lead
Vice President

Nancy McLean

Nancy McLean
Project Co-Lead
Secretary

RI League of Women Voters, South County Chapter

5 State Ballot Questions

Check your sample ballot for the details at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>

The League of Women Voters does not take a position on this or any ballot question, but provides the following information to help you vote your interests. Find more details about all state and town ballot questions in the 2024 Voter Information Guide (<https://vote.sos.ri.gov/Forms/Elections/Guides/24RefGuideEng.pdf>) that has been mailed to registered voters in Rhode Island and Google for more pros and cons.

1. CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION Shall there be a convention to amend or revise the Rhode Island Constitution?

Some Pros of a Constitutional Convention

- Opportunity to add “good government” provisions like term limits for elected officials and a line item veto for the governor.
- Opportunity for all citizens to run as a delegate to the Constitution Convention and explore participation in the democratic process.

Some Cons of a Constitutional Convention

- Concern for proposed amendments that would result in loss of rights that the constitution now provides like ease of voting.
- Concern that outside special interests and money become involved and exacerbate polarization in RI.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION FACILITIES BOND - \$160,500,000

3. HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY BOND - \$120,000,000

4. GREEN ECONOMY BONDS - \$53,000,000

5. CULTURAL ARTS AND THE ECONOMY GRANT PROGRAM BOND - \$10,000,000

Local Ballot Questions

Town Name: Narragansett

6. PRESERVATION EASEMENT ON KINNEY BUNGALOW

7. TAXPAYER FUNDED AFFORDABLE HOUSING BONDS AND NOTES NOT TO EXCEED \$3,000,000

Town Name: North Kingstown

6. FINANCE PUBLIC SAFETY PROJECTS INCLUDING A NEW PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX/POLICE STATION AND A NEW FIRE STATION \$60,000,000 BONDS AND NOTES

7. CONSTRUCTION, IMPROVEMENT, RENOVATION, DEMOLITION, REMEDIATION, FURNISHING, EQUIPPING AND OTHER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS OF SCHOOL FACILITIES INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, A NEW WICKFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL \$137,200,000 BONDS AND NOTES

Local Ballot Questions - vary by town

Check your sample ballot for the details at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>



Early Voting Period October 16, 2024 - November 4

In the 20 days leading up to Election Day, you can vote in person at your town hall. This is a great option if you are unable to vote at your usual polling place on Election Day, or if you have run out of time to request a mail ballot.

Narragansett Town Hall

25 Fifth Avenue, Narragansett

8:30 am - 4:30 pm, except on Nov 4 ends at 4:00 pm

North Kingstown Town Hall

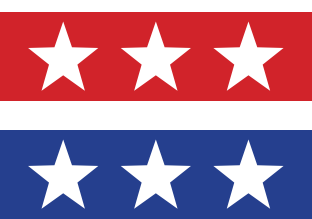
100 Fairway Drive, North Kingstown

8:30 am - 4:30 pm, except on Nov 4 ends at 4:00 pm

South Kingstown Town Hall

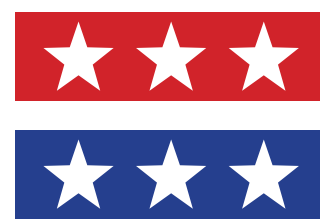
180 High Street, Wakefield

8:30 am - 4:30 pm, except on Nov 4 ending at 4:00 pm



State of Rhode Island General Election Candidates

SENATE



Senate District 35
Bridget G. Valverde
Democrat
Incumbent - uncontested

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

In my six years serving North Kingstown, South Kingstown and East Greenwich in the RI Senate I have had the chance to become even more involved in my local community, which helps me stay on top of what my constituents are thinking about. Whether I'm volunteering in the school garden, helping with local events or welcoming students to the State House, every day is a chance to hear directly from the people I represent and respond to their ideas and concerns.

The topics I hear about most are providing more funding for education at all levels, protecting our environment from plastic pollution and climate change, increasing the supply of housing, and improving our health care system.

We have made important progress in all of these areas in recent years and I plan to continue working with my colleagues in government to build upon past successes.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

In recent years we have passed critical legislation that protected reproductive rights, improved access to

health coverage, and safeguarded our environment - all things that make life better for Rhode Islanders.

In the next legislative session, we must reform our tax code to take the pressure off Rhode Islanders who are struggling to make ends meet. Right now, our tax structure is unfair, with the highest earners paying a lower rate than people living paycheck to paycheck. When we make life more affordable for people, we all win.

I also continue to be committed to transforming our waste management systems to dramatically increase recycling and build out composting infrastructure, extending the life of our only landfill. We need to pass a bottle bill to ensure we are recapturing beverage containers (especially alcohol nips!) so they don't end up on our streets and in our waterways. These changes will not only protect our state's natural beauty, they will deliver significant cost savings for all residents if we are not paying to bury organic waste and plastic in the landfill.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

The RI Senate has made it a priority to tackle these deficiencies in our health care system head on. Increasing provider reimbursement rates

for Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance is essential to keeping and attracting health care providers.

In the next legislative session, we should move forward legislation directing the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner to review provider reimbursement rates for primary care, along with other service areas, and make recommendations for changes. Increasing reimbursement rates will help us compete with neighboring states and bring more providers to Rhode Island.

We also need to train more healthcare providers overall. This past legislative session, I was proud to support the creation of a senate study commission to explore the establishment of a medical school at URI which would train more doctors right here in Rhode Island.

We have also made investments through our Wavemaker Fellowship program to help with education expenses for graduates who agree to stay and practice in Rhode Island. We should significantly expand investments like this so health care providers who train in Rhode Island stay in Rhode Island.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

Rhode Islanders have a constitu-

tional right to access the shoreline. We have nearly 400 miles of beautiful coastline in Rhode Island. It is one of our state's greatest assets and should be enjoyed by everyone, not locked away by private interests.

I hoped we had put the matter to rest last year when we passed legislation clarifying that the public could utilize the beach up to 10 feet above the high tide line. But some people who are fortunate enough to be able to afford oceanfront homes want to selfishly keep the coastline all to themselves. I support the shoreline access law as passed and hope the courts ultimately agree.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Yes. Passing the Act on Climate was one of the most important votes I've taken as a senator. Meeting the ambitious goals that we established will require a range of solutions like providing incentives for converting fossil fuel energy systems for homes and businesses as well as decarbonizing the transportation sector. We are moving forward with the help of federal and state investments and I look forward to supporting new strategies to achieve our goal of net zero carbon emissions in Rhode Island by 2050.

6. Recently the General Assembly

passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

Funding is only part of the answer to the housing crisis. We can also tackle some of the structural causes of delays. For example, ensuring our municipal planning and building departments are well-resourced and staffed is essential so they can adequately respond to and oversee proposals.

We all want to move as quickly as possible to increase the supply of housing, but we also want accountability at every step of the process to ensure that we are spending limited dollars wisely and actually meeting the housing needs of the community.

It's imperative that all local, state, and quasi-public entities, in collaboration with key stakeholders, evaluate their internal and external processes to ensure as lean a development process as possible while still maintaining strong safeguards and accountability.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



Senate District 36
Alana M. Dimario
Democrat
Incumbent - uncontested

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am so grateful to be entering my third term in the Rhode Island Senate this January. I first ran for office as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor who wanted to bring the voices and experiences of my community with me to the State House, and this is the mission I have kept front and center. As the Chair of the Senate Committee on Environment & Agriculture I have focused on advancing legislation that protects us against the effects of climate change and sea level rise, while making sure Rhode Island is doing its part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In my role as Co-Chair of the Child Care Commission, I have worked to pass policies that help Rhode Island's children get off to the best possible start and give support to their hard-working parents, while ensuring thriving wages for early childhood educators. As a member of the Health & Human Services Committee I have brought my professional expertise to the table and worked alongside my colleagues and advocates to pass legislation strengthening our mental health care system in particular. I have had a productive four years in the Senate, passing bills ranging from protecting victims of abuse to expanding our public transit system for people with disabilities to ensuring responsible siting of solar development. I am looking forward to continuing to remove barriers and create paths to make sure Rhode

Island is a place where we can all live, work, and thrive.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

First, it's time to follow the lead of Massachusetts and pass a Millionaire's Tax to raise much-needed state revenue. There is only so much we can accomplish by cutting other budget items without compromising other necessities. If we want to check off anything else from our long To Do List of actions to improve the lives of Rhode Islanders, we need more revenue to do it.

Second, we need to get serious about investing in building out our public transportation and "complete streets" systems, especially down here in South County and other areas that are underserved by public transit and overly dependent on cars for everyday life. Our lack of a truly functional, statewide public transit system puts us at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to attracting companies and workers. It puts us behind on meeting our emissions reduction goals. It is also a key part in reducing strain and congestion on our roads and bridges. Investment in public transit will pay off in so many ways.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

I am proud to have worked alongside a number of my Senate colleagues this session to pass a package of bills and budget priorities aimed at strengthening Rhode Island's health care system. We entered into a number of interstate professional compacts to help attract and retain providers and expand access to care across state lines. In addition, we established pilot programs to expand training sites and incentivize providers to stay in Rhode Island. We also established a Study Commission to explore opening up a medical school at URI geared towards making medical school affordable for Rhode Islanders who want to stay and practice here. Next, I want to explore targeted student debt relief programs as well.

We made some key strides in reimbursement by first studying rates in the behavioral health care systems and then accelerating the plan to make our rates match those of our neighbors. The next step is to expand the systematic evaluation of rates for services such as primary care and other key areas, with the goal of raising those rates accordingly as appropriate.

Last session I worked with medical provider advocacy groups to pass legislation reforming prior authorization policies, and I will continue to consult with providers to identify and address excessive administrative burdens.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challeng-

ing the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I fully support protecting public access to the shore and lateral passage along the shoreline, using the parameters identified in the bill I proudly cosponsored that passed in 2023. That bill was the result of a study commission that sought to clarify the public's right to access the shore as outlined in the Rhode Island Constitution, and to delineate in more easily recognizable terms the boundary between public and private land. I will continue to support the public's right to access the shore, and will work to preserve and expand access points statewide.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

I was proud to vote for the Act on Climate in 2021, and since its passage I have been working to support legislation and budget priorities that are the essential parts to meeting the goals outlined in that landmark legislation. We must fund the work of the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) and its member agencies by leveraging federal funds and finding state dollars to go where the science leads us to systematically address the biggest sources of emissions in our state and ensure we meet our targets. Up next will be reducing emissions from buildings and con-

tinued programs to support reducing emissions from transportation.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

We have passed dozens of bills related to increasing housing in Rhode Island in the past two years, and now we are in a period of watching to see what changes are having the desired impact and where there are still roadblocks. When there is a system with many components and steps it can take a minute to see where the problems are, and with stakeholder input we can address those issues and remove any barriers to getting more housing stock built.

The fact that there have been a few people in charge of this process in a short time is indicative of what a challenging problem it is to solve. Before we jump in with more legislative changes, I want to see these plans be fully implemented with careful observation and oversight.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



Senate District 37
Virginia S. Sosnowski
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

First and foremost, I hope to continue serving as a strong voice for the people of South Kingstown. I will continue working to address the concerns of my constituents and to secure support for local initiatives such as local senior, arts, cultural, public health, public safety, and community services organizations, and efforts to remove invasive weed species from local lakes and ponds.

Legislatively, a top priority remains addressing the primary care provider crisis in our state. I was proud to sponsor legislation to support South County Hospital and to make provider reimbursement rates more competitive with neighboring states, as well as legislation establishing a new commission to explore the feasibility of a medical school at URI to help address the provider crisis.

Other priorities include reforming the Coastal Resources Management Council; creating an income based utility assistance program; more fully restoring cost of living adjustments for hard-hit public retirees; continuing to strengthen our renewable energy and environmental protection laws; and continuing to increase our investments in education at all levels, and particularly at URI.

I have been honored to represent

the people of South Kingstown in the Senate since 1996, where I presently serve as Chairwoman of the Commerce Committee and previously was Chairwoman of the Environment and Agriculture Committee. I was a member of the South Kingstown Planning Board prior to running for Senate.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

My top priority is continuation of our incredibly important, but complex, work to address the shortage of healthcare providers in our state, especially primary care doctors.

I was proud to work with South County Hospital this past session and to sponsor legislation requiring the Health Insurance Commissioner's office to factor in reimbursement rates as part of its core mission. We cannot expect recent medical school graduates, who generally carry heavy debts from their time in college, to set up a practice in Rhode Island if they can get paid significantly more just over the border in a neighboring state. With much progress having been made on this vital legislation in the 2024 session, my hope is that next year we will be successful in enacting it into law.

On a related note, I also sponsored legislation creating a commission to explore the feasibility of establishing

a medical school at the University of Rhode Island. I am serving on that commission, and I look forward to its recommendations in the coming term.

If I had to pick just one additional priority, it would be to continue to position Rhode Island as a leader in resiliency and responding to climate change. Rhode Island is home to the nation's first offshore wind farm, a result of legislation I sponsored, and since that time our state has only continued to be a trailblazer in renewable energy. I have been proud to be part of these efforts and look forward to continued progress.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

There are two vitally important bills that were part of the Rhode Island HEALTH Initiative introduced in the Senate this session to address this issue. The first, which I sponsored and which was strongly supported by South County Hospital, would make it a core part of the mission of the Health Insurance Commissioner to keep provider reimbursement rates competitive. The second, which I was proud to vote for when it passed the Senate, would require a rate review process take place for primary

care providers. We cannot expect debt-burdened medical school graduates to practice in Rhode Island when they can make significantly more just over the border in a neighboring state.

4. RI Shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I was the first co-sponsor of the shoreline access legislation enacted in 2023 to provide clarity in the law regarding every Rhode Islander's right to access the shoreline. This right is so sacrosanct in our state that we have enshrined it in our Constitution.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

I was proud to co-sponsor the Act on Climate in 2021, as well as numerous laws, both before and since, to support our state's efforts to address climate change. To cite just a few examples among many: the 100% renewable energy standard for electricity--the most aggressive such standard in the nation; the offshore wind procurement requirement; a solar siting framework to promote renewable energy growth while

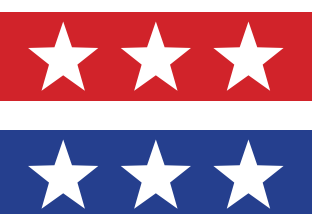
protecting core forests and protecting ratepayers; energy storage incentives; community resiliency funding; and much more.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

Rhode Island has a serious housing crisis. I have been proud to support historic levels of funding to support creation of affordable housing, as well as dozens of new laws addressing different aspects of this challenge, particularly focused on removing barriers to housing production. Ultimately, we need more housing; housing production is the only way to solve this crisis. These laws are very new, but I am hopeful they will have an impact. In the meantime, I look forward to continuing to work alongside my colleagues to build upon the momentum we have gained in recent years to address the housing crisis.

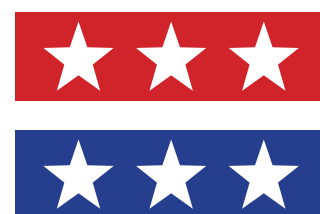
7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



State of Rhode Island General Election Candidates

SENATE



Senate District 38

Victoria Gu
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

We have unique challenges in our coastal towns. First, we're a coastal community in the time of climate change. As the former chair of our local Climate Resiliency Commission I helped enroll Charlestown in the state's Municipal Resiliency Program and brought community members together to workshop and prioritize possible solutions. As your State Senator I have worked on bills to make buildings more energy-efficient, which will bring energy costs down for families. I also championed the Act on Coasts bill and want to continue to marshal together the planning and key resources to protect our critical infrastructure and make sure we're prepared before the next Hurricane Sandy hits. Second, we are

seeing fewer families here and more out-of-towners who only come during the summer. The cost of everything: housing, food, childcare, and health-care, is stretching many families' budgets. I will continue to work hard so that everyone who has roots here can afford to stay here.

My professional background is in software engineering and data analysis. The mindset I learned is to always use data to figure out your next step. We'd often say: "Hey, we think doctors would benefit from this change in the application," and then we'd look at the data before and after the change to see if we actually solved the problem we wanted to solve. That's why I want to bring a fresh, evidence-based point of view to the state legislature and track data over time to monitor success.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

One of my top priorities will be climate resiliency / adaptation. This recent string of severe coastal storms and inland flooding in Dec 2023/Jan 2024 should be a wakeup call to all Rhode Islanders. Our southern shoreline is heavily exposed to hurricanes and we're steadily losing some of it year-over-year to erosion and sea level rise. At the same time, the tourism industry is a huge economic driver in southern RI. I want to see through the implementation of comprehensive planning and cost-estimates required by the Act on Coasts (one of my bills we passed in 2024) and then pass any legislation or budgetary items needed to leverage this planning to secure more federal funding for resiliency, especially regional grants. We have to do more to adapt so that we don't lose the places we love in South County.

Second, we must conduct a rate review of primary care reimbursement rates and other incentive programs so that we are in a better position to

attract and recruit primary care physicians and other essential healthcare workers: I have explained this more in my answer to question #3

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Our healthcare system is at a crucial point where many primary care providers are nearing retirement age, but our hospitals have trouble recruiting the next generation of providers in Rhode Island. This will only lead to greater costs down the road because people's conditions can get more serious and life-threatening while they wait.

In 2024, we passed a number of bills in the Senate to increase access to care (by incentivizing or recruiting more providers), reduce costs for patients, and provide transparency. Five of the bills enabled RI to join interstate licensing compacts so that healthcare providers can more easily practice in multiple states including RI. There are still more licensing compacts that RI could join, like the physician assistant compact. Additionally, we funded a four-year scholarship program for primary-care physicians, nurse practitioners and physician's assistants. Students who receive the scholarships commit to practicing primary care in Rhode Island for at least eight years. This scholarship program was limited to 15 spots, so we need to make sure it works and expand it if it does.

Finally, we need to address the reimbursement rates. Currently, a primary care physician choosing between RI and other states would probably opt for other states because they would earn substantially more. One possible solution is Sen. Sosnowski's bill, which proposes a dual mandate for OHIC (office of the health insurance commissioner), to adjust

rates based on both affordability and provider recruitment/retention. Other big-picture solutions include healthcare-workforce housing and a medical school at URI.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

When I was growing up, I loved going exploring the shoreline and getting sprayed by the waves. I want to make sure we protect and expand public access to the shoreline in RI because our whole community should enjoy it—whether you're swimming, fishing, or making a living or a home here. That's why in 2023, I put much of my weight behind Senate Bill S-417 and we passed it in June 2023. The main thing this bill did was designate the public-private boundary of the shoreline at the seaweed line + 10 feet inland. The shoreline access commission recommended this boundary after extensive study. While the court case is still in process, I believe there is a strong rationale for using the seaweed line because the RI constitution explicitly mentions gathering seaweed under the public's rights and privileges of the shore (Article 1 Section 17).

I have also seen instances where advertisements of oceanfront property are misleading, and that's why I worked to pass my oceanfront property disclosure bill into law. It requires a disclosure form during the sale of an oceanfront house that includes any public rights of way on the property and an explanation of the public-private boundary (seaweed line + 10 feet). This will be an important education tool for people who are coming from out of state to purchase an oceanfront property.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate

Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Westerly, Charlestown, and South Kingstown are at the frontlines of climate change. Sea level rise, tidal flooding, and severe weather events are affecting our groundwater and infrastructure. Beaches are eroding at least several feet per year. Septic systems are in danger of failing more often. Our coastal ponds are warming, which affects the marine ecosystem. Climate change is here, and we have a limited time window to act.

In order to fulfill the Act on Climate objectives, we need to decarbonize the energy grid, transportation, homes, and industry. RI has already set a goal for 100% renewable energy by 2033. If we become energy-independent (producing our own energy locally), it'll help us avoid the huge price swings with global oil and natural gas prices.

Between 2023-24 I've focused more on buildings and transportation because RI doesn't yet have a robust strategy for these sectors. I passed legislation that requires RI to adopt the 2024 International Energy Conservation Code. This will reduce energy usage and utility bills in new residential and commercial buildings. Going forward, the Building Decarbonization Act will be a key piece of legislation to benchmark emissions in large buildings and reduce them over time.

In transportation, we must build out an effective EV charging network and invest in electric-powered public transportation. Westerly residents reached out to me because they want to bring CT commuter rail to Rhode Island, so I formed a monthly working group and have been actively meeting with other elected officials to seek funding.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability,

but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

South County is a tight knit community, with many generations of families living in the area. More recently, people have come to me concerned that their kids and grandkids will not be able to come back and settle down here when they want to have a family of their own. With a housing crisis decades in the making, it'll take time to climb out of it, but I will continue to advocate for 1) state funding to support nonprofit housing developers working on projects in our area. This has historically been difficult because the cost-per-unit to develop housing is higher and the permitting process is longer compared to northern RI. But now that towns are in the process of updating their affordable housing plans, I will push for projects within each town's affordable housing plan to have access to dedicated funding streams for all stages of the process (site acquisition & preparation, design/architecture, utilities, construction).

2) In South County it's also important to preserve existing housing, and that might mean enabling nonprofits/owner cooperatives to compete in the market and purchase a house before it gets sold to a speculative investor. 3) Another big push of mine has been to enable more local regulation of short-term rentals, which have been popping up more and more in residential neighborhoods (for example, a moratorium on new short-term rental registrations).

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



Senate District 38

Westin J. Place
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

The job of an elected official is to represent their constituents. Contrary to many who hold public office I am not setting out to achieve specific agendas outside of what the people of my district deem important. I want to be that official that every constituent can contact with ideas, worries, hopes, and dreams that will actually listen and be able to relate. I believe I am well rounded in experience to be extremely successful. During my early years I worked on charter boats in Galilee, a greenhouse in Narragansett, and a breakfast chef in South Kingstown. I graduated Narragansett High School in 2006 and continued my education part time at CCRI while managing a local retail store. In 2012 I left to work in construction. One recession later I got my CDL and now work for myself as a truck driver. I have been an owner/operator since 2014.

Getting married to the love of my life in 2018 taught me compromise and communication. Becoming a Father in 2019 and again in 2021 taught me patience and sacrifice. Living within your means is what my grandmother taught me. I have worked hard to give my children everything I never had growing up in a single parent household. Holding public office was never on my to do

list, but I am willing to do what needs to be done so every generation in our state has the opportunity to live, grow, and watch each successive generation do the same.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

The first priority of anyone seeking to be a representative in the General Assembly should be an Independent office of an Inspector General. It has been a running joke for decades on the amount of wasteful spending, pay to play business practices, and unaccountability in our government. I'm all for a good joke but at the expense of the taxpayers of our state that is unacceptable. On top of that I wish to work with other members of the assembly to relieve burdens on our small businesses. Around 86% of jobs in Rhode Island are from small businesses. We all know how cost prohibitive it has become just to live in this state with inflation and the lack of opportunities and as a small business owner I see doors closing, windows being shuttered and opportunities for our youth moving to other states in the union.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement

rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

My mother is a NP. She recently went through the motions to open up her own clinic. As someone who has dealt with small business administration for almost 20 years I had a hand in helping her fulfill her dream of having her own office. We must understand first and foremost that these clinics and offices are businesses first. Reimbursement rates for Medicaid in our state are amongst the lowest in the north east. With a larger percentage of people now on Medicaid our providers are losing money on every visit. If being a primary care physician doesn't pay the bills the doors wont stay open and the people of Rhode Island will suffer. We also must look for how to improve how medical procedures are covered by insurance. At the moment providers do not determine what medical procedures are required or necessary for your health. Insurance adjusters are the ones responsible. I believe we should have a talk about who you would rather have deciding what is best to treat your well being, your Doctor or your Insurance. The current system is not working for the people of Rhode Island.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and

property owner rights?

I am an avid fisherman. From surfcasting for stripers on the beaches of Watch Hill to plugging for Bluefish off the rocks of Galilee, I have been using the shore since before I could ride a bike. Rhode Islanders have the Constitutional right to access the shoreline in the state. I have been personally accosted by people who were uninformed or were misinformed and the misinformation has been perpetuated by illegal sign postings. We should also look into property lines that have not changed even with the shore changing due to erosion, etc. The shoreline is public property but you should not be burdened with property taxes or maintenance of public property.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

As a conservationist and an avid outdoorsman I am serious about protecting our environment. However the bill that went through the house and senate does not have the best interests of Rhode Islanders in mind. Clear cutting raw land for solar farms when putting solar awnings over parking lots could cover the same surface area without the destruction of our environment. We need common sense solutions that don't kill marine

mammals, hurt our fishing industry, or force residents to purchase expensive technology that is still evolving. We need to slow down, think, and not be the guinea pig in a world of evolving energy requirements.

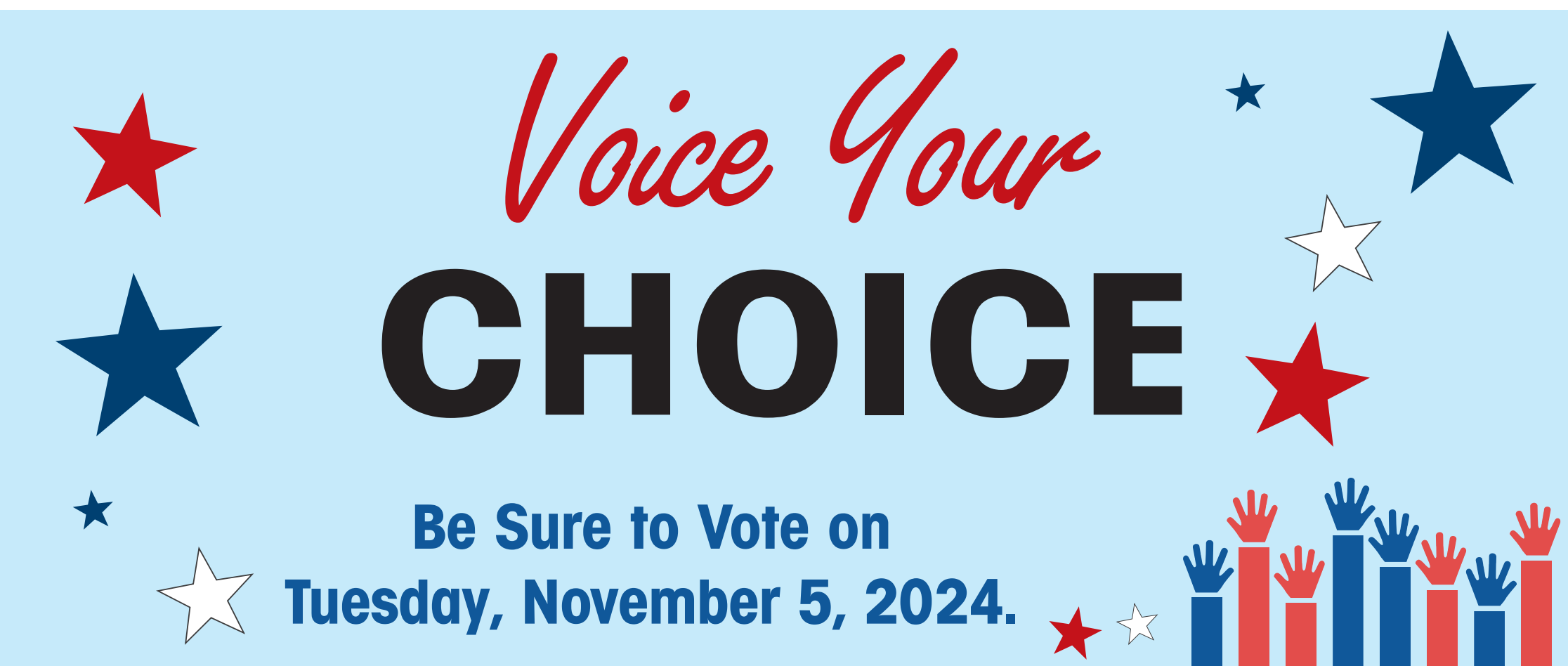
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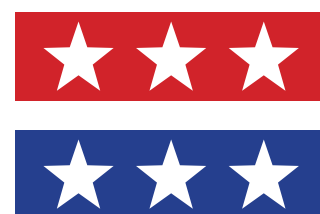
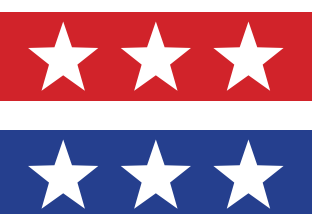
We live in the smallest state in the union and we have 28 separate housing authorities. Other states have single housing authorities that cover areas larger than our entire state. The burden of administrative costs this brings with it is astronomical. We should consolidate and have the one authority work with each individual town zoning and planning board. I would like the process to be handled on a local level to keep the powers in the hands of the towns, not the state.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes

District 37 - South Kingstown
RAYMOND E. GARDNER - R - no response





State of Rhode Island General Election Candidates

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



House District 31
Julie A. Cassimiro
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

During my next term, I plan to continue my tireless advocacy for children. I will continue to fight for education issues as well as child welfare/child wellbeing and juvenile justice issues. I am currently a substitute teacher at North Kingstown High School where I see firsthand the struggles of our students and our teachers.

I have spent years working in the child welfare arena and have been using my experience there to better the lives of kids in state care. I am active in my community in the schools and my work with the North Kingstown Food Pantry which is invaluable to the way I legislate.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why? Rhode Islanders are struggling with affordable childcare. There were several bills introduced for affordable childcare that did not pass the general assembly last year. We need to enact some laws that will provide relief to parents so that both parents can work and provide for their families. Every dollar we invest will bring back even more money to our economy.

Rising health care costs are out of control and the General Assembly needs to do more to drive those costs down so that families are not choosing between filling their prescriptions or buying food for their children. Placing caps on more drug prices would help.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Our healthcare system is in need of an overhaul. For the past two years, I have introduced legislation that would give pharmacists the opportunity to receive reimbursement for services they provide that are beyond filling prescriptions. This would lighten the load for physicians, which are in shortage right now, and provide Rhode Islanders with the access to care they need.

I also successfully passed rate reform legislation to help with our low reimbursement rates.

4. RI shoreline access is still in

dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I believe everyone should have access to the shoreline, but we need to find that delicate balance to not infringe on property owners and their rights.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Yes, when elected, I will continue to support the evolving strategy for the Act on Climate which I supported in 2021.

6. Recently the General Assembly

passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

This responsibility really falls with the Executive Branch of the government. The General Assembly has enacted legislation and provided the necessary funding for housing - we need a housing expert that can actually drive production across the state.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



House District 32
Robert E. Craven
Democrat
Incumbent - uncontested

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

During my term in office, I aim to advance key initiatives such as improving public education, enhancing healthcare access, and supporting local economic development. My experience as a state representative has equipped me with a deep understanding of legislative process and community needs. Additionally, my involvement in local civic organizations and my background in law have provided me with a strong foundation for effective policymaking. I am committed to leveraging my knowledge and experience to make a powerful impact in our community.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why? Rhode Islanders are struggling with affordable childcare. There were several bills

introduced for affordable childcare that did not pass the general assembly last year. We need to enact some laws that will provide relief to parents so that both parents can work and provide for their families. Every dollar we invest will bring back even more money to our economy.

The General Assembly should prioritize affordable healthcare access and comprehensive education reform. Expanding healthcare access will improve public health and financial stability, while investing in education will ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed and contribute to a stronger economy. These initiatives will address immediate needs and foster long-term prosperity for all Rhode Islanders.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement

rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

To improve Rhode Island's healthcare system, we should enhance support for providers with loan forgiveness and residency programs, streamline administrative processes with better economic health records, and negotiate higher reimbursement rates. These measures will address provider's shortages, reduce burdens, and ensure fair compensation, leading to better care for all Rhode Islanders.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I believe in balancing public access to Rhode Island's shoreline with property owner rights. Ensuring that the public has reasonable access to the coast is essential for recreational

use and environmental protection, but it's equally important to respect property owners' rights and address their concerns. I support solutions that enhance public access while also considering property owners' interests, such as creating clear guidelines and providing support for conflict resolution.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Yes, I support the evolving strategy for implementing Rhode Island's climate action bill. The 2021 act represents a critical step in addressing climate change, and I am committed to backing efforts that enhance its goals, adapt to new challenges, and ensure effective and sustainable environmental practices.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability,

but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

To expedite responses to Rhode Island's housing crisis, we should streamline access to state funding by simplifying application processes and increasing transparency in distribution. Additionally, enhancing collaboration with local governments and developers can help expedite project approvals and ensure that funds are effectively utilized to address both housing shortages and affordability issues more rapidly.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



House District 33
Jessica Drew Day
Republican

everyone involved. I am committed to listening to people and finding practical solutions.

I regularly attend Town Council and State House meetings, as well as local group discussions, to stay informed on key issues. I've also met with local fishermen to learn about the adverse effects offshore wind farms are having on the ocean.

As the elected South Kingstown Republican Chairwoman, I've encouraged residents to engage in civic duties and run for office, assisting them with campaign coordination and ensuring compliance with legal responsibilities. At the state level, I was elected First Vice Chairwoman of the Republican Party, where I help build committees and motivate individuals across Rhode Island to seek office.

As a small business owner, I understand the difficulties of operating in today's environment. I am dedicated to bringing accountability and transparency to our government, advocating for reduced regulatory and tax burdens that negatively impact small businesses. My goal is to make Rhode Island a safer, more affordable, and business-friendly state.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

There is much to accomplish in the General Assembly, and I have several key priorities. One of my main goals is to establish an independent Office of Inspector General to ensure govern-

ment transparency and accountability. In more than half of U.S. states, Inspectors General save significant taxpayer money by eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse, with returns of up to \$27 for every \$1 spent. This office would also reduce the need for costly outside attorneys, benefiting all Rhode Islanders.

Energy is crucial to our economy, and I am deeply concerned about rising costs that harm working-class families and vulnerable citizens. By investing in hydroelectric power just 46 miles from our border, Rhode Islanders could see both financial and environmental benefits. Local fishermen estimate \$1.5 billion in lost economic impact due to wind farm construction. My opponent, Carol Hagan McEntee, fully supports offshore wind and solar farms and consistently votes in line with the House Speaker.

Education is another top priority. I strongly support our teachers and want to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed. I would push for legislation requiring schools to notify parents about their child's behaviors and provide curriculum information so parents can better support their children. I would work to bring back textbooks and stable lesson plans, benefiting both students and teachers. The 2019 Johns Hopkins report on Providence Public Schools revealed serious statewide issues that must be addressed. I am committed to improving our schools for a brighter future in Rhode Island.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of

providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

The Rhode Island Medicaid reimbursement rate is the lowest among our surrounding states, contributing to a significant provider shortage. For years, Rhode Island governors have neglected to address this issue, resulting in a loss of providers. Although the Rhode Island legislature has recently taken steps to increase some reimbursement rates, these efforts have been insufficient. We must raise the rates to be competitive and on par with our neighboring states.

Additionally, the state Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) has reported that the administrative burdens and insurance regulations in Rhode Island are excessive and place an undue strain on the entire Healthcare system. There is much work to be done, and I am committed to collaborating with OHIC to reduce these regulations, streamline the system, and bring back the providers who have left to work in neighboring states.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

Recently, property owners brought forth a court case that interpreted the public access law differently than the

legislature intended. I am committed to revisiting this law to ensure it aligns with our Rhode Island Constitution and protects the property rights of homeowners. The Rhode Island Constitution rightly protects the public's shoreline access. Our state's beautiful shoreline should not be reserved for the wealthy; access for the general public must be preserved.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Yes, I will vote to support an evolving strategy for implementation. As technology advances, I am committed to making our state more efficient and effective in achieving our goals. However, the climate act signed by Governor McKee is unrealistic.

I oppose placing wind turbines in our oceans and clearing hundreds of acres of beautiful habitats for solar farms. Estimates suggest Rhode Island would need up to 20,000 acres of solar panels to meet the 2040 goals, with about 50% of current installations requiring deforestation. This could lead to the loss of 10,000 acres of forest, despite trees being the world's largest natural CO2 eliminators. If the state wants to utilize wind turbines, they should be located inland to avoid negative impacts on our fishing industry, tourism, and economy, as seen with the Nantucket turbine breakdown.

Since the offshore turbines have been developed, marine life such as

whales, seals, and dolphins have been washing up onshore. This current approach is not environmentally friendly.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

To accelerate development in Rhode Island, I would work to reduce the number of hurdles for building and cut unnecessary regulations. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in Low to Moderate Income House in RI over the past 3 years - but much of the money is being absorbed by the operating costs of the 26 separate Housing Authorities in RI. This leaves only a small fraction of the funds for the intended purpose. In contrast, other jurisdictions in the US - many of them larger than Rhode Island - manage these funds through a single Housing Authority. I will always advocate for smaller government and for more money to be returned to the hands of taxpayers.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Candidate did not respond with a yes or no answer



House District 33
Carol Hagan McEntee
Democrat Incumbent

I'm especially proud of the Take It Outside initiative. Originally passed during the pandemic, it was a lifeline for local restaurants - so successful, we made it permanent. As chair of the House Small Business Committee, hearing feedback from local business owners about how my legislation helped them is incredibly rewarding.

In 2024, we passed the Safe Storage Act for firearms; increased education aid by \$70 million; eliminated the COLA freeze for state employees/teachers who retired before 2012 pension changes; increased the tax exemption for pension income; passed the Healthcare Provider Shield Act to protect medical providers from out-of-state laws that could negatively impact delivery of care; created the RI Lake Management Program to address invasive aquatic plants, like the hydrilla at Indian Lake; mandated a Statewide Coastal Resiliency Plan; created the RI Renewable Ready program to ensure renewable energy projects are built without increasing electric rates or clearing forests; and added funding for RIPTA to prevent service cuts in South County.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

In the coming session, I know the General Assembly will be working on healthcare reform. COVID pushed our healthcare system to a crisis point. Rhode Island is not unique in seeing declines in our ranks of healthcare providers, but that doesn't mean we can't try to find solutions. I've successfully supported legislation to increase access to education and training opportunities to build our pipeline of healthcare professionals, as well as to expedite the process for licensure. Additionally, the General Assembly passed legislation, which I supported, to join the National Nurse Licensure Compact. This allows Nurse

es in 41 states who hold a Multi-State License to work in Rhode Island, and it will make it easier for Rhode Islanders to access the care they need.

A local issue, which ultimately impacts all Rhode Islanders, is increased erosion due to climate change. Our beaches are part of what makes South County so wonderful, but climate change is changing our coast. The Narrow River in particular has experienced shifting sands that have clogged the area near the mouth of the river. Recently, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse toured the area with me to see how much the river has changed, as well as the resulting environmental and safety concerns: if a boat errs by a foot it can run aground, fish are dying, and the water is murky. My hope is that we can dredge the Narrow River and place that sand on local beaches. It's the more sustainable option to contribute to our coastal resiliency.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Healthcare reform is one of my top priorities for the coming session, and this question outlines exactly why the situation is so dire.

About one-third of Rhode Islanders receive Medicaid assistance, and we heard from advocates and health care providers that our state's Medicaid reimbursement rates for doctors were lower than those of neighboring states. To address this issue, the we included more than \$160 million to raise Medicaid reimbursement rates next year, the full amount recommended by the RI Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner. This funding includes \$3.8 million for Early Intervention providers. We also redirected \$10 million in unspent federal

COVID funding to nursing homes.

Another exciting possibility - which would directly impact South County and would significantly address our healthcare needs - is that the legislature is looking exploring the establishment of medical school for Primary Care Doctors at URI. No new medical schools have been established in the state since 1972. The creation of a state college of medicine would go a long way to train and retain our next generation of primary care physicians.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

The issue of public access and property owner rights is a matter that is currently before the courts. As a lawyer myself, I will of course respect the court's determination.

However, it is important to note that Rhode Islanders' right to access our shoreline is something that's enshrined in our state constitution. In 2023, the General Assembly passed a new law that more clearly delineates the public area of the shore: it establishes that the public area of the shoreline ends, and private property begins, at 10 feet landward of the recognizable high tide line.

The law was intended to provide a clear, identifiable border between private property and the area of the shore that the public is constitutionally entitled to use and enjoy. I voted in support of this law.

In 2024, we passed legislation to improve the disclosure of shoreline access rights and related conditions during the sale of oceanfront property. This law will ensure that new coastal property owners are made aware of the public's shoreline access rights, and I hope it will help avoid

future disputes.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

I supported the Act on Climate and I will support the evolving strategies to assist in its implementation.

I am incredibly proud that the last several years have been described by environmental advocates as some of the best in Rhode Island history for environmental policy-making. I'm proud to have been one of the legislators urging passage of our sustainability initiatives.

In addition to the Act on Climate, which was passed in 2021, we enacted the Act on Coasts in 2024. It will mandate the creation and maintenance of a statewide coastal resiliency plan, which will ensure that our state is prepared to adapt to changing coastal conditions.

However, that doesn't mean we can stop now. Rhode Island has more than 400 miles of coastline. It's what makes our state such a wonderful place to live and visit, but it also makes us more vulnerable to the effects of rising tides and climate change. Our beaches are eroding more rapidly than ever, and we are seeing worse and worse flooding whenever we have a major storm.

We can't just rest on our accomplishments; we must continue to press forward with resiliency and sustainability initiatives. I promise that I will continue to be a strong advocate for our environment and our adaptability.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response

to our housing crisis?

Even though we have passed more than 40 new laws aimed at reducing barriers to development and cutting red tape, the reality is that it takes time to build homes.

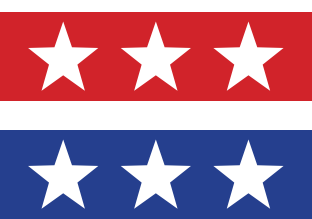
However, we are already seeing progress. One new law that's having an immediate impact was the creation of a court calendar dedicated specifically to housing and land use. The law became effective January 1, 2024, so we don't have hard data yet, but we've heard that it has cut the backlog of pending cases by as much as 80 percent. That's fantastic news.

A lot of the legislation that we've passed is aimed at reducing the steps required, so instead of a permitting process taking three steps before two different boards, it's two steps in front of one board. This doesn't take away any local control; it just eliminates redundancy. We also passed legislation that enables "adaptive re-use," or converting an existing building, such as old mills or vacant schools, into housing. Those buildings are already connected to utilities, so that expedites the process of bringing new units of housing online.

For so long, we've heard from developers that the process in Rhode Island is confusing, has unnecessary red tape, and takes too long. With the legislation we've passed in the last several years, we've made tremendous progress in making development more efficient, consistent, and predictable.

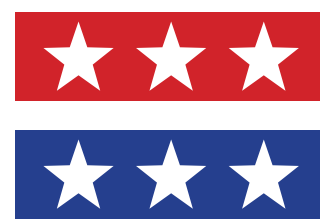
7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



State of Rhode Island General Election Candidates

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



House District 34
Teresa Tanzi
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

As always, I want to bring more attention to the needs in the southern part of the state, and serving on House Finance is a powerful way for me to advocate for attention and investments where we live, work and play. I have served as a member and Chair of the Steering Committee for the Washington County Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds Health Equity Zone (HEZ) which focuses on both the physical and mental health of the residents in the county. I was also a member on SK's Economic Devel-

opment Committee, and the Healthy Places by Design grant program. I sat on the Hunger Elimination Task Force Committee and am a member of the Basic Needs Network which looks after the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

As Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Services in House Finance, I oversee and help create the 1/3 of the state budget that deals with our veterans, aging populations, those with disabilities, our children in state care and the entire healthcare system. The experiences I have had these last 14 years serving my constituents in Narragansett, Wakefield and Peace Dale and the understanding I have gained from being invited into the lives and the experiences of this community are invaluable. I am eager to put that wealth of knowledge to work for those who live in District 34.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

I think we can all agree that the behavioral health needs of many are not being met in our state, and judging from the calls I get, it is clear to me that this is a top priority going into 2025. One of my ongoing priorities to address these concerns is behavioral health parity, meaning anyone seeking treatment for behavioral health or substance use issues should have the same access to care as someone seeking treatment for a heart attack or a broken leg. Despite the existing state and federal mandates on parity, many people in our state are unable to access the care they need when they need it. I have worked with the Mental Health Association of Rhode Island to write several pieces of

legislation that I have introduced over the last few years proposing different approaches to dealing with access and parity. I want to take this opportunity to remind anyone experiencing a crisis in behavioral health to call 988 for assistance.

My second priority is increasing the reimbursement rates being paid to providers in our state. As I touch on in my next response, I will continue my work with the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) and the Attorney General on issues surrounding network adequacy, pre-authorizations, and step therapy, all of which are impediments to accessing care when we need it and keeping families, doctors and nurses on the phone instead of in the exam rooms treating patients or being treated.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden, and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

I am incredibly excited at the prospect of bringing a medical school to URI. It would be a great start to producing a constant pipeline of new providers into the state. Doing so will also create many externship, fellowship and residency opportunities locally for the new physicians to give back to this community. I will continue to work with the OHIC to make sure private insurers are doing all they can to keep prices down and reimbursements in line with MA and CT. And let's be honest, once they get to know South Kingstown and Narragansett, it will be pretty tough for them to leave!

A second angle I will continue to

work on will be working to ensure practitioners are operating at the top of their licensure so that the higher acuity needs of patients will be addressed by those with the highest level of skill, and so on down the acuity and training scale. Through a program I enacted into law this year, we will also be creating opportunities for those in the field to advance their skills and work up the ladder to licensure. For those wishing to pursue these career goals we will offer support to better paying jobs and a stronger workforce; a win-win for patients and those serving our patients.

As a bonus, building out the healthcare workforce, and freeing up the time of physicians through the reform of administrative burdens as described above, will cut down on burnout and keep our practitioners practicing.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I am in favor of the legislation that we passed and support it now because it is clear and easy for all to understand. The past rule was relying upon data and measurements that someone simply walking on the beach would be unable to determine on their own. The measurement of ten feet from the high tide line is clear and easily understood for all without access to scientific instruments or complicated calculations based on historical data. Despite the current challenges, I stand with our Attorney General in his steadfast effort to defend the law in the courts and the

right for all Rhode Islanders to have access to the shoreline.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

I am an ardent supporter of the Act on Climate, and as a member of House Finance I am always asking our state agencies and departments how each proposal before us would advance the benchmarks of the Act. I am also a longtime advocate for more and safer bicycle infrastructure and mass transit investments to help alleviate our over-reliance on cars. I have twice sponsored bond questions to ask voters whether to support major investments in transportation alternatives and hope to have these questions on the 2026 ballot, since the General Assembly failed to act this year. Since transportation accounts for the single biggest source of carbon, these investments need to be made now. Lastly, I am proud to have received the endorsement, yet again, of Clean Water Action and Climate Action Rhode Island and will tirelessly work to ensure we meet our mandates.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

The very first thing we must do, is pass the bonds on our November ballots for affordable housing to give us more opportunities to act quickly!

We have one locally in Narragansett for seed funding, and a \$120 million bond for the state.

While the General Assembly made significant investments in creating affordable housing this year, the process is a painfully slow one and with hundreds of millions of dollars being invested over a short period of time by a newly created department, it is a process that must receive close oversight. I assure you I have been asking the hard questions and requiring accountability as the new Department of Housing has been stood up.

One important way to ensure money is being spent quickly and invested wisely is to be sure to give preference to projects that have local roots and are being developed by those with a long term stake in the community. Three such groups in Washington County are The Jonnycake Center, with a multi unit development proposed in Peace Dale, The South Kingstown Housing Authority with a plan to redevelop the property at Champagne Heights, and the South County Habitat for Humanity project for 20+ homes in Westerly. These groups have long track records and buy-in from the community and need to be given their due consideration when the next round of funding becomes available. I will be an outspoken advocate to ensure the needs of the southern part of our state are heard and met.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



House District 35
Kathleen A. Fogarty
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I have been involved in the town of South Kingstown for over 30 years. I was a mother who volunteered in my children's schools. I was a youth soccer coach and a CCD teacher. I ran for Town Council and served for 5 terms. I then ran for State Representative and have served the people of District 35 since 2014. I know the issues that the town faces and have been working tirelessly with my colleagues to get things done. For the next term I will continue to focus on increased funding for URI, fight to protect South County Hospital, and advocate to ensure that our schools in South Kingstown have the state resources needed to prepare our students for academic success.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

The top two priorities the General

Assembly needs to continue to work on are housing and healthcare. We have passed many laws dealing with housing and South Kingstown must benefit from any monies being spent to increase housing stock and affordability. Multiple issues are affecting our healthcare system in Rhode Island including retention of medical professionals, low reimbursement rates and the second largest proportional decline of nurses throughout the United States.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Last year I introduced a bill to allow Clinical Therapists who are licensed in other states to practice in Rhode Island with the goal of improving public access to professional counseling services. We also passed the Medical Primary Care Scholarship Program to establish a scholarship program for Doctors, Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners that

will require them to practice in Rhode Island in exchange for receiving the scholarship. The General Assembly has increased funding for Medicaid reimbursement rates. We must continue to work on RI commercial reimbursement rate disparities, especially to hospitals.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I have been fighting for public access to our shoreline since my first term on the Town Council. We worked to identify rights of way that had been blocked or taken by property owners. The town cleared the ROWs and erected signs along Narrow River to allow greater access for the public. In the General Assembly after years of discussion, a shoreline access commission was formed, a report on access was completed, and a law was passed which clarified the definition of public access to our shoreline. I

understand that beachfront property owners are upset and believe the new law is a "taking" of private property, but I believe you can't take what someone never really owned. We are guaranteed access to the shore in the RI Constitution and this law serves to clarify any discrepancies.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Yes. I was a sponsor of the Act on Climate Action Bill. I am a strong supporter of environmental issues. I will continue to fight for increased funding to guarantee the full implementation of the law. I am a member of the House Committee on the Environment. In the past, I have been honored to have the support and endorsement of many environmental groups including Save the Bay, Clean Water Action, the Sierra Club and many others.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

Yes

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

We have passed many housing bills, but they are not perfect. There is a \$120 million bond issue that will be decided by the voters in November. We must support this in order to build more housing for our citizens. When the supply goes up, the demand will come down and so will housing prices. We also must do something about hedge funds and private investors buying up our housing stock for investment purposes. We must ensure that homeownership continues to be the American Dream and not an unreachable fantasy for the next generation.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



House District 35
Jennifer P. Nerbonne
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I have extensive experience as an IT professional across various industries, including DoD, Manufacturing, Pharma, and Insurance. In these roles, I have been directly involved in every phase of project development, from stakeholders to developers, overseeing the marketing/ training of each system. I have worked in compliance on a large scale, marketed services, managed budgets, and improved processes to save costs.

My professional background has equipped me to address complex issues. I have maintained strong relationships with diverse personalities and have the ability to work collaboratively with anyone.

One of my top priorities is improving our schools by focusing on the insights of those on the front lines—our teachers. We need to gather data directly from them to understand how we can help them perform their jobs more effectively. What do they need, and how can we, as a community and as parents, support them? By using this data, we can establish clear metrics that will guide us toward practical, sensible solutions.

I want to address the overwhelming number of bills that are submitted each year. Do we really need thousands of laws that serve as mere band-aids? Instead, I'd like to collab-

orate with our small businesses and families to identify their needs and find ways to cut through the red tape. What obstacles are holding back our community, families, and businesses? Let's focus on creating legislation that genuinely helps them and strengthens our town.

We must focus on making our state affordable, business-friendly, and safe for all constituents.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

I believe our legislation needs a thorough review. Too many bills are passed that unnecessarily regulate every aspect of our lives, adding burdensome regulations that stifle small businesses. We need to focus on legislation that promotes transparency in our schools and removes political activism from the curriculum. Teachers need consistent support, and we should establish clear metrics to identify what they need to do their jobs more effectively. This will allow teachers to focus on teaching, school administrators to oversee high-level operations, and help streamline operating costs.

We need to take a hard look at where our tax dollars are going. There's a serious lack of transparency and accountability. We can't keep throwing money at problems without clear, measurable results. Families are struggling to cope with the rising

costs of food, gas, energy, and tuition, among other essentials. It's time to rein in spending and ensure that our resources are used effectively.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Rhode Island is facing a shortage of healthcare providers, as many are leaving for neighboring states due to various challenges. One significant issue is that Rhode Island's Medicaid reimbursement rate is among the lowest, and our current legislators have not addressed this adequately. Additionally, the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) has noted that Rhode Island has excessive insurance regulations and administrative burdens. Streamlining this entire system is essential, but it will require a collaborative effort and cannot happen overnight. It's crucial that we all work together to overhaul the system and create a more sustainable healthcare environment.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

Rhode Island boasts one of the

most beautiful shorelines, and I am incredibly grateful to live here. I strongly support property owners' rights as outlined in our state constitution, while also advocating for public access to the shoreline. This access is a vital part of our community and should never be restricted from the general public.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

I fully support the development and implementation of strategies to achieve our goals of a clean environment, reduced pollution, and improved energy efficiency. However, we must ensure that our efforts are effective and results-driven, rather than simply throwing money at the issue. We also need to be mindful not to place undue burdens on families and businesses in the process.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

Rhode Island currently has 26 separate housing authorities, which consume so much overhead that funds intended for addressing the housing crisis are significantly reduced. There

needs to be a solution that eliminates wasteful spending, mismanagement of tax dollars, and unnecessary overhead. On top of this, the rising cost of living due to inflation makes it increasingly difficult for people to not only purchase a home but also maintain it.

This issue is complex and tied to federal policies that drive up inflation and lower employment rates. Simply throwing more money at the problem won't solve it, especially when the system is so large and inefficient. While affordable housing programs sound promising, they often fall short. For example, Rhode Island's zoning laws only require that 10% of homes in new developments be affordable, which is minimal and unlikely to make a significant impact. Additionally, affordable housing requirements often don't provide homeowners with the opportunity to build personal wealth.

We need to strip away excessive bureaucracy and work together to brainstorm straightforward solutions that will reduce inflation, increase employment, and keep taxes at a manageable level.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Candidate did not respond with a yes/no answer

District 31 - North Kingstown, Exeter LISAMARIE LEAVITT - R - no response
House District 34 - South Kingstown, Narragansett JOANNE R. FORTI - R - no response



SCAN TO JOIN LWV

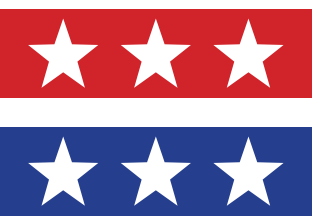


NOVEMBER 5, 2024
POLLS ARE OPEN 7AM - 8PM

Find your polling place at <http://vote.sos.ri.gov/>

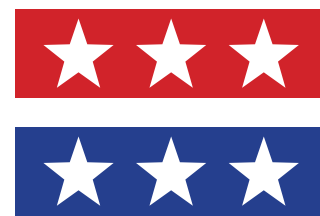


SCAN FOR VOTER SERVICES



State of Rhode Island General Election Candidates

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



House District 36
Tina L. Spears
Democrat
Incumbent - uncontested

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

My goal as a State Representative is to serve the needs and priorities of my district and the larger community of Rhode Island.

My experience as a disability advocate and a parent have prepared me well for the role of a policy maker. I have a can-do attitude and have had a multitude of life-experiences that inform my values and priorities, that I believe largely aligns with my community.

My willingness to work with all people with diverse perspectives allows me to find compromise when the outcome is to the benefit of all. Ultimately, that is what moves the needle on all good policy; compromise and an unwavering commitment to the community you serve. If you are willing to work hard and work together with all stakeholders, anything is achievable. That is success to me.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

Bottle Redemption Bill: Rhode Island is failing terribly at capturing and recycling plastic waste. We are the Ocean State, and each day we do not recycle our plastic, we are polluting our waterways, our soil, and our ocean. This is a top priority for all the Representatives on the House Environment committee and South County Representatives.

Healthcare reforms: While I don't have a specific policy that must be passed, I believe a package of bills that will build on the work that has been done in the general assembly is needed. Policy areas that I believe should be explored are related to; increasing support to physicians and direct care workers, increasing reimbursement rates to compressed areas in the system, creating price transparency, pharmacy benefit manager controls, insurer requirements, etc.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Healthcare costs are driven by three key elements: pharmaceutical prices, professional specialty prices (Ex: radiology, orthopedics), and

durable medical equipment/supplies prices. More must be done to control these cost drivers and create transparency in pricing for all services and products in the healthcare industry.

In addition to the high-level cost drivers, this pressure of higher costs in the above-mentioned categories have driven down the reimbursements to clinical care, direct care, front-line workers etc. As a state, we can do more to target clinical and direct care services for investments and higher reimbursement rates while controlling the cost of the top cost drivers.

Lastly, the healthcare system in our country is a large part of state or economy and any adjustments to its ecosystem must be done thoughtfully and many experts at the table working together to improve our system and maintain the needed workforce.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I stand firmly on the side of shoreline access for the public. The shore is the property of all Rhode Islanders and as the sea rises, the access will

shift with the tides. Property owners have the right to preserve their residence and structures, and all people should respect this right. However, there should never be obstruction to the shore by any property owner.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Yes

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

The housing crisis is impacting all people in Rhode Island. The House of Representatives has taken the lead to move toward a streamlined process for building and invested hundreds of millions toward housing. We need to continue these investments. The process is slow and daunting and we will not solve our problem overnight.

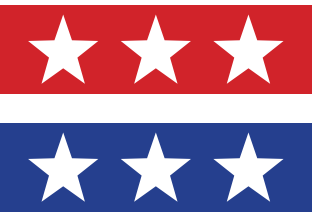
Development also comes with concerns for one of the most densely

populated states in the country and the sensitive environmental conditions along the shoreline, so all development must be done thoughtfully in a manner that is resilient and sensitive to the area.

Policy that is not related to development that may be helpful would be to limit non-residents buying up single family homes for Airbnbs or equity firms buying properties for financial gain. I am not opposed to short-term rentals, however, the single family home supply is limited and we may need to explore a moratorium on short-term rental properties and/or limit equity firms from purchasing in our state. Additionally, the platforms that list properties and real estate/rental agencies who are incentivized to drive prices upward may need to be addressed to begin stabilizing the housing market to become more affordable.

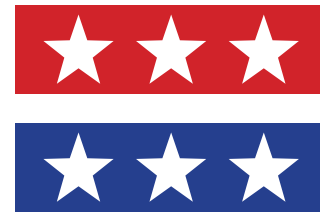
7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

No



Narragansett General Election Candidates

NARRAGANSETT TOWN COUNCIL



Jason Colonies

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I volunteered on two committees in Narragansett: the Economic Development Committee and the Narragansett Land Conservancy Trust. Both experiences educated me on town operations, the importance of civic duties, and the value of committing oneself to the community. I recently earned my doctorate in Education with a focus on leadership and social justice. Currently, I serve as the Executive Director at The Education Exchange in Peace Dale, Rhode Island. Our team helps adult learners earn high school credentials, transition to college, and acquire life and workforce skills to advance their careers or gain employment. This position has helped me deepen my knowledge in budgeting, staffing, and program development.

My wife and I are raising two daughters and understand the importance of supporting our school system. I want to ensure that the schools always receive the resources they need to continue excelling in educating our children in Narragansett. I recognize that our town has three important economies consisting of residents, college students, and tourists. All three must be maintained to keep Narragansett's tax rates low. It's essential that the beach and Narragansett River be preserved. The proposed

dredging project must move forward, as it will place over 70,000 cubic yards of sand onto the beach and open the river, creating a cleaner environment for all to enjoy. I believe that civil communication must be prioritized. The council's job is to listen and collaborate with all stakeholders involved when making decisions for the community.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing is a difficult subject for Narragansett. The market has dictated the pricing for houses here, which has unfortunately priced out many families from moving to the area. One effort I support is passing the proposed \$3 million bond this November. Following that, we can have an open discussion about how those funds can be used to help with affordable housing.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and why? If not, what changes would you support?

I do not support the current ordinance passed by the town council. I believe the process was not transparent enough and did not involve input from all stakeholders. While Narragansett residents want some form of regulation around short-term rentals,

the current ordinance is overreaching. Families from out of state or even from northern Rhode Island should have the opportunity to come and enjoy Narragansett. Not all families can afford the proposed seven-day rule. We have limited hotel space, and many people hold their weddings here. Our economy would benefit from allowing these visitors to stay. I propose that the current ordinance be repealed and that workshops be scheduled immediately to create a new, fairer ordinance that works for all of Narragansett.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

Our first priority should be to dredge the Narrow River and use the extracted sand to replenish our beach. The proposal from Foth Infrastructure & Environment LLC suggests placing 78,000 cubic yards of sand back onto the beach. Additionally, this plan includes the construction of natural dunes to provide essential protection against environmental elements. However, it's important to recognize that this is just the beginning. To safeguard our beach for future generations, dredging will need to be revisited periodically. Future councils must assess the timing and approach for ongoing maintenance. We are fortunate to have strong support from the state, and I am confident that our

stakeholders will remain dedicated to the ongoing protection and preservation of Narragansett Beach.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

As I've walked through various neighborhoods in Narragansett, it's clear that our residents are generally content with the current tax structure. There's little concern expressed about our taxes, and many are happy with the balance we've struck. To further support our residents, I propose raising the homestead exemption to 20%. We live in a beautiful town, and who wouldn't be thrilled to call this place home? Our taxes are low, and we can further increase our town's revenue by extending the shoulder season in the fall and spring.

I'm aware that our Parks and Recreation department is already working on developing more events during these seasons to boost our local economy. Let's support Parks and Recreation, along with local businesses, to create a vibrant lineup of events. A stronger shoulder season will not only provide a boost to local businesses but also offer more opportunities for us to come together as a community and celebrate what makes Narragansett special.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

This ordinance is yet another example of a measure that was pushed through prematurely. Residents of Narragansett deserve the right to park near their homes and to allow their families and friends to do the same. The recently passed ordinance does not adequately address these needs, and there must be a better solution. State roads fall under state jurisdiction, and it is not Narragansett's place to interfere. If changes are necessary at the state level, our officials should engage in negotiations with the state.

We have resources, such as empty school parking lots and town-owned buses, that could be utilized to address parking concerns. There must be a way to open these lots and transport visitors to the beaches efficiently. I propose that we repeal the current ordinance and immediately convene workshops to discuss an option that is more equitable for all residents of Narragansett.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center?

Yes



James P. Durkin

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community, and life experience do you bring to be successful?

During my term, I aim to preserve and enhance the qualities that make Narragansett a wonderful place to live while addressing the challenges we face. My primary goals include promoting responsible development, ensuring the success of affordable housing projects, and implementing fair and effective regulations for short-term rentals. I also want to help the new council by leveraging my knowledge of the building industry, particularly regarding ordinances that have been passed and need to be reviewed. My experience in real estate and construction allows me to bring a practical, informed perspective to these discussions. I have a lifetime connection to this community, having grown up in Narragansett and spent decades as a local business owner. I'm proud to have helped build the Narragansett Athletic Complex at the high school, a project that reflects my commitment to our town's future. My three terms on the Town Council have given me a deep understanding of our town's history, challenges, and potential. Additionally, my background in real estate and accounting has equipped me with the skills to make informed decisions that balance economic growth with community well-being. My ongoing involvement with the Towers Committee and various civic groups demonstrates my commitment to preserving Narragansett's heritage while planning for its future.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing means ensuring that town residents have access to housing that costs no more than

30% of their gross income. This can be achieved through various means—whether it's government-subsidized, town-subsidized, or supported by property owners who receive incentives from the town to offer year-round housing at affordable rates.

I firmly believe in the work being done by the Affordable Housing Collaborative Committee, and the new \$3 million bond that we'll be voting on in November is a critical start to addressing this issue. This initiative, spearheaded by current Council Member Susan Cicilline Buonanno, represents a significant step toward a practical solution. While it may only address a small percentage of the need, it is a beginning that we must build upon to ensure that all Narragansett residents can afford to live in the community they love. In our attempt to attract young families and permanent residents, we need to be careful not to alter the established supply and demand that has created the fabric of this town. The balance that has been struck over the years is crucial to maintaining the unique character and charm that make Narragansett so special.

The town should continue to support and expand projects like the over-55 affordable housing development at the former Camp Jori site, and we must identify and utilize town and government-owned properties for similar developments. Encouraging public-private partnerships and streamlining the approval process are also essential to ensure these projects meet community needs while preserving our town's character.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and why? If not, what changes would you support?

No, I do not support the current short-term rental ordinance. My family has been renting homes and cottages since 1945 with very little regulation, and we've experienced

few to no problems over the years. The proposed ordinance feels overly restrictive and unfair, especially considering the long history of successful, managed rentals in our town. The rise of platforms like Airbnb and the prevalence of unmanaged short-term rentals have indeed created a need for more oversight. However, regulating bedroom sizes and reducing supply annually is far too intrusive and overly broad. The recent court decisions have already put a hold on implementing these regulations, and continuing down this path would be unwise. Further discussion at this point seems futile, as it would only lead to more tax dollars being spent without solving any issues, and it risks further dividing our community. I currently sit on a legislative state short-term rental committee that has met multiple times during the legislative session. While there are many good ideas being discussed, it will take some time before any legislation is enacted. In the meantime, we should focus on finding balanced, fair solutions that address the real issues without overburdening property owners or stifling the rental market that has been a part of Narragansett's fabric for decades.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

It's crucial for our town's economy and recreational enjoyment that the Salt Pond and Narrow River areas have clear, open channels and aren't continually hindered by storms every few years. For a long time, I've considered how to stabilize Narragansett Beach. Initially, I thought that groins along the beach might be a good solution, as they could help protect the beach from erosion by disrupting the natural movement of sand. However, I understand that many people prefer the uninterrupted natural scenery without such structures. If you visit

the lobby of the Towers building and look at the historical displays, you'll see that there was once a harbor at the south end of Narragansett Beach with groins extending into the ocean. These structures likely helped protect against the sweeping wind currents that now push sand down to the mouth of the river. Redirecting these currents toward the rocky beach further north might have reduced this problem. Whatever solution we choose, it's essential that we act quickly and ensure we have plans in place for periodic maintenance, not just one-time fixes. We should secure permits that allow for annual maintenance of the river mouth, ensuring it remains open. A straightforward solution could involve using two large dump trucks and an excavator to clean up the mouth of the river each winter, redistributing the sand along the beach to maintain its health and accessibility.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors, and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

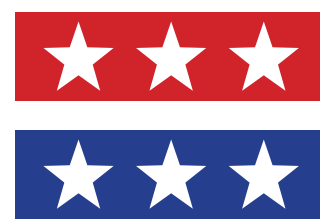
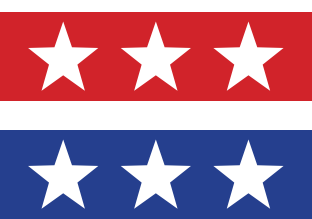
I believe that our property tax structure should be fair and equitable, reflecting the needs of all residents while supporting the town's financial health. At this time, I support maintaining the current property tax structure as it strikes a reasonable balance between funding essential services and ensuring that Narragansett remains an attractive place to live, work, and invest. However, I am open to exploring adjustments if future conditions warrant it, particularly in ways that could provide relief to residents without compromising our town's ability to meet its obligations. Any changes would need to be carefully considered with extensive community input.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

Narragansett resident taxpayers should have the right to park on any town-maintained road, with reasonable exceptions for emergencies, egress, and ADA compliance. To ensure fairness, I propose a non-political Parking Traffic Commission to prioritize residents while considering the needs of businesses and visitors. One of the biggest challenges is the congestion in the Pier area, one of the most attractive places in town. The parking situation here is a serious problem, and I believe the solution lies in improved transportation options for employees and patrons. We can utilize vacant school parking lots and establish a long-term shuttle service operating from June through October to alleviate this issue, managed by the Traffic Commission. Regarding state roads, we must acknowledge they are under state jurisdiction and exist to serve all Rhode Islanders. While we can suggest improvements, we must accept that these roads are intended for everyone, not just our residents. Additionally, the Coastal Access Improvement Committee should focus on purchasing and maintaining key areas that enhance public access to our coastline. For example, the closed parking lot near Point Judith Lighthouse should be reopened for public use to provide access for fishermen, sightseers, and surfers. Our undeveloped areas offer potential for resident-focused development, ensuring taxpayers have priority parking, as they are the backbone of our community.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center?

Yes



Narragansett General Election Candidates

NARRAGANSETT TOWN COUNCIL



Ewa M. Dzwierzynski
Incumbent

remain undeterred.

I learned a lot from serving on the past two councils and am running for a third term because there is more work to be done. I have worked tirelessly on important issues. I have ignored bickering on social media because I prefer to spend my time focusing on matters of importance like housing affordability, parking availability, fiscal diligence, public works, flood hazard mitigation, public safety, planning and zoning, and charity work.

As many have come to know firsthand, I am not afraid to challenge the status quo and fight for what is right. I am pragmatic, kind, resolute, trustworthy, and undeterred—a local voice with integrity to help thwart powerful self-serving interests who only care about lining their wallets.

Vote Ewa for Narragansett. For the People. For the Town.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

I may be a Polish girl from Pawtucket, but I have called Narragansett home since buying my first home on Harbour Island 26 years ago. I fell in love with Narragansett as a URI student while working towards my pharmacy degree. I fulfilled my dream of living here after I graduated, but I'm not sure it would be possible for today's grads in this market.

Owning a home is out of reach for many due to high prices fueled by increasing demand for seasonal/investment properties, student housing, and inflation. Ironically, so-called affordable housing laws passed by the Statehouse this year preempted the very local zoning in our town designed to promote affordability. As a result, conditions are more favorable

for investors to flip more properties into seasonal and short-term rentals. Out-of-town investor-owners are increasingly consuming properties while trying to call the shots in town and at the Statehouse.

The Comprehensive Housing Study and Needs Assessment by Crane Associates is a key document which provides recommendations to help with the issue of housing affordability in our Town and should be utilized to implement and address changes. As a scientist, I appreciate data and subject matter experts to help guide the decision-making process to address many of the challenges and issues that had been identified for many years in this Town but had not been addressed until recently. Kicking the can down the road is no longer an option for many pressing issues in this town, including housing affordability.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and Why? If not, what changes would you support?

Yes, I championed the short-term rental ordinance and support it. We need more year-round residents to be able to live here. I want to see our community become more affordable for families with school-age children. I want to strengthen the fabric of our neighborhoods by protecting new rules and limits on short-term rentals.

The town went to great lengths to ensure a legally sound short-term rental ordinance, working with outside legal counsel, the town solicitor, and a third-party expert specializing in short-term rental ordinances to develop the ordinance. Additionally, the Affordable Housing Study that was conducted by Crane Associates outlined specific recommendations

including a 7-day minimum stay for short-term rentals which was taken into account when drafting the ordinance.

The impact of the local short-term rental trend is contributing to housing unaffordability and the town is losing housing stock for year-round families from conversion of single-family homes to rentals leading to less year-round residents. Currently the town has 1,100 registered short-term rentals, the highest in the state by far, and the consumption and monetizing of homes for rentals continues.

The intent for regulating short-term rentals is to create balance among residents, vacationers, students, and seasonal renters, increase the quality of life for everyone, build community, and increase full-time year-round residents, and increase housing affordability by limiting the number of short-term rentals. Unlike some towns in the state, country, and abroad that have passed laws banning short-term rentals outright, the town of Narragansett is looking to bring balance to the community.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

Recent storms over the past few years have dramatically impacted our beaches and waterfront communities. As climate change threatens our shoreline, I will focus on policies and strategies that will combat beach erosion and pollution. A top priority for the next Council is to consider and implement funding strategies to protect our precious shores, port, and vulnerable communities. This is why I voted for an enterprise reserve fund policy to ensure operating revenues can support necessary annual expenses and capital investments

at our Town Beach and wastewater plant. I supported and the Town received grants for hazard mitigation solutions in low-lying neighborhoods threatened by tidal flooding. I worked with a URI-led student project to assess resilient land development strategies in the Port of Galilee, and we are actively studying options for the shoaling conditions at the mouth of the Narrow River.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

I am grateful to the Town's Finance Committee for recently studying and submitting a thoughtful set of recommendations to the Council showcasing ways to promote housing affordability through the tax structure. A two-tier tax structure could create more flexibility as an option but another option for tax changes is the homestead exemption. Increasing the homestead exemption to from 10% to 20% or even higher on median home valuation in Narragansett could be a strategy for change.

Ultimately, the current single residential property tax rate with an increased homestead could help owner-occupied households. I also feel that we need to ensure that seniors are able to age in place and live at home. Exploring additional tax credits for seniors on fixed incomes is also important to address given the increased valuations and impact on taxes for seniors who are on a fixed income.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

I believe starting with the most immediate needs as stated above are the best place to start.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

This past year the Town has just completed a reevaluation, and many residents' property values skyrocketed at an alarming rate. Increases were above 40% and more in some neighborhoods. I have been researching this and the largest driver in increasing or decreasing new evaluations are recent sales in proximity to surrounding area housing. I continued my research and checked housing sales in the reevaluation and compared to see if they were on the Towns rental registration list which are income producing properties. I have found that there were some higher increases in areas that had many sales of homes that were rental properties, and not many sales of homes that were full time residents. Therefore, in some neighborhoods the results are assessed on values of income producing properties which skews the neighborhoods housing valuation stock. This may be the system of valuation, but I do not feel that this is fair for a resident or seasonal homeowner that has been here many years and has not sold or wants to live in the town to be bearing the same increases of valuation as the investor. It is situations like this that can lead to unintended consequences, should be evaluated to find more of an equity balance to tax-

I respect and realize Narragansett is a destination beach community. The allure as a vacation hot spot has attracted vacationers for more than a century. I welcome visitors to our town to enjoy our beaches, restaurants, and attractions. That's why I voted to restore parking on the Avenues making the shoreline more accessible for surfers and recreation al fishing. I also support inclusive parking policies as recommended by two consultant studies and our planning board to alleviate congestion and make parking more available for visitors along our seawall and in our central business district in the summer.

It was the consensus of the Town Council that the three (3) hour limit would prevent people from parking in the Pier area during peak (beach) season all day. By doing so, the spaces would rotate at least every three (3) hours and this would provide a benefit to local businesses who often have very limited parking.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with the ordinance that was passed, the parking recommendations were based on data and subject experts. The Town Council utilized these documents as a component of its discussions and formulating the ordinance. Setting parking regulations is statutorily vested with the duly elected Town Council.

The council had always planned on addressing any concerns or issues after the season implementation and making any changes necessary.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center?

Yes

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am running for Town Council because I want to continue the progress the current Council has made to bring balance to our community. I will continue to represent the interests of year-round residents, families who live here, and businesses. I care greatly about our town and its future. The stakes are too high to step aside and watch from the sidelines as special interests continue to usurp our community. That's why I have personally monitored legislation and testified at committee and commission hearings at the Statehouse to represent the nuanced interests of our Town. I've brushed off the stinging jabs from those with opposing viewpoints, and I



Steven J. Ferrandi
Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

First, I would like to thank the voters of Narragansett who elected me in the 2022 election. It has been a fulfilling experience to be involved in the many aspects of our Town and I have met many new residents. I am running again this year to continue a platform of full time, resident, friendly, neighborhood quality of life policies, which includes ensuring our neighborhoods are a priority and a there is a framework in place to accomplish this goal. I am an advocate of the three-college student, and three unrelated ordinances. I believe this will prevent our single-family neighborhoods from becoming mini dormitory districts with guest houses and mini hotels implanted in our residential neighborhoods. When this occurs the neighborhoods experience a more transient status and residents become

concerned that it changes the general fabric of the neighborhood, people do not know who their neighbors are. If this situation continues, it threatens one of the very ideals of the American dream of single-family home ownership and sense of community.

I have always been involved with my community in the past attending Town Council meetings, working with other neighborhood associations to find common ground on issues, and working on solutions. In my career in sales, I have acquired transferable skills for being on the Council. These include budgeting, project management, fiscal management and business development. Lastly my recent 2 years on the Council have given me a wealth of hands-on experience in how government works.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

I believe that affordable housing should be that the Town would have a multitude of residents that are able to purchase and rent properties in Narragansett for all income levels. Currently that is not the case. According to the Crane report on Housing that the current council enacted in 2023 and was completed in 2024, there are many competing interests and unique challenges to the Towns housing.

The report states there are approximately 6,000 to 8,000 enrolled college students that live in Narragansett for a 9-month rental period. The study references that the weekly and summer vacation rentals also add pressure on the housing stock and bring a significant increase on housing prices in Narragansett for both renters and owners.

There needs to be a multi-faceted approach to solving this issue.

1) Uri needs to build more student housing on their campus to help alleviate the burden on the Towns

available housing stock, there would be more opportunity for families, affordable housing, and long-term rentals

2) Enact ordinances, and policies that bring incentives for long term leases bringing more stability in the neighborhoods.

There is a statement in the crane report that explains what has the biggest negative effect is on affordable housing, " URI and private landlords in Narragansett have developed a symbiotic relationship by avoiding the cost of building student housing, and landlords are benefiting from renting to student for 9 months and then gaining 3 month rent premium from vacationers from June to August."

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and Why? If not, what changes would you support?

Yes, I do support the Short term rental ordinance. This ordinance has been talked about by previous councils and has been a work in progress with the Town on an ongoing basis. As other towns have also faced the same issue of STR Ordinances, many have passed ordinances like the Narragansett ordinance. Narragansett has engaged a consultant that specializes in STR ordinances and, the town has engaged with expert law firm that went over its validity. After careful thought and expert advice this council passed a long-needed ordinance on Short term rentals This brings a framework to the town that addresses all the general rules for dwellings such as occupancy limits, parking, inspection, registration, Fire codes, advertising, fines, owners responsibilities, and housing code violations, that will ensure that the Town has a comprehensive database on the activity of STR.

The State also requires owners to register their STR and has been for several years, and this past year they have added some more required

information needed to register. As a matter of fact Narragansett has upwards of 25% of all STR in the state.

The Short term rentals in Narragansett are becoming much more prevalent, as investors purchase houses and turn them into STR this has an effect on our single family neighborhoods where these homes were owner occupied. This changes the character of the single family home and turns it to more of a business use. STR Ordinance is a priority for me.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

The current Town council in 2023 engaged with a consultant Taylor Engineering Company to perform a Beach carrying capacity study. In June of this year the Town Council held a public workshop to discuss the study.

The study brought out many historical and up to date facts about the beach.

There was an in depth analysis of capacity and beach maintenance, and many other areas of importance to list them all. The study is the most comprehensive report that the Town has ever undertaken. Some of the pertinent concerns from surveys were overcrowding, parking, Beach erosion/Beach width, ecosystem health, among others. The top concern related to the environment is beach erosion and beach width, another top concerns stated Narrow River shoals and inlet and the effects of sea level rise on the beach.

In conjunction to Beach capacity study, there has been an ongoing study by the Foth Company, this study has focused on sand infilling in the Narrow river channel and further into the river affecting boating navigation and flow of the river. That Study has recommendations of 3 possible alternatives of action on dredging the area and replacing sand

on the town beach. I believe the town has a golden opportunity to affect some improvements to the beach area with these studies. I recommend using these documents as the towns planning process as decisions are made.

I believe starting with the most immediate needs as stated above are the best place to start.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

This past year the Town has just completed a reevaluation, and many residents' property values skyrocketed at an alarming rate. Increases were above 40% and more in some neighborhoods. I have been researching this and the largest driver in increasing or decreasing new evaluations are recent sales in proximity to surrounding area housing. I continued my research and checked housing sales in the reevaluation and compared to see if they were on the Towns rental registration list which are income producing properties. I have found that there were some higher increases in areas that had many sales of homes that were rental properties, and not many sales of homes that were full time residents. Therefore, in some neighborhoods the results are assessed on values of income producing properties which skews the neighborhoods housing valuation stock. This may be the system of valuation, but I do not feel that this is fair for a resident or seasonal homeowner that has been here many years and has not sold or wants to live in the town to be bearing the same increases of valuation as the investor. It is situations like this that can lead to unintended consequences, should be evaluated to find more of an equity balance to tax-

ing these properties. I am also in favor of working on other inequities in the tax structure to enhance for long term rentals and Full-time residents.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

The Parking situation in Narragansett is one of many variables in each area of Town. Some neighborhoods have no overnight parking, usually as necessity in some of the more Student rental percentage neighborhoods, where vehicles would fill up on both sides creating an unsafe safety conditions. Some areas have concerns for businesses and allow for hang tags for residents or businesses. It can be difficult to find the right balance for each area of Town. The recent decision to have 3 hour timed parking on ocean road, which would bring more turnover and available parking throughout the day was a long process that previous councils had discussed. The planning board along with the planning department held focus groups with stakeholders of residents, retail/service business owners and restaurant owners. There also was a parking study completed by a traffic expert consultant Mr John Burke, called the Burke report that the recommendations were discussed with the planning board in their discussions concerning the pier area parking. When the parking recommendations were passed it became evident the there were many using the parking spaces for their own needs. It certainly is true that parking should be more resident focused to make sure that residents have opportunities for parking.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center? Only a yes/no response will be

Yes

MAIL-IN VOTING



UPDATES

Rhode Island voters who are unable, or prefer not going to the polls on Election Day can vote by mail, but you need to act now!

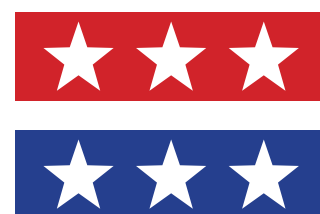
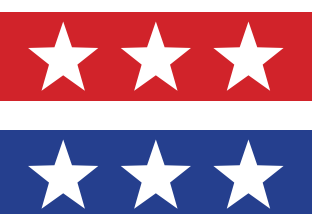
Deadline to apply for your mail-in ballot is **October 15, 2024**. Good news! This year you can apply online or by paper at your Town Hall.

1. You must apply for a mail in ballot by **October 15, 2024, at 4PM**, either at your Town Hall or online at <https://mailballot.sos.ri.gov/>. Your signature must match your voter registration signature. You may opt in to automatically track your ballot as it goes through the counting process.

2. When you receive your ballot, mark it and complete the Voter's Mail Ballot Certificate as directed. **The signature on your Mail Ballot Certificate envelope will be compared to the signature on your mail ballot application.**

3. Return sealed ballot to the Board of Elections in your town by 8:00 PM on election day. Allow at least 7 days by mail or deliver the ballot to a dropbox in your town or the RI Board of Elections, 2000 Plainfield Pike, Suite A, Cranston, RI 02921.

IF YOU TRY TO VOTE AT YOUR POLLING PLACE ON ELECTION DAY AND YOU HAVE REQUESTED A MAIL-IN BALLOT, YOUR VOTE WILL BE CHALLENGED - THIS PROVISION IS ASSURANCE THAT NO ONE VOTES TWICE.



Narragansett General Election Candidates

NARRAGANSETT TOWN COUNCIL



Rupert Friday

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I will foster civil discussion and build consensus around the town's most pressing issues. I will also ensure that the town's actions are transparent and well communicated so that residents and visitors understand their purpose. I commit to maintaining our community's strong sense of belonging and quality of life. Retaining families and year-round residents and encouraging new families to move here is a priority. Another priority is implementing programs to support our senior citizens so they can age in place. I will also continue initiatives that reduce real estate speculation so that the town's existing housing stays more affordable. Narragansett needs more housing that is affordable for families, the area's workforce, and children who grow up in town. Protecting Narragansett's environment - our beaches, waterways and rich history - and preparing for climate change is essential. A long-term strategy for managing the town's water and wastewater infrastructure

is needed.

My family has lived in Narragansett for 24 years and I serve on Narragansett's Planning Board. A trained mediator, I have experience facilitating civil discussions, bringing people with diverse perspectives together to build consensus around challenging community issues. I also have experience with land use planning and watershed protection and provided technical assistance to other local governments. Throughout my career I advocated for sound environmental stewardship. In addition, my work in schools and parks gives me a working knowledge of major town departments. Finally, my experience running small businesses gives me an understanding of economic development. See www.Vote4Friday.com for details.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing means that housing is affordable for: 1. the town's workforce (police, firefighters, teachers, clerks); 2. people working for large employers (URI faculty and staff, South County Hospital, Electric Boat); 3. families; and 4. people who grew up in town. It means low-income residents can find housing. Affordability also means that increasing property tax and utility costs do not force residents to leave town.

Three market forces are driving up Narragansett's housing prices and making them unaffordable: demand for second homes; demand for seasonal rentals for URI's rising enrollment; and conversion of houses into short-term rental businesses. Rising real estate assessments and resulting tax increases add to the problem. And high market prices are enticing landlords to sell the houses they have rented for years.

To address our housing affordability needs, the town must continue implementing the Council's strategy developed over 5 years ago to reduce real estate speculation: limit the size of houses allowed on small lots and manage short-term rentals. I also

strongly support implementing the 8 recommendations of the 2024 'affordable housing' report including:

- Creating incentives for converting seasonal and short-term rentals into year-round rentals: tax incentives and/or rental fees; and prohibiting short-term rental stays of less than 1 week.
- Encouraging development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) - known as granny flats - for owner-occupied houses.
- Working with URI to develop more affordable apartments.
- Funding the town's "Affordable Housing Trust Fund" so the town's affordable housing committee has resources to create more affordable housing.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and Why? If not, what changes would you support?

Narragansett has a long history of renting beach cottages. This is part of the town's culture and traditionally, rentals were on a weekly basis with the homeowner using the cottage for part of the summer. The Air B&B & VRBO industry has changed this dynamic. Now, single family houses are being converted into short-term rental businesses. Narragansett is at a tipping point as more than half (56%) of the properties in town are owned by non-residents. I support Narragansett's short-term rental ordinance:

- to insure the safety of the visitors staying in rentals;
- to ensure these rentals are less disruptive to our neighborhoods and quality of life; and
- to implement two recommendations of the 2024 'affordable housing' report: 1) prohibiting short-term rental stays of less than seven days, and 2) creating financial incentives to convert summer rentals into year-round rentals.

I also support the Planning Board's recommended changes including: prohibiting short-term rental of Accessory Dwelling Units and adding specific violations for "renting for a period of less than 7 nights, parking on areas other than designated drive-

ways, and failure to post required information." In addition, I would give registration priority to owner-occupied houses and renewals without violations to increase predictability for landlords. I would also evaluate the annual license limit based on the first-year demand. Perhaps, the proposed annual reduction in the licenses can be achieved through attrition as licenses are not renewed. Finally, monitoring implementation, making needed revisions and addressing unanticipated problems will improve operations.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long-term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

The impacts of climate change on Narragansett - rising sea level along with larger and more frequent coastal storms - are most dramatically impacting our beaches, shoreline and waterfront neighborhoods. The impact on the Town's beach is most conspicuous at the southern most section of the beach, which has narrowed in recent years and is under water at high tide. This limits the number of people who can enjoy the beach. Maintaining and restoring the town's beach is essential to maintaining the town's quality of life and is a pillar of the town's economy. This will be an increasing struggle with sea level rise over time.

The recent Narrow River Dredging Study provides a strategy for creating a sand dune and expanded beach at the south end of the town beach. This would provide a natural buffer that protects the sea wall and parking lot and reduces the impact of storms. This initial plan for restoring the beach and creating a dune on the southern end will need to be accompanied by an annual plan for replenishing sand on the beach. A sand transport study would help the town understand sand movement and become the basis of a beach sand replenishment and maintenance plan. The town also needs to continue working with partners to plant dune grasses and other native species that will help to stabilize and

maintain the dunes along the entire beach.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

I support making changes to the town's property tax structure and I will take a long-term approach. Due to second home and investment property purchases, Narragansett property assessments and resulting taxes are increasing for long-term residents. Narragansett's tax structure should distinguish between houses that are the owner's primary residence versus second homes and non-owner occupied houses used for seasonal and short-term rental businesses. Our property tax structure should avoid increasing taxes for homeowners' primary residences. Further, the tax structure should be progressive to benefit lower value houses that are the homeowner's primary residence. To implement a recommendation from the 2024 'affordable housing' report, I will also pursue property tax incentives for landlords who rent year-round. Houses that are used for seasonal and short-term rentals should be treated as businesses for real estate assessment and tax purposes.

Narragansett's homestead tax provision - reducing property taxes 10% for residents - is currently capped by state law, but could be raised. The town could also pursue a tax structure used in Providence or Newport to reduce taxes for homeowners that live in town. Either change will require the town to pursue state legislation to revise our current real estate tax structure.

The town's property assessment records - many of which are inaccurate - also need updated. I would revise Narragansett's assessment standards so that the number of bedrooms is considered. Because seasonal and short-term rentals are rented based on the number of bedrooms, house assessments should reflect the num-

ber of bedrooms.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

Parking management in Narragansett has been a challenging issue for decades. The town has commissioned two parking studies and the planning board did extensive work and held focus groups on this topic. Their carefully considered recommendations to Town Council establish a sound foundation for parking management and regulation.

I will build on these recommendations to make prudent and efficient use of available spaces. Parking must: 1) be safe; 2) insure residents and their guests can park in front of their homes; 3) be convenient for customers and practical for staff of restaurant and other businesses; and 4) be accessible so visitors can walk along the sea wall, enjoy the beach, fish, surf and bicycle. Parking for these interests needs to be managed comprehensively - especially during the summer.

I will evaluate how rollout of the changes implemented this year have worked to achieve these goals and pursue needed changes. Some Planning Board recommendations have not yet been implemented - such as providing parking hang tags for some restaurant workers and people attending special events. Moving forward, I will: partner with restaurant and Pier business owners to develop a staff parking strategy; review and refine management of parking at the beach parking lots; and manage parking along the sea wall so that there is adequate turnover for people who want to walk along the sea wall.

Longer term, depending how management of existing parking meets demand, the town, in partnership with restaurants, should explore creating additional parking.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center?

Yes



Winters B. Hames III

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I would like to bring stability to the Council and believe that I can do that through my experiences of living and growing up in the Town for the last 65 years. I have served on the Rec Advisory Board and EDC. I have been a member of the Lion's Club for over 50 years and work closely with them on the Blessing of the Fleet. I also organize and run the Lion's Club Christmas Dinner. I was a board member and coached in the Narragansett Little League for over 15 years and organized the Narragansett Little League Senior Baseball division. I coached soccer and was a board member of the SK Youth Soccer league for over 10 winning one State Championship. I coached the Trowt Basketball League for 5 years. I also coached the Narragansett Middle School Baseball team for 5 years and the High School Team for 4 years. I

am past President of the South County Son's of St. Patrick and have been the Chair of the Narragansett Democratic Town Committee for the last 25 years. I have owned businesses in Town for over 50 years and supported many organizations over the years.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing is a very difficult situation in Narragansett as it is in most towns. We have a bond on this November election to allow us to explore more options. The State has mandated certain setbacks and allowing auxiliary buildings on certain lots. All this must be explored to see how it affects our zoning.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and Why? If not, what changes would you support?

I do not support the current ordinances that have been passed. I do not think enough thought went into the process on what type of side effects it would have. For instance, a woman approached me after this was to go into effect. She has lived in Town of many years and her property taxes have tripled since she moved here. Her Social Security and Pension have not tripled so she rents out a room in her house to supplement her income. After the ordinance was passed, they took away her homestead exemption, made her increase her insurance, doubled her license requirements. She will be forced to sell her home and it has increased in value to the point it is out of reach of young families wanting to move here. So, who would be the buyer most likely out of state investors. The ordinance has to be looked at from a broad perspective.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

I voted for the STR and fully support the Ordinance. Like any new Ordinance it is never perfect. I am open to making changes as the ordinance evolves. The STR Ordinance was created to mitigate the problems associated with having our neighborhoods inundated with transients. Our neighborhoods should not be short stay hotels. Narragansett commissioned Crane Associates to evaluate our housing needs and make recommendations. Crane recommended creating a STR Ordinance as the town needs more affordable year-round housing.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

My plan is to use the Taylor Engineering beach Carrying Capacity

term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

I would support investigating the dredging of Narrow River, but I don't think that is a permanent solution. It will be impossible to control the rising tide and the only way to protect the Town and beach is to build protective barriers. Dredging Narrow River to replenish the sand is a temporary and expensive fix.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

I would support an increase in the homestead exemption. I would cap the commercial property tax rate and devise a way to give exemptions to residents that rent their property to year round tenants. I would also like

to use part of the three million bond to explore giving first time homeowners a five year decreasing property tax break.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

Parking has always been an issue in Town. But it is only for about 60 days out of the year. We have learned to live with the parking problems over the years and not restrict parking in ways that it hurts businesses. There are sections of the Town where some restrictions should be enforced but all the ramifications of any ordinance must be looked at thoroughly.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center?

Yes



Jill A. Lawler
Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I earned as BS in Psychology from The University of Connecticut and an MBA from Sacred Heart University. Prior to becoming a Real Estate Agent I worked in the Pharmaceutical Industry. I bring experience of having served three terms, twice as President Pro Tem. During my tenure the Council passed the 3 student and STR ordinances to work to provide a better housing balance, voted to conduct studies on beach resiliency and currently investigating dredging of Narrow River. I have always voted to fully fund schools each budget and fought to keep taxes low and provide additional recreation activities for our families. I would stay the same course the next term.

mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing means people who work in our community have the ability to afford to live in our Community. Prior to the Pandemic investors had begun buying up our housing stock and using it as their 401K plan. This trend escalated in 2020 as out of state investors were able to our bid families, drastically changing our fiber of community. I believe the STR Ordinance which limits the amount of homes which can be licensed as STR will help to find a better housing balance. With the work done on STR the next steps are to find ways to incentivize landlords to rent to year round families such as waving rental registration fees and tax incentives.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and Why? If not, what changes would you support?

I voted for the STR and fully support the Ordinance. Like any new Ordinance it is never perfect. I am open to making changes as the ordinance evolves. The STR Ordinance was created to mitigate the problems associated with having our neighborhoods inundated with transients. Our neighborhoods should not be short stay hotels. Narragansett commissioned Crane Associates to evaluate our housing needs and make recommendations. Crane recommended creating a STR Ordinance as the town needs more affordable year-round housing.

you support?

I voted for the STR and fully support the Ordinance. Like any new Ordinance it is never perfect. I am open to making changes as the ordinance evolves. The STR Ordinance was created to mitigate the problems associated with having our neighborhoods inundated with transients. Our neighborhoods should not be short stay hotels. Narragansett commissioned Crane Associates to evaluate our housing needs and make recommendations. Crane recommended creating a STR Ordinance as the town needs more affordable year-round housing.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

My plan is to use the Taylor Engineering beach Carrying Capacity

Study to create a Master Plan for the Beach. This would include dune restoration, sand migration and erosion plan. Winter storms have also created the need to investigate dredging Narrow River so that the River can flow properly and remain "healthy". Forth Engineering recently presented their findings after studying Narrow River for three years. I would work with all public and private stakeholders to develop a plan and find funding joint sources.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

I would be in favor of taxing seasonal investment properties at a higher rate, as they are operating a business in our neighborhoods. I am

in favor of a lower rate for homes either owner occupied or rented yearly.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

Narragansett has studied parking in the Pier, hiring Consultants who conducted focus groups made up of residents, businesses and restaurants. The Planning Board reviewed the results and made recommendations to multiple Councils. The most recent Consultant has hired by the previous Council. In each case timed parking was recommended to allow for everyone to enjoy the Town.

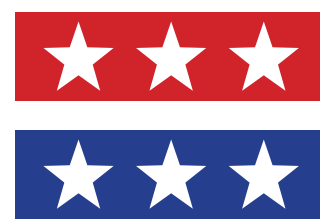
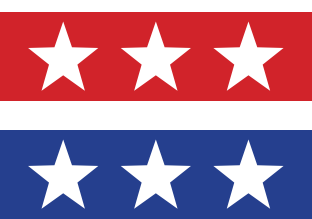
7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center?

Yes



VOTE EARLY

Wednesday, October 16, 2024 - Monday, November 4, 2024



Narragansett General Election Candidates

NARRAGANSETT TOWN COUNCIL



Alexander T. Menzies

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

My primary focus as a leader in this town will be to improve the quality of life for all residents. I will continue to support the education of all Narragansett students and work hard for families to be able to come into our town and live here. I hope to continue to build a partnership with our local businesses and work collectively to create policies that will support our local economy. I support keeping our tax rates low and defending rights to coastal access. I believe in empathy to others. I advocate for transparency and inclusion. I value listening to residents and encourage collaboration to get work done. We need to work together to support our future.

I have had the honor of serving on the Narragansett School Committee for the last four years and two of those years as Vice Chair. I was born and raised here in Narragansett and have lived here my entire life. Growing up in our town's public schools has allowed me to understand the value of the educational services that are provided. With the school committee, I successfully advocated for a student representative position where students will now have a seat at the table to participate in conversations at meetings. I chaired the Health & Wellness committee and served on the Special Education Advisory and District Technology committees. I have experience working on the school's budget and work on budgets daily in my role as a Senior Merchandising Analyst for CVS Health.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically

should the town do to address affordable housing?

The lack of affordable housing options is a serious problem for Narragansett. This is an issue that goes beyond the borders of our town. We need to be willing to branch outward and work with neighboring towns and state officials to come up with solutions. We need help. I applaud the work of the Affordable Housing committee that has worked tirelessly to come up with recommendations on how we can support families and housing options in our town. One way we can start is by approving the proposed \$3 million dollar bond that is on the ballot in November that will fund the town's affordable housing trust fund and purchase land for affordable housing. Then the Town Council should have workshops to determine how this bond will be allocated to support those initiatives. Over the last decade, we have continued to see a steady decline in student enrollment. I speak with families regularly and it warms my heart to hear about how lucky they feel to be able to send their children to Narragansett public schools. At the same time, I understand that there are many families who want to come into our town but are unable to do so due to the lack of affordable homes. We have a crisis on our hands. I will support policies that will retain residents and work to find ways in which we can bring families back into our community.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and why? If not, what changes would you support?

We have a vibrant beautiful community. I know that there are many

residents in town who fell in love with Narragansett after they rented a house in college or came down to enjoy some time with their families at the beach. I have family that has rented in town, and I believe we all know someone who has enjoyed the opportunity of renting in our town. I believe the current rental ordinance needs to be reassessed. In my conversations with residents, I have found that there is a lot of confusion about how this new ordinance will be regulated. The policy talks about making significant cuts to the total number of rentals in town, but it is unclear as to how those cuts will be made. There is a growing concern that this would be done as a first come first serve basis or done in an unfair way. We need to have workshops and allow for this conversation to develop. I agree that rentals need to be regulated and an appropriate compromise can be made that supports all stakeholders. I am confident that we can work together to create a balanced ordinance that works for all members in our community.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

Our town beach is a jewel and we need to do everything in our power to protect it. We are blessed to have such a beautiful resource at our doorstep. My favorite part of each morning, while travelling to school was to see the sun come up over the horizon. Every time we think of Narragansett, the vision we always create in our heads is that of the beach with the towers. The beach is at the very heart and soul of all Narragansett residents. We need to do everything we can to protect it. I plan on working closely with our Coastal Access and Parks

and Recreation Committees. I will work with our state officials to get aid for projects that will help with the preservation and sustainability of our beach. I support the dredging at the mouth of Narrow River and the use of that extracted sand to be cycled back onto our beach. We can use this sand to build up the dunes and plant sea grass to reinforce its stability. I have seen tremendous support from our state officials and many members in our community. We need to make sure that the avenue that we take is well thought out so that our beach is protected and preserved for many more generations to come. The beach is our legacy and it is our responsibility to do what we can to ensure that our families will be able to enjoy it in the future.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors, and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

One thing that has become very apparent to me in my neighborhood discussions with residents, is that people are happy with the low taxes. They are happy with the current tax structure and the balance that has been made. The residential real estate tax is based on the valuation of the property and a re-evaluation will occur every three years. This is based on the sales price of properties in a neighborhood. The rate basis per property was reduced, but tax bills have overall increased due to the new tax rate that is based on valuations of the property and the tax levy being requested by the town. I support the Homestead Exemption and working closely with our Finance Committee

to make recommendations on taxes, as well as with the Finance Director and our Town Manager.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

We need to allow for dialogue to happen. We need to elect members to the Town Council who are approachable and who have proven that they are willing to go out and have these important conversations directly with small businesses and residents. We need to evaluate what policies are working and what policies are not working. Then we will course correct. I will advocate for greater transparency when decisions like introducing parking signs is being discussed. We need to find the right balance and the only way that we can do this is by encouraging to have these important conversations. Parking implications include the impact on local businesses, being able to visit a family member, public safety, amongst others. When it comes to parking, it is important to establish the needs of anyone who may be affected. I look forward to working closely with our residents and businesses to come up with viable solutions to parking and other concerns around town. When I worked at the Town Beach, we used to have a shuttle that ran from the elementary school to the beach. This is just one example of ways in which we can find creative solutions to address problems in town. A similar service can be used to support seniors in our town.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center?

Yes



Ryan J. Torrealday

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

Narragansett is a beautiful, welcoming community yet recent actions and attitudes in this town dilute this vision of what this town can be. I'm running for Town Council because I wish to make our town the best version of itself. Growing up in Saunterstown, I spent much of my time in Narragansett and was involved in this community through sports, lifeguarding, earning my Eagle Scout award from Troop 2 Narragansett, and volunteering with the Narragansett Lions Club since I was 12.

Narragansett can be the greatest place to live in RI, but our current council is leading it in the wrong direction through exclusionary ordinances and contempt for the constituents they represent. As a Town Councilor, I will listen to all members of our community and give the town the voice and representation we deserve. Respect, compromise, and common sense is what I will restore to the Town Council.

I am for repealing and updating the short term rental ordinance, down to a reasonable amount of 3,4 days/nights. I am pro coastal access and believe the anti coastal access movement is leading to the increased sentiments of elitism around our

town. I have watched the beach and river mouth be ravaged by storms and climate change and would like to use the office of Town Council to review any and all options and take action on safeguarding our beach and river mouth for generations to come.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing are houses, condos, apartments, duplexes that are affordable to families, fishermen, tradesmen, teachers, seniors, and young working professionals all under the middle class umbrella. Unfortunately, affordable housing is an issue not unique to Narragansett. It is a town, state, country-wide issue that all municipalities are facing at the moment. Locally, I would like to use the office of Town Council to petition Jack Reed, who sits on the Armed Services Committee, to decommission Fort Nathaniel Greene in favor of building housing, commercial development, and bringing further xyz to the South End of Narragansett. Fort Greene is largely unused and is ripe for redevelopment, should we be able to reclaim the land. With affordable housing being such a hot-button issue country wide, this could be a blueprint for towns and states of how to reintroduce affordable housing into

communities, if we are successful.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and Why? If not, what changes would you support?

I do not support the current short-term rental (STR) ordinance of restricting rentals to a minimum of 7 days. In my experience, renting for shorter than 4 nights leads to an increase in individuals who are using the rental property to party. Very few renters that we have rented to for shorter than 4 nights have been respectful of our property & neighbors. Besides continued vetting of renters (which all landlords and owners of STR properties should be doing), we installed a 4 night requirement on our property in an attempt to bring in more respectful renters who would not treat the property as their playground. This has seen an improved quality of renter and a reduction in issues stemming from renters, with a drastic reduction in complaints from neighbors.

I believe the current council's restriction of 7 day minimum is far too restrictive, and is cost prohibitive for some potential renters. My proposal for 4 nights lessens the barrier to entry for prospective STR renters, while still looking to maintain the moderation and respect that we should expect of tourists in our town.

Unfettered renting opens the possibility for irresponsible and disrespectful renters to come in, wreak havoc, and leave. I am open to a 3 night requirement, should other members of the council agree, but I believe 4 is the sweet spot of affordability and responsibility.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

I want to explore any and all options for beach repair. Dredging of Narrow river is an excellent start to repair the river mouth and replenish the beach, but further steps need to be taken to protect the beach and river mouth long term. I would explore options like building a breakwater alongside continued replenishment.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

I would not make any changes to the current property tax structure, except for looking to increase the tax rate on out of state investors on rental properties. With fiscal responsibility & an eye on expenses and hires, the Town Council should be able to keep

the tax rate stable and low.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

I will not pursue time limited parking along the seawall. Claiming dominion over a state road was a misstep that brought negative attention to our town and wasted taxpayer dollars on the installation and removal of signs. I would look to open the North and South parking lots to anyone on weekdays, restricting parking to residents once the lots have hit 2/3s full, and open the West lot at that point to nonresidents. On weekends, I would make the West lot open exclusively for non-residents, but would give the Beach Manager the discretion to open the North and South Lots to non-residents at 1:00, in the event the West Lot is full, and the North and South lots are not 2/3s full. By opening beach parking to nonresidents, we can try and alleviate some of the issues with parking on Ocean Road & provide revenue for Parks and Rec.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center? Only a yes/no response will be Printed

Yes



Donna Vignali

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

Through respect, empathy and active listening, I hope to bring a fresh perspective to our Town politics, encouraging individuals to share their ideas, lived experiences and concerns with the Council, knowing that their input is being heard and welcomed. I will apply a fair, inclusive, and constructive lens when representing all populations of our Narragansett community. When working collaboratively with individuals and groups, regardless of political affiliation and position on an issue, let's begin our discussions with what's working, and then work to find solutions to adjust what isn't.

I am retired from teaching after 35 years in the public school system. During that time, I proudly served as the President of the Waterbury Teachers union, representing 1500 teachers, and served as a political intern with the Connecticut Education Association. As Vice Chair of the CEA Legislative Committee, I contributed to state-wide policy while advocating for and bringing awareness to high quality education.

I am currently serving my second term as Co-President of the Rotary Club of Wakefield and embed our "Service Above Self" motto in all aspects of my life.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines "affordable housing" as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.

Housing costs in our town, to meet the affordable housing definition, are extremely limited. However, Narragansett is not unique to having an affordable housing crisis. To ensure that we can attract families to our town, housing needs to be available, and this issue needs to be addressed. Meeting the 10% affordable housing mandate set by the Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act (RIGL 45-53-1) should always be a priority.

The passing of the 3 million dollars to the Affordable Housing Trust Collaborative, which will be on the ballot in November, is a starting point to try and tackle this problem. Revisions to the recently adopted Affordable Housing Trust Collaborative by the Town Council make a multitude of well thought out recommendations which I would use as a road map in all future decisions on housing and development.

3. Do you support the current short-term rental ordinance and Why? If not, what changes would you support?

I do not support the current short-term rental ordinance as written. Although I do see the need to have some type of regulations, this newly approved ordinance was passed to favor one segment of the population in town. It was decided and voted for with very little active listening from others outside of a small fraction of the community. It is my opinion this

ordinance does not meet the needs of our town. I oppose the minimum 7-night stay and believe it is going to be detrimental to our small businesses. Although I think the number of rentals should be measured, I do not support the reductions made arbitrarily.

It has been my experience that most students living in STR's are respectful, and grateful to be living here. Of course, there are always the exceptions which cause great concern to residents and that must be dealt with. However, I do not believe limiting the number of students to 3 is the answer. Short term rentals, like affordable housing, is a complex issue, which is going to take working collaboratively, active listening and compromise on all sides, to meet the wants of the community.

4. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

Narragansett beaches are our greatest asset. Our beach is known for being the most beautiful, cleanest, and having the best waves. Maintaining our beaches must be a priority for the town. A \$147,000 study was conducted. The study looks at the current condition of the beach and makes recommendations for continued maintenance. A study was also conducted on dredging the Narrow River. Dredging the river will not only ensure the health and well-being of the river, but the 54,000 to 78,000 cubic yards of sand that is removed from the river can be spread on our beach. Seeking outside funding sources is a must. We then need to look at all

recommendations from both studies, input from town management and residents, to design a comprehensive maintenance plan which must include dealing with the environmental issues which afflict our beach.

After reviewing several years of beach surveys, I found that most beach goers are happy with the way the beach is currently being managed, however a few issues jumped out at me. I believe when discussing the beach, we need to start with what is working well and address the policies that are not. Parking and the use of cabanas and lockers seem to be a concern and warrant some discussion with stakeholders.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to the current property tax structure for residents, homeowners, investors and commercial businesses? If you support no changes, please explain your reasons.

Narragansett is one of the top 5 towns with the lowest taxes in the State. During my time here in Narragansett and currently while out knocking door to door speaking to residents, property taxes have rarely come up. So therefore, I am of the mindset, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it. The current tax structure seems to be working for people. The services provided to residents (i.e. the school district, fire and police, etc.) serve the town well, based on our tax rate. Of course, there is always room for improvement. I would support revisiting town spending, looking closely at the budget, line by line, to ensure our tax dollars are being spent to meet the needs of the town.

I support the Homestead tax credit and Senior tax credit and working to keep our taxes low. This is an area where I will seek and welcome input from the Finance Dept. and other town departments that are knowledgeable about the budget and the process.

6. How will you address balancing the parking needs of residents, businesses, and visitors?

First and foremost, I do not support timed parking or putting signs up by our beautiful beach wall. I see parking as a seasonal problem, and I think we need to address it as such. We must take a hard look at the parking policies currently in place for the beach. I believe part of the solution to our parking problems lies there. Next, we need to look at all signage that currently exists around the entire Pier area to ensure that parking patterns meet the needs of the residents, the families wanting to visit the park, and visitors wanting to visit established and new businesses May through October.

I support finishing the bike path to the beach. Parking is an issue that is going to require input from all facets of the community, and all suggestions must be considered to find a possible solution.

7. Yes/No: Will you continue to share and pay for services with the South Kingstown Senior Center?

Yes



Narragansett General Election Candidates

NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Jennifer E. Armstrong
Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I question how we can be better as a school district. I believe that the current Narragansett school committee isn't looking at all the ways we can help EACH child reach their education potential. We need a school committee to be more passionate about meeting EVERY student's needs and advocating for the families that express they need more help. There are many families that have concerns for their child. We have many families choosing private schools over Narragansett because they just aren't satisfied with the personal attention their child needs. This is contributing to the declining enrollment each year. We are a small district, with the money the town allocates to the schools for teachers and administration we should be able to meet each child's needs and customize for them. We need to do better. In order to do that we will need to elect new committee members.

The skill and knowledge I have in education and in teaching in another district sheds light on what can be done more efficiently. I have children in the schools and see first hand what they learn, how they learn and what changes need to be made in the 21st century for the students to learn better. I volunteer for the schools, local churches and support many other local organizations. My family supports the success of the community by investing in the town in running

a small business. We talk with so many who we serve and we love our community.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

The discussion among professional educators, librarians, parents and our community on issues of curriculum development and books in the classroom in my opinion is a needed one. We should always be questioning sources in which the students have to use to develop their minds and not just when book bans are suggested. I don't think we should be shy in asking for conversations for our opinions to be heard. I do think it needs to be done in an organized way with a committee of educational, community, students and family stakeholders. We need to embrace these opportunities to grow forward in public education.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

I support the educational health of all students including transgender students!! In a teacher and humans' eyes, the health and safety while at school and during school and community event of all students no matter what classification they profess is Paramount! I think the Narragansett

school system needs to do more in helping make sure the needs of all students are met and that they are not treated differently. I do think there is a fine line in dictating to the families beyond the education setting. We need to respect boundaries the students and families express they need in each individual situation. This is no different from any other aspect of education and we need to do better for the families at helping to create less stigma among our local community.

4. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience

School Resource Officers are extremely important in not only keeping the school physically safe with their training and ability to handle intruders, but also for the connection they make with the children during every school day. The connections I have seen with my own children at the elementary level are truly ones of respect and appreciation. At the upper levels my view is that anything that can add a safety barrier on many levels to keep the school safe is a must in this society. I believe connections are made on the middle and high school level as well to help respect the safety of ourselves

and our community and important bonds are formed. This to me is school budget money well spent!

5. With declining enrollment,

how should the budget be adjusted? What opportunities exist for collaboration with other communities?

We lost many students over the past term. Most want to blame the real estate market, air b and b, and off campus housing but that truly isn't the whole story. Those factors do make it more difficult but I don't believe that is why the biggest part of enrollment has

decreased. After gathering information from families, I do believe if we were able to satisfy the students and families that choose private school and home school over NPS our numbers wouldn't nearly be as low. The only place to cut the budget would be in upper administration. I wouldn't cut teachers. We have teachers and staff who have dedicated their careers to Narragansett. I would worry that if we cut positions top step teachers would have a hard time finding a job to finish out their careers. However, we are coming to a crossroads. I would like my children to go through Narragansett schools and not merge with another district so if the budget has to be cut I would urge the superintendent to cut money that doesn't directly affect the face to face instruction of the students, teachers and specialized staff must stay! If we were to merge with another district I believe we should engage in conversations with our neighboring Jamestown who has a very similar demographic as us and does not have a dedicated high school for all of their students to go to.

6. What benefits should Narragansett provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract and keep the best teaching professionals in our school system?

We have so many wonderful educators in our town! Being an educator I believe there are needs to retain and attract other highly qualified educators and that the best way to determine what the majority would want and need come collective bargaining time would be to survey them. However I would have a few suggestions as to what to offer. 1. Offer for their children to attend our schools so that the educator can feel like they have more ease in their child and themselves being in the same community for convenience! I do think the pay structure for teachers in our town is competitive compared to surrounding towns for a 10 month position but I would be willing to look at the current rate of inflation and come up with some ways to adjust wages to give them a little more wiggle room. The amount of sick days an educator will need to take now that Covid exists has increased with no more State Regulated Quarantine so I might suggest the addition of an day or two to sick days for themselves and to care for their children.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Diane S. Nobles
Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

During my term in office, I will continue to work to ensure that we offer all our students a quality education, our community an educated and productive graduate; and that we accomplish this at a price that is affordable to our town's taxpayers. Every student crossing the stage to receive a Narragansett High School Diploma needs to be prepared to be successful in their next endeavor; be that, college, the workforce, and/or military service.

Since returning to Rhode Island in 2001, I have been involved in our community and state through professional and volunteer activities. Having served on the Narragansett School Committee since 2004, I have been Vice-Chair, Clerk, Parliamentarian, on the Policy Subcommittee, Negotiations Subcommittee and the representative to the RI Association of School Committees. I was appointed by the Town Council to serve on the Charter Review Commission and Historical Cemetery Commission, appointed by the state to serve on the RI School-to-Career Advisory Board, State Scholars Program Advisory Committee and the Advisory Board of the Exeter Job Corps Center. In addition, I am a member and officer of the South County Museum Board of Directors, Steere House Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, The Seasons Assisted Living, a member of St. Peter's by the Sea, a volunteer usher at Theatre by the Sea and on the Event Staff of URI's Ryan Center. I have thirty-five years experience in workforce education program development/implementation and at-risk student program administration and earned a PhD in HRD from Texas A&M University.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Our Narragansett School District has long had a transparent policy in regards to the selection of curriculum/instructional and library materials. Due to this policy approach, it has allowed our district to avoid many of the difficulties encountered by

other school districts in the state and around the country, centered upon contemporary, controversial cultural issues. Our policy is based upon the objectives of the Standards for School Media Programs and the policy objectives for selection of library/media center materials are 'to support the school's educational philosophy, enrich and reinforce the school's curriculum and provide materials for pleasurable and recreational reading. There will be available a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal and the presentation of different points of view.' The responsibility for the selection of library materials rests with the school's Library/Media Specialist. However, suggestions and requests can involve administrators, teachers, parents and students.

Our Curriculum Director, in conjunction with administrators and teachers, serve on content based Curriculum Committees, which extensively review and pilot various instructional resources. Based upon the results of their usage, the Curriculum Director, in conjunction with the Superintendent, recommends the purchase and adopting of the recommended curriculum products to the School Committee. The Narragansett School System's curriculum for PK - Grade 12, including the academic standards and content units, is available on the district's website (nssk.org)

Our Selection of Instructional Materials Policy outlines a process to address any complaints or objections to library and/or curriculum materials.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

It goes without saying that all School Committees, in Rhode Island and all states, have a responsibility to ensure a safe and supportive school environment for all of their students. In order to have a safe and supportive learning environment for all students, schools need to be free of discrimination and harassment in regards to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

RIDE's Transgender, Gender Diverse and Transitioning Policy is designed to address these issues and provide guidance to the state's School Districts. Upon reviewing

the RIDE Policy, it is clear that it was developed to conform to historical precedent and existing state law. The Rhode Island State Constitution's Article 1, Section 2, adopted in 1842, states "No otherwise qualified person shall, solely by reason of race, gender or handicap be subject to discrimination by the state..." State laws supporting the policy include RIGL 11-24-2, adopted in 2001, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression; RIGL 16-38-1.1, which echoes Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, states "Discrimination on the basis of sex is hereby prohibited in all public elementary and secondary schools in the state..."

Although I agree with the RIDE Policy, as described above in principle, I part ways with it in allowing males, identifying as females, to participate in sports that involve speed and strength. To me, it is a matter of safety and fairness for the girls and just plain common sense to prohibit that situation from occurring.

4. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience

Our Narragansett School District is fortunate to have a School Resource Officer (SRO) in each of our schools. They are needed for many reasons including: 1. to help ensure a safe and secure learning environment, 2. to provide guidance and advice to school administrators in preparation for special events, 3. to build positive relationships with students and staff, and 4. to provide age appropriate safety presentations for students. Also, our SRO's work with our Director of Operations and administrators in the development, review, and updating of the District's Safety Plan and each individual School's Safety Plan. The SRO in each school serves on that school's Emergency Response Team and is involved in the conducting and review of emergency drills for the students.

Our SRO's are members of the Community Police Division of the Narragansett Police Department; so they have completed their training to become a Law Enforcement Officer and graduated from the Police Academy. However, before being assigned to be a SRO, the police officer must successfully complete an additional

forty (40) hours of training, including de-escalation of violent situations. According to RIGL 16-7.2-6, 'SRO's are required to have completed 40 hours of specialized training in school policing, administered by an accredited agency, before being assigned to a school.'

Along with the four reasons above, SRO's and local law enforcement are valuable because they work cooperatively with our Director of Operations in 'hardening' our school's campus and buildings by protecting them through the installation of security devices and equipment.

5. With declining enrollment, how should the budget be adjusted? What opportunities exist for collaboration with other communities?

The Narragansett School Committee holds two public budget workshops: the first to hear the budget needs of the Director of Curriculum, Director of Student Services and the Principals of each school; and, the second to hear the budget needs of the Director of Technology, Director of Operations and Director of Transportation. Upon hearing and questioning their budget needs, the district budget is drafted keeping in mind budget considerations, such as, a 2.8% proposed reduction in State Aid, end of ESSER (federal Covid monies), projected enrollment decline, and cost of contractual obligations. These realities must be taken into account, while at the same time, keeping focused upon our School Committee Goals of strengthening our academic programs, ensuring a safe, secure learning environment, investing in faculty and staff and encouraging student engagement in learning.

It is always an important priority to produce a fiscally realistic and responsible budget that will be acceptable to Narragansett taxpayers. In response to declining enrollment, there was personnel reduction of 4.25 positions. However, this past school year, our five Career and Technical Education Programs have accounted for 112 incoming tuition students from other districts with only 34 of our students outgoing. The budget is a 2.01% increase from the previous year, which is well under the year over year CPI of 3.40%. The school portion comprises only 44% of the total town budget; which is the lowest of any school district in the state. We collab-

orate on faculty instructional rounds with other districts.

6. What benefits should Narragansett provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract and keep the best teaching professionals in our school system?

Teaching professionals, like most all professionals, want to keep apprised of and be knowledgeable of the important trends and research findings that could be incorporated into improving their pedagogy. The leadership of the Narragansett School System recognizes the importance of meaningful professional development for faculty and professional staff.

At the beginning of the new school year, there are three full days of professional development, including a Convocation. If you are new to our district, there are an additional two days of Orientation at the beginning of the school year. However, professional development does not stop with the conclusion of the 'official' professional development days. Rather, it is ongoing during the school year and into the summer. Faculty and professional staff have opportunities to attend relevant conferences and participate in collaborative instructional rounds at other school districts. There is an annual Summer Curriculum Academy, where members of Vertical Alignment Teams integrate adoption of new or updated curricula. As part of the District's continuous improvement cycle, the Curriculum and Professional Development Council works throughout the school year to design professional learning, pilot educational resources and decide on new or revised curriculum projects. In addition, the Superintendent selects a common book for faculty and staff to read and leads group discussions on instructional strategies and approaches.

Our District is widely recognized as an excellent place to work, one that provides many opportunities for professional growth and expects our faculty to provide high quality instruction to challenge our students and increase their academic achievement.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Gregory V. Lato

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I have an extensive history of service. It all began while serving the country as an aircraft firefighter in the United States Navy for 4 years. I am also a children's book author and award-winning family music artist. I perform for children at schools, bookstores, libraries and family themed events. My music has been streamed over half a million times around the world, I had an album in the top 10 on the iTunes chart, and I'm a member of the Grammy Recording Academy. I have also volunteered to conduct songwriting workshops with the Girl Scouts of Rhode Island.

I am running for school committee to carry on this tradition of service to my community with emphasis on making a positive difference for both students and teachers. My focus areas will be on maintaining a safe and inclusive school environment, supporting music, theater and sports programs, fiscal responsibility,

budget transparency, embracing new technology, finding creative and innovative ways to increase enrollment, and helping to ensure that Narragansett continues to have one of the top school districts in Rhode Island.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Balancing those opinions requires a thoughtful and inclusive approach with educators, librarians, parents and potentially students to ensure diverse perspectives. Open communication is important. Fostering an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their opinions and listening to others, providing opportunity for feedback, considering multiple viewpoints, establishing a process for addressing disagreements and finding mutually acceptable solutions.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender,

Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

Yes, I do support the current policy in Rhode Island. I am all for creating a safe and inclusive school environment for all students. Respecting students' gender identity, inclusive facilities, educating staff on supporting transgender and gender-diverse students and encouraging parent-school collaboration while respecting students' autonomy are all important. This would all need to be done in a way that does not make any of the other students feel uncomfortable.

4. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience?

I am in favor of School Resource officers in all schools. They should require specialized training and they do. By RI State Law, they are to complete a 40-hour course for specialized training in school policing, adminis-

tered by an accredited agency. That is in addition to their normal police training. Some important aspects of this training would be adolescent development, de-escalation techniques, crisis intervention, mental health response, and cultural diversity. As far as how it impacts the students' experience, it provides them with a sense of security, offers mentorship and guidance, and facilitates positive relationships between law enforcement and students.

5. With declining enrollment, how should the budget be adjusted? What opportunities exist for collaboration with other communities?

I am all for finding creative and innovative ways to increase enrollment, but in the meantime, we must prioritize essential needs like instruction, student and teacher support, technology that improves student outcomes, the physical condition of our schools and safety. As far as collaboration with other communities, there are definitely opportunities to look at in terms of joint programming,

for example, offering shared courses, extracurricular activities and professional development. Also, community partnerships, for example, leveraging local organizations, businesses, and higher education institutions for resources and expertise.

6. What benefits should Narragansett provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract the best teaching professionals in our school system?

To attract and retain top teaching professionals, we should be offering competitive salaries and benefits, professional development opportunities, mentorship programs, recognition and rewards, wellness initiatives, a positive work environment, constructive feedback and open communication channels.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Narragansett General Election Candidates

NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Tammy McNeiece
Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am very excited to seek re-election to the Narragansett School Committee. I have been the Chairperson of the School Committee for the past 16 years. I hold 3 degrees in the field of Education, and I also have 23 years of experience as a teacher and school administrator. I am also the proud parent of 2 Narragansett High School graduates.

I have worked hard with my colleagues on the School Committee to write policies and develop a responsible annual budget that supports the needs and priorities in our district development plan, and provides all students with a personalized learning experience to support each student's unique talents and skills. I advocate for high expectations because I know our students can achieve greatness with the right support and challenges. Additionally, continuing to develop long-term plans to maintain our school facilities is a top priority for me. Maintaining and improving our school facilities is crucial to providing a safe and conducive learning environment for students. I am eager to continue to support a learning

community where every student feels valued and supported to thrive academically and socially.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Schools should have clear guidelines, procedures and policies for book selection that relies on the expertise of professional educators and librarians, and also outlines a process for parents and guardians to give input. Having a clear policy for stakeholders to give input can help build trust and understanding among stakeholders. The goal should be to select curriculum resources and a library collection that meets the educational needs of students, includes a variety of viewpoints, and promotes inclusivity and diversity. In Narragansett we have a clear policy that outlines this process for stakeholders.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

that the school system is run in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure that students continue to have access to exceptional facilities, teachers, resources, and activities, ultimately producing well rounded, community-minded citizens for the future of Narragansett.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

The trained professional educators in our schools have been entrusted by the community with the responsibility of curriculum development and learning material selection for our students. These books and curricula are designed to ensure that our students develop the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking capabilities necessary to become productive members of society. These educators are accountable for the school's curriculum and must ensure that it not only achieves this goal but is also aligned with the values of our community. When the community feels that the curriculum is not aligned with its values, it is important that they have a process to bring this to the administration's attention for review. Given the diversity of viewpoints in our town, this process should be designed for the community as a whole, rather than for any indi-

As a School Committee member I wholeheartedly support all of RIDE's policies that support LGBTQ students and the promotion of inclusive learning environments. Our classrooms need to be safe and welcoming to all students. By implementing policies that support transgender students, we are creating learning environments where all students can feel safe and excel.

4. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience?

I fully support the need for School Resource Officers (SROs). The safety and well being of all students and staff are top priorities to me. Students need to feel safe and cared for to achieve at high levels. School Resource Officers play a critical role in helping to maintain a safe, secure positive learning environment. SROs are valuable resources for students and families, providing mentorship and support, and helping to build positive relationships between students and law enforcement. SROs contribute in a positive way to improve safety in schools that includes a multi-tiered approach that

includes prevention, intervention and response. During this last term the school department partnered with the town to support an additional School Resource Officer, allowing an SRO to work at every school in Narragansett. We are grateful to have this partnership with the town, to ensure a safe learning environment at every school for students and staff.

5. With declining enrollment, how should the budget be adjusted? What opportunities exist for collaboration with other communities?

Adjusting the budget in response to declining enrollment while preserving programs is challenging but necessary. The needs of students and goals in the district strategic plan need to remain at the forefront. However, during budget season a comprehensive review of current programs, resources and staffing levels must be completed to identify areas to make adjustments without compromising the quality of teaching and learning. The school department should always be open to exploring collaboration and cost-saving measures, especially partnering with our town on projects, services or vendor contracts whenever possible.

6. What benefits should Narragansett provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract and keep the best teaching professionals in our school system?

Supporting and retaining talented teachers and staff can be achieved by offering different types of benefits, in addition to competitive salaries. Highly skilled talented teachers want to work in positive, professional learning communities where they can continue to grow and learn new and innovative approaches to teaching. Providing teachers with high-quality professional development opportunities can support their professional growth and enhance job satisfaction and retention. Establishing mentoring programs and support networks for new teachers can also help to attract and retain new staff members. We can also continue to promote work-life balance for staff by promoting wellness programs and other initiatives for staff.

7. Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



David Pavone

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am an experienced business technology leader with a demonstrated history of success building diverse teams to solve the world's most difficult technical challenges. I reside in Narragansett with my wife Megan, and our three children Ben, Emma, and Jacob. All three of my children attend Narragansett Schools and are active in both the classroom and a wide range of extracurricular activities. My wife, Megan, is an active participant and board member of the Narragansett Parent Teacher Organization.

I want to ensure that our schools continue to have access to outstanding teachers who deliver high-quality educational programs in a safe and nurturing environment. Our schools should reflect our community standards by promoting inclusivity, diversity, and respect while fostering critical thinking, creativity and love for learning. I am committed to supporting a broad range of extracurricular activities and programs, including sports, the arts and STEM activities, to ensure that every student has the opportunity to explore their interests and develop their talents.

I will also ensure fairness, transparency and an open dialog between the school board and the community. Additionally, I will take care to ensure

that the school system is run in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure that students continue to have access to exceptional facilities, teachers, resources, and activities, ultimately producing well rounded, community-minded citizens for the future of Narragansett.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

The trained professional educators in our schools have been entrusted by the community with the responsibility of curriculum development and learning material selection for our students. These books and curricula are designed to ensure that our students develop the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking capabilities necessary to become productive members of society. These educators are accountable for the school's curriculum and must ensure that it not only achieves this goal but is also aligned with the values of our community. When the community feels that the curriculum is not aligned with its values, it is important that they have a process to bring this to the administration's attention for review. Given the diversity of viewpoints in our town, this process should be designed for the community as a whole, rather than for any indi-

vidual community member, unless that individual possesses unique accreditation or other qualifications that allow them to speak as an expert on the topic. In the end, our goal is to ensure that our students develop a lifelong love of learning and become productive members of our diverse global community.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

Yes, I absolutely support the guidance produced by the Rhode Island Department of Education on transgender and gender nonconforming students. We are entrusted with providing all students with a high-quality education. It is paramount for our students' success that they feel safe and supported in the school environment, regardless of gender or gender conformity. If we cannot ensure that our students are safe and free from discrimination, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, then how can we expect them to grow, thrive, and learn within our schools?

4. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience?

School Resource Officers (SROs)

play a vital role in ensuring the safety and security of our schools. It is crucial that our students and staff feel protected while at school, and equally important that parents have confidence in their children's safety. Beyond their visible presence and on-site crisis management, SROs collaborate with school administration to develop, implement, and maintain comprehensive safety plans.

When it comes to training, it is imperative that we have the most qualified and highly trained officers in these positions. This specialized training ensures that SROs are not only skilled but also genuinely passionate about their role in safeguarding our schools.

5. With declining enrollment, how should the budget be adjusted? What opportunities exist for collaboration with other communities?

It is important that, with declining enrollment, we adjust the school budget organically according to the district's needs. The school district should always be run in a fiscally responsible manner, and we need to hold our administration accountable for achieving net positive results from our investments. We must also recognize that our community is unique, with many second homes and rentals, making it difficult to measure Narragansett's school budget in the same way one would in a non-resort community. We should explore all opportunities to partner

with like-minded communities. Such partnerships must be net-beneficial for both parties, but they are worth exploring.

6. What benefits should Narragansett provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract and keep the best teaching professionals in our school system?

We seek educators who have a genuine passion for teaching, particularly within the Narragansett community. We value teachers and staff who are adaptable, flexible, and responsive to the evolving needs of our district. We are looking for individuals who can serve as positive role models for our students and who are deeply committed to nurturing the development of our children's skills and talents.

When we find the right candidates, it is essential that we reward them with competitive wages, excellent facilities, opportunities for continued professional development, and the support they need to thrive both professionally and personally. Furthermore, we are committed to ensuring that our community stands behind their efforts, fully integrating our educators into all aspects of community life.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Justin Wolf Skenyon
Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am an active member of the school committee, serve on the technology subcommittee and hope to continue to work to enable our students to navigate and utilize emerging new technology. We have successfully pulled out of covid with Narragansett ranking as one of the top education systems in the state. My main priority is to maintain our standards and build upon our success to improve where possible. I have lived in Narragansett my whole life, I originally joined the school the committee to bring the student perspective, I'm local, I'm here and I listen.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

libraries?

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

If elected, I aim to foster open dialogue on all subjects, with a strong focus on students' well-being and mental health care access. My 20 years of experience as a Teacher Assistant and Office Personnel have given me a deep understanding of the challenges that students, teachers, parents, and administrators face daily. This background allows me to bring a unique perspective and trusted input when it comes to finding effective solutions.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

We currently have a wonderful system in place with our School Improvement Team (SIT) program, where teachers, parents, and administrators collaborate effectively. I fully support this approach. Our Curriculum Director has done an incredible job of balancing the curriculum, and I would rely on her expertise and feedback to continue enhancing our educational programs and continue that approach in making my decision if needed in what books would continue to stay in our school libraries.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

As a committee member I have already worked and created a policy that according to RIDE is, "both accessible and comprehensive, reflecting a clear commitment to equitable support for students who identify as transgender. Furthermore, it aligns with federal and state statutes, ensuring compliance with legal requirements." Not only am I a sup-

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

As a committee member I have already worked and created a policy that according to RIDE is, "both accessible and comprehensive, reflecting a clear commitment to equitable support for students who identify as transgender. Furthermore, it aligns with federal and state statutes, ensuring compliance with legal requirements." Not only am I a sup-

portive of this policy but have already accomplished it goal. This is part of my long-standing effort to support and provide all students with the best environment we can offer.

4. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience?

School resource officers provide a valuable resource for the safety of our students in school. Our resource officers are well trained, as we have partnered with the Narragansett police department to ensure we have highly qualified staff interacting with our students.

5. With declining enrollment, how should the budget be adjusted? What opportunities exist for collaboration with other communities?

Our school budget is created to address the needs of our students

within the district. The goal is to provide all students with the ability to achieve high standards of learning in a safe student-centered environment. As most Narragansett residents are aware, one of our unique challenges is our declining student enrollment. The committee has been dealing with the impact of low student enrollments with a collaborative, respectful student focused approach. There are multiple opportunities for collaboration, for example we are currently participating in a collaboration agreement with Jamestown for our high school. Narragansett has also created one of the most successful career and technical education programs in the state. This program has attracted students from around the state. As a school committee member, I will do my due diligence addressing these and the many other issues as they arise.

6. What benefits should Narragansett provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract and keep the best teaching professionals in our school system?

Our teachers play the most essential role in our students' education. Attracting and retaining excellent professional staff is my priority. I will work to maintain fair salaries, professional opportunities and a respectful, safe working environment. From my experience, teachers look for opportunities to further their own education. The Narragansett school system provides for their teachers to participate in professional development, attend conferences and experiment with new material. I will continue to utilize my time as a school committee member to ensure that these opportunities continue.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Carolyn J. Tudino

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

If elected, I aim to foster open dialogue on all subjects, with a strong focus on students' well-being and mental health care access. My 20 years of experience as a Teacher Assistant and Office Personnel have given me a deep understanding of the challenges that students, teachers, parents, and administrators face daily. This background allows me to bring a unique perspective and trusted input when it comes to finding effective solutions.

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We currently have a wonderful system in place with our School Improvement Team (SIT) program, where teachers, parents, and administrators collaborate effectively. I fully support this approach. Our Curriculum Director has done an incredible job of balancing the curriculum, and I would rely on her expertise and feedback to continue enhancing our educational programs and continue that approach in making my decision if needed in what books would continue to stay in our school libraries.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

I support the current Rhode Island Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student Policy as I believe it is essential that all educational agencies provide every individual with full access to educational opportunities, ensuring that any barriers to student participation based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression are identified and removed. Every student, without exception, deserves the right to attend a school where they feel safe and free to express their identity without fear.

4. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience?

I fully support the School Resource Officers (SROs) in our schools because they play a vital role in the student experience. Having SROs at each school helps students learn to respect and build positive relation-

ships with police officers, fostering a sense of trust and approachability. In today's world, where safety is a growing concern, it's essential to continue this program and ensure that SROs receive ongoing training. This not only enhances their ability to protect our students but also helps create a safer, more supportive school environment where students feel comfortable seeking help when needed.

5. With declining enrollment, how should the budget be adjusted? What opportunities exist for collaboration with other communities?

I am open to speaking with colleagues and discussing options for budget adjustments and collaboration. However, these matters must be addressed in conjunction with the new Town Council as we move forward. I am committed to bringing transparency, an open mind, and

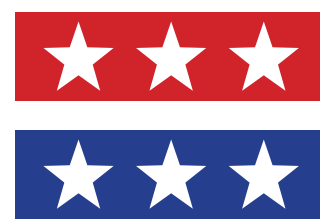
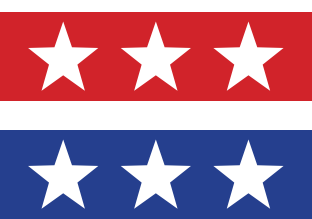
my experience in understanding the needs of students to the table with every decision I make.

6. What benefits should Narragansett provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract and keep the best teaching professionals in our school system?

We should continue offer the competitive salary of a top rated school in RI with the following: Continuing to have open dialog with teachers for their needs Continuing with the Surveys Celebrate their teaching achievements and efforts

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Candidate did not respond with a yes or no answer.



North Kingstown General Election Candidates

NORTH KINGSTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Linnea Drew
Democrat

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am a champion of safe and healthy communities and will do everything I can to further promote that in North Kingstown. This includes supporting further improvements to the town parks, expanding recreation opportunities for town residents of all ages, and investing in climate change mitigations that impact the safety of our roads, land, and water. I am also a pragmatist who is dedicated to making sure that these community achievements are balanced in terms of cost and priority. In terms of experience, I spent several years working in community pediatric asthma education around Rhode Island and currently work in cancer clinical research, so I understand how to work with many and varied stakeholders

as well as how to prioritize the critical needs of vulnerable populations in a community. As a parent of young children, I am often "at" the town parks and appreciate the improvements but also have thoughts about what we can do even better. And as a working parent, I think about what things cost and what's most important to households like mine on a daily basis.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing simply means that all members of our community can afford to live here in North Kingstown. But I very much mean "all" members of the community - single parents, families with a low income, seniors who have lived here for years. We need to ensure that affordable housing is included as new housing continues to be built in our town and

that we don't raise taxes above what people with fixed or low incomes can afford. The Town Council has done a good job in recent years of keeping tax increases below the rate of inflation and we should continue to do that.

3. What ideas do you have for improving life in North Kingstown?

I would like to see North Kingstown expand upon its reputation as an amazing place to live. I think we can expand the recreation offerings to residents of all ages and abilities to create additional active and creative opportunities for kids and adults at affordable prices. I would like to see the walkability and safe cycling ability of the town increase. I would also like to see some revitalization along the Post Rd stretch north of Wickford; many of these commercial buildings and lots have been severely neglected, and while much of that is down

to the owners of those properties, I would like to see the town explore any available options for intervening.

4. How would you work to prepare the town for the long and short term impacts of climate changes? Please be specific.

I think the Town Council can and should continue to address vulnerable areas in our physical infrastructure - namely, roads and lots that flood or are losing physical integrity due to erosion and temperature changes. Additionally, as storms become more severe with climate change, I think we should explore whether there are any programs the town could implement to assist homeowners with the costs of tree maintenance to reduce the interruption to roads and power from fallen trees and limbs.

5. What opportunities do you see

for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

If elected, I am in favor of exploring any opportunities for collaboration between municipalities that could benefit residents and/or reduce costs.

6. Yes / No:

a. Do you support a \$60M bond to build a new safety complex?

Yes

b. Do you support a \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

Yes



Gregory A. Mancini
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I hope to work cooperatively with the other members of the council and school committee to develop a town budget that fully funds all our town departments and provides the resources to the school committee that will provide for a quality education to the children of our community with little or no adverse impact to taxpayers every year of my term.

The community and life experiences I bring to public office include being a husband of a local business owner, a father of 3 North Kingstown High School graduates, a lawyer that represents working people as well as parents of children with educational disabilities, and being bestowed the honor of town council president for the past 6 years. During that time, the councils I have been a part of have always fully funded town government services and provided the resources needed to the school committee/department for a quality education to the students of our community without ever raising taxes more than the rate of inflation, including no tax increase this year. This is a track record I hope to continue if re-elected.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing is generally defined by a household's ability to pay for their housing based on a percentage of their gross income—usually defined by 30% or less. Currently, there is not nearly enough such housing in our state.

To date, our town has 1,013 affordable units with another 267 under construction. On a percentage basis, this is one of highest number affordable units of any municipality in the state. To accomplish this we have tried to concentrate development and incentivize affordable housing in the more densely populated areas that have the infrastructure to handle it. For example, we require 15% affordable housing in the Wickford Junction area, up to 20% in the Post Road district, and 10% in virtually every other area. In addition, in conservation developments we allow for density bonuses based on the size of the unit and/or if there is a 55 and older component, and we also promote longer affordability deed restrictions (up to 99 years). We further try to incentive redevelopment over development of green spaces. And where appropriate we also allow for ADU units. We do this while being mindful of our groundwater overlay protection areas to ensure that our drinking water resources remain fully protected.

This is a complex issue however and more needs to be done. So, we will continue to work with other communities and the general assembly to

continue to improve legislation and rewrite our ordinances to address this crisis.

3. What ideas do have for improving life in North Kingstown?

As it relates to the town council, the most important ideas I have is for the council is to continue to do its job well. That means providing excellent traditional government services at the lowest reasonable cost to the taxpayer. This includes reliable public safety and senior services, having numerous high quality recreational options, ensuring that our town infrastructure is appropriately maintained, developing strategies to address climate change, and providing the resources needed for a good quality education to NK students. Again, all at the lowest reasonable cost to the taxpayer.

In addition, the council has put 2 questions on the ballot this Fall, 1 for a new public safety complex, and 1 for our schools. Approval of both of these questions by the taxpayers will undoubtedly improve the life of our community.

4. Who would work to prepare the town for the long and short term impacts of climate changes? Please be specific.

Climate change is the biggest existential threat to coastal communities like North Kingstown—it must be addressed. To date, the town has

completed numerous measures. We put a tidal gauge in Wickford harbor to measure the effects of tidal increases, put sewers in Wickford, passed a plastic bag ordinance, hosted Arbor Day that has resulted in numerous new trees in and around town, supported the Revolution Wind project, was a primary participant in the EPA planning workshop for a climate resilient economy, participated in the state municipal resilience program, conducted an energy audit of town buildings, distributed rain barrels free of charge to residents, constructed EV charging stations, tried to develop a town solar project, instituted remote net metering, assisted with the construction of the Mill Cove footbridge, had regular conversations with RIPTA regarding bus energy alternatives and DOT about bike lanes to and from the train station at Wickford Junction, we will put before the voters a school bond question in November that requires the project be built "net zero", and we are currently constructing a new sea wall in the Wickford municipal parking lot.

But we must do more to meet the state's Act on Climate goals. This includes looking at solar opportunities on town properties, educating the public about renewable energy opportunities in the newly proposed energy aggregation program, and continuing our conversations with DOT to develop more in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to make it easier to find other ways than cars to

get around town.

5. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget/ contain costs?

At our last council meeting, my peers on the council appointed me to represent our town on the Washington County Regional Planning Council, an organization that includes all of the municipalities of Washington County. I see this as an ideal opportunity to collaborate with these municipalities to discuss how we can reduce and/or contain our mutual municipal government costs as well as collaborate on issues relating to climate change or any other related matter affecting our municipalities. Accordingly, I plan to have a discussion with the other municipal representatives at these meetings to address these issues at our future meetings.

6. Yes/No:

a. Do you support a \$60 million bond to build a new safety complex?

Yes

b. Do you support \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

Yes



Lawrence C. Mandel
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am running for re-election to North Kingstown's Town Council because while we have accomplished much over the past two years, there is much yet to do. For over 30 years I served as a U.S. diplomat, and that experience taught me the value of compromise and working together to accomplish our highest priority needs and goals. I believe in the importance of communications, which is why I host monthly Office Hours, and post summaries of Town Council meetings on social media.

Over the past two years we have upgraded recreational facilities, seen to the implementation of stop lights on Boston Neck Road, strengthened communication with the School Department, and passed a responsi-

ble budget without increasing taxes. We still need to build new police/fire stations, replace a dilapidated middle school, and make improvements to the municipal parking lot behind Brown Street, Yorktown Park, and traffic patterns on Route 4. We have scaled back the size and design of a new middle school and dropped plans for an indoor recreation center out of concern for the financial impact on our residents.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

We need housing that is affordable by our essential employees - our teachers, police and firefighters, nurses, municipal workers, and others.

The shortage of affordable housing is not just a town issue, a state issue or even a national one - it is worldwide at this point. Realistically Council

cannot solve this problem, but we can encourage our state representatives to enact policies and provide targeted funding. Developments like Reynolds Farm and other projects in the pipeline will help, but much more needs to be done.

3. What ideas do you have for improving life in North Kingstown?

Our community is extremely lucky to have so many different components - residential, business, industrial, recreational, the bay, etc. There is a need to balance all those aspects. I favor a business-friendly environment on Post Road, creating additional housing units at the Wickford Train Station, and maintaining rural and agricultural land where it exists. Quonset remains a major employer and we retain tax-like payments from the businesses located there, and more job creation stands to benefit

us all.

4. How would you work to prepare the town for the long and short term impacts of climate changes? Please be specific.

The currently ongoing construction at the municipal parking lot off Brown St is a major project to respond to climate change, designed to reduce flooding in Wickford. We funded a town tidal gauge as an important reminder of the impact of rising tides. We support a community group that is sponsoring Conversations on Climate Change at the library, bringing in five experts to share their ideas. We will continue to seek expertise, obtain grants and advocate for our citizens with state and federal officials.

5. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain

costs? Please be specific.

Recently Town Council voted to seat one of our members on the Washington County Planning Council, to seek opportunities for more cooperation. Realistically we are too big to consolidate our schools, police or fire departments, but we coordinate closely with other communities and will continue to seek ways to work together wherever feasible.

6. Yes / No:

a. Do you support a \$60M bond to build a new safety complex?

Yes

b. Do you support a \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

Yes



Matthew B. McCoy
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

If re-elected to a second term of office, I will deliver balanced budgets for fiscal years 2026 and 2027; ensure that property tax rates increases, if any, are minimized and that the town's tax exemptions are reviewed annually and adjusted, as practicable; support investments in public education, including the modernization and capital improvements of North Kingstown's K-12 schools; support investments in public safety, including providing the town's first responders with the tools, equipment, infrastructure, and resources that they need to be successful in their mission to keep the citizens of our community safe and to respond to incidents within the Quonset Business Park and the Port of Davisville.

I bring 63 years of life experience to the office of town councilor, including almost two years as an incumbent member of the North Kingstown Town Council. I bring the experience of having completed a K-12 public education. I bring the leadership and management experience attained during a successful 23-year career in the United States Navy. I bring 13-years of business acumen attained during my career working on a major defense acquisition program for a Fortune 500 aerospace and defense company. I bring the perspective of someone who has travelled extensively throughout the world and who has lived with his family in the United States, Japan, and England.

I have served since December 2022. I stand by my public record. Links to videos of town council meetings and meeting minutes may be found on my campaign website: www.mccoy4nktc.com.

2. What does affordable housing

mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

The term "affordable housing" means housing in which the residents are not cost burdened or spending more than 30% of their income in housing costs. Unfortunately, the number of cost burdened households in North Kingstown and Rhode Island has been increasing. According to the 2023 Housing Factbook published by HousingWorksRI, there were an estimated 1,066 renter households and 1,672 owner households out of 11,169 total households in North Kingstown that were cost burdened. Statewide, there were an estimated 71,472 renter households and 70,998 owner households out of 426,769 total households in Rhode Island. This is one of the reasons that the Rhode Island General Assembly and governor enacted many affordable housing related bills during the last legislative session.

I supported the initiative to permit Accessory Dwelling Units within Rhode Island. I would like to see more ADUs constructed in North Kingstown, where appropriate. I also believe that we need more one- and two-bedroom apartments and multi-family homes in town. We need affordable housing for working adults and seniors.

One thing that the town can do is to update the current tax exemptions to adjust for inflation, especially the elderly tax and 100% service-disabled veteran exemptions. I'd also like to see a new tax exemption for municipal employees. Those that work for the town should be able to afford to live in the town.

3. What ideas do you have for improving life in North Kingstown?

First and foremost, I believe that life in North Kingstown would be improved by continuing to promote and

foster diversity of all types. A diverse community is a group of people with a variety of characteristics, ideas, and worldviews who interact with each other to grow and improve the community. Diversity can include differences in age, ethnicity, gender, race, physical abilities, sexual orientation, educational background, work experiences, religion, geographical location, and worldview. We have seen an influx of people re-locating to North Kingstown from adjacent states, other parts of our country, and other parts of the world. We should welcome everyone and embrace them and their families.

Secondly, I think that we need to support those individuals, churches, charities, and non-profit organizations that are actively involved in helping those among us who may be struggling financially, physically, mentally, or dealing with food insecurity. I'm especially concerned about improving the quality of life for our seniors, many of whom live by themselves with little support from their families or community.

Finally, I believe that we need to work together and make a deliberate effort to plan and conduct activities and events in North Kingstown that help to create and foster a sense of community amongst its residents. Examples include the North Kingstown Arts Council's concert series and the Wickford Harbor Fire events. It is always joyful to see the residents of our town experiencing these events and having a good time.

4. How would you work to prepare for the long- and short-term impacts of climate changes?

We cannot ignore the effects of climate change. They are clearly visible during and after each severe weather event. As a town, we can plan for them and take decisive and deliberate actions to mitigate the risks posed by frequent and severe storms and

hurricanes, rising sea levels, flooding, coastal erosion, etc. There are many resources available to assist the town in this effort. The North Kingstown Town Council was recently presented with the 5-year draft update to the 2019 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). We need to ensure that recommendations contained within this plan are implemented in a prioritized way.

As a member of the town council, I would continue the work already begun by the town as part of the Municipal Resilience Program (MRP). I would work with our town manager, members of our federal and state government, and organizations like the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (www.rib.org), to identify and acquire the financial resources needed to implement the highest priority projects in our town. Some of these projects, like the improvements at the town's municipal parking lot in Wickford, have already begun.

5. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget/ contain costs?

There are always opportunities to collaborate with other municipalities to reduce the town's budget and contain municipal costs. At the August 5, 2024, meeting of the North Kingstown Council we discussed participating in the Washington County Regional Planning Council. I support this initiative as well as maintaining positive working relationships with other

Rhode Island municipalities through the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns and their elected leaders within the Rhode Island General Assembly.

The majority of North Kingstown's annual budget provides funding for the North Kingstown School Department. Student enrollment has been steadily decreasing while cost per pupil has been steadily increasing. Many of the town's citizens are concerned about the overall costs of operating the North Kingstown School Department.

In the past, the citizens of some Rhode Island municipalities have agreed to regionalization of their school districts with the intent of reducing costs. There are four regional school districts in Rhode Island: the Bristol-Warren Region School District (Est. 1991); Charlestown, Richmond, and Hopkinton (CHARIHO) Region School District (Est. 1958); Exeter-West Greenwich Region School District (Est. 1956); and the Foster-Glocester Regional School District (Est. 1958).

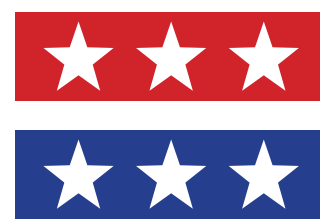
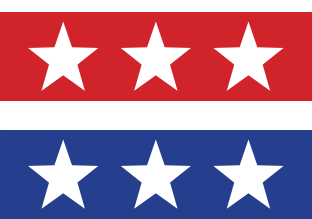
It remains to be seen if the citizens of North Kingstown and its abutting municipalities have an appetite for exploring the regionalization of their school districts. A thorough examination of the existing regionalized school districts would be the first step towards determining whether regionalization would be the correct approach. I suspect that any proposal for regionalization would encounter stiff opposition from North Kingstown voters.

6a. Do you support a \$60M bond to build a new safety complex?

Yes

6b. Do you support a \$137M bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

Yes



North Kingstown General Election Candidates

NORTH KINGSTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Kimberly A. Page
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I want to work with the town council and school committee to achieve more harmony. We do not need to agree on all items, but we are both funded with taxpayer dollars, so I want us to work together for the common good of our residents. I want the council to strive to be prudent with our spending in order to wisely use tax dollars for essential items. At the same time, I want people see and feel that North Kingstown is the best place to live for our parks and recreation department, our public works, Wickford Village, our award-winning water, our top-rated schools, and our positive environment to help each other.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

All housing needs to meet the ordinances of town and the health and safety standards of the community. Then RI town should encourage affordable housing when they are approving new developments. New areas for residents should have a mix of different types of housing, so areas for seniors, areas for children, single person dwellings, and larger for families. When we structure our areas to look like villages to help one another, we can become more cohesive.

3. What ideas do you have for improving life in North Kingstown?

I would encourage people to get involved with town committees and government. We always need citizens to serve on various committees such as the library board, the arts council, recreation, the audit committee, economic development, parade organization, the charter commission, the planning and zoning boards, to name a few town committees. These town committees are made up of volunteers to discuss important town

issues and make recommendations to the council. Because the committee members are people who are experts or passionate in their field, they carefully work with the town staff to research topics, and report to the council. Thus, the council usually takes their opinion in making decisions. If people want changes to North Kingstown, they should join a town committee. We frequently do not get enough volunteers to fill all the slots for a committee. The council wants to appoint people to the committee but we need people who want to be involved.

4. How would you work to prepare the town for the long and short term impacts of climate changes? Please be specific.

The town council recognizes that as a coastal community, we already are experiencing the changes in the climate. We applied to funding to fix our seawall in Wickford to prevent or mitigate flooding. The timing of the construction is before the August-October hurricane season. This is a

long-term improvement. We also reexamine our evacuation plans on a regular basis. Two years ago, the council approved the installation of a sea level gauge to monitor the harbor and allow residents to see the local impact of climate change. The council approved installing more electric charging stations in North Kingstown so residents with electric vehicles have options and easier access to keeping these cars usable.

More recently the council approved the first step in a greener energy provider for electricity in North Kingstown. Residents can opt out of the greener program, and the new cost may be minimal in savings, but it is a step forward in an energy conservation program.

5. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

The council recently appointed Greg Mancini to work with a group of council members from each of the seven towns in Washington County

to meet once a quarter and discuss ways we can work together on issues. This means we may be able to borrow equipment from South Kingstown or visa versa, rather than buying something for a short-term use. This group recently reformed and we are eager to find savings and commonalities among ourselves rather than being nine separate entities. The Washington County Regional Planning Council was reorganized specifically to discuss budgetary items and ideas where we can share expenses and work together.

6. Yes / No: a. Do you support a \$60M bond to build a new safety complex?

YES

b. Do you support a \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

Yes



Beth Hill Ross
Independent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community, and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am a long time resident of Saunderstown; designed and built my home on family owned property. Being a concerned resident of North Kingstown, I have been and continue to be an active member of the community, including assisting with local political campaigns, and decades of community service volunteering. When elected, I will protect North Kingstown's water by re-establishing our groundwater protections, as well as re-forming our (disbanded in 2023) 'Ground Water Committee' as a stand alone team to oversee our drinking water protections. Additionally, I will

work to make North Kingstown more cost effective for the taxpayers, this would include, but not be limited to, better town maintenance to prevent the need for future MEGABonds. Additional efforts will include Preservation, Conservation, and town beautification projects.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

I believe that affordable housing is an important facet of the North Kingstown community and feel that we need to make NK living more available to young people who are just starting out, the workforce, and retirees. Additionally, I support the

minimum of 10% of future development proposals being dedicated to affordable housing.

3. What ideas do you have for improving life in North Kingstown?

To improve life in North Kingstown I would include, first and foremost, the protection of our drinking water and to reduce taxpayer costs, but I will also focus on improved town building maintenance, preservation of NK's natural assets, as well as beautification projects...I am a tree person. We need more trees! Additionally, the Post Rd could sure use a glow up (make over)! I would work to get people involved in this as a community.

4. How would you work to

prepare the town for long and short term impacts of climate change?

I would like to see solar projects move forward, but without clear cutting any more NK land and/or placement near residential neighborhoods. I support solar on former dump sites, rooftops, commercial districts such as Quonset, etc.

5. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget/ contain costs?

I will work with local municipalities to collaborate to save taxpayers money. A few examples include shared tax assessing and billing, human resources, and youth services. Like the

local fire departments and some of our neighboring waste management facilities (Narra&SK), sharing services would be more efficient and save the North Kingstown taxpayers money.

6. Yes/No: a. Do you support a \$60M bond to build a new safety complex?

The candidate did not respond with a yes or no answer.

B. Do you support a \$137.2M bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

The candidate did not respond with a yes or no answer.



Joseph Manuel Teixeira, Jr.
Independent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

First...Why, I am not running... I am not a politician. I am not running to become one. I am also not using the Town Council as some sort of stepping stone to a different political career. I am not running for the money or the need of a job. I am happily retired.

Why I am running... I want to be a voice for our Homeowners, Small Businesses, Residents, Students, and my fellow Retirees when it comes to our Town Budget, Growth Plans, and our local Education system.

My thirty years in the Financial Services Field makes me uniquely qualified in reviewing Town finances, but just as important, the effects of those financial decisions on all those concerned, especially, the Taxpayer. Our role, must always be to do no harm in our financial decisions. My goal is to provide for the needs of the Town residents at the most affordable cost. With oversight and due diligence, we can strike a proper balance

in matching needs with affordability.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Rhode Island does not have a permanent source of funding for low income or affordable homes. Most of the funds designated to trying to solve this issue is from Bonding at the State level. Unfortunately, there is not a level stream of money each year to assist towns and cities in creating affordable home ownership.

In North Kingstown we have a very good ratio of Low to Moderate Housing Development to our overall total units, almost 8.7% as compared to similar Towns.

The one area that needs improvement is in home ownership by lower to moderate income families. I believe as inflationary pressures decrease, we should see an uptick in home building which should lead to more opportunities for home ownership in this market segment.

3. What ideas do have for im-

proving life in North Kingstown?

Public safety leaders have long recognized that robust youth engagement can lead to overall stronger police-community relations, while at the same time helping young people resist peer pressure toward problematic behavior.

This summer, our Town Police Department kicked off their very successful Anti-Bullying program, aimed at promoting kindness and inclusivity among children before they return to school.

This program has been very successful in promoting positive communication between our Police Officers and students. I look forward to supporting our Public Safety Department to develop additional programs for positive engagement in our school system.

4. Who would work to prepare the town for the long and short term impacts of climate changes? Please be specific.

Our biggest climate issue is protecting our Town water supply. Currently, we are in the process of drilling

a new well in our Town to increase our current supply.

There are only four sole-sourced aquifers state wide, including the Hunt, Annaquatucket, Pettaquamscutt system that sits under much of North Kingstown and East Greenwich.

Our Town is fortunate to have such a highly rated water supply and this resource must be protected and maintained at the highest levels.

The newly elected Town Council must provide oversight and due diligence to all requests for new Development in our Town. Water conservation and protection, must and will be a big part of any approval process.

We have to be good "Stewards" in order to increase, protect and pass on this valuable asset. I plan to work with the other members of the Council to re-activate the Water Conservation Commission that was disbanded several years ago.

5. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget/ contain costs?

Currently, we share our water supply to Narragansett (the north end) which amounts to about 5% of our daily use. In addition, we can and have helped Jamestown on occasion with their needs.

Our water supply generates income for our Town. Therefore, it is imperative that we maintain the highest quality and volume available so that we can continue to assist our neighbors, while providing a revenue source.

I plan to look at other areas where we as a Town can share purchasing, and services to save community dollars and resources.

6. Yes/No: a. Do you support a \$60 million bond to build a new safety complex?

Candidate did not respond with a yes or no answer

b. Do you support \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

No



Rickey Lee Thompson
Independent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

As a retired Sr. Manager in Private Industry with Budget, Profit and Loss experience, I understand business, and a 14+ year involved resident, I understand North Kingstown's Boards, Committee's, Commission's, Town Council and our Town Government.

"TAXES." North Kingstown's taxes are higher than what is required, here's why: our town Government has experienced years of multi-million-dollar budget surpluses which have been deposited into an Undesignated Fund for favorable bond interest rate(s). This was understandable "until" our Undesignated Fund exceeded that need leading our Town Officials to use our Taxpayer Dollars as a Piggy Bank.

"Remembering that this is Our Taxpayer Dollars," several examples include transferring excessive Undesignated Funds to an all but forgotten outside account, loaning excessive Undesignated Funds to a developer and targeting excessive Undesignated

Funds to make up the difference of the low-balled Recreation Center Bond. Being Taxpayer Dollars, I strongly believe that budget surpluses should be used to offset Budget short-falls or applied to Budgets to reduce or even reject the need to raise our property taxes.

"BONDS." While I believe that our Safety Complex and Schools need much attention, I do "not" believe that the current proposed \$197+Million Bond(s) are Taxpayer friendly nor will these 2 Bonds prevent the need for additional sooner than later future Bonds resulting in even higher increased Property Taxes. Our Town Officials know that fact. When elected, I am looking forward to revamping the existing Bond proposals into win-win proposals that fits the needs of our Police, Fire, Schools and Taxpayers.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing also referred to as work force housing and formally known as starter homes is important

to our community. As is and unlike a number of RI communities, North Kingstown meets RI's mandated 10% affordable housing. I support our continuing efforts requiring a minimum of 10% affordable homes and or apartments in proposed development plans.

3. What ideas do you have for improving life in North Kingstown?

I would persistently work with our Town Manager and State Delegation to convince RIDOT to address the:

- excessive police, fire, rescue response times due to the Devils Foot Rd overpass weight limitations.
- unacceptable Oak Hill Rd and W Allenton Rd RT 4 intersections wait times.

- I would seek resident feedback pertaining to the Post Rd South Road Diet i.e. leave as is or return back to 4 lanes.

- I would ask our Town Manager to assemble a task group to review and offer solutions pertaining to town-wide traffic issues and improvements to our bike paths.

- I will review Town Beach access

and seek the repeal of over 65 parking pass fees

- Primarily for pedestrian safety, I do not support the planned Wickford roundabout.

4. How would you work to prepare the town for the long- and short-term impacts of climate changes? Please be specific.

Understanding that the State Legislature determines climate change directions, beyond the current project to prevent/minimize long time flooding in the Wickford public parking lot, I do not believe that there are any ongoing North Kingstown climate change efforts. This being said, I maintain that Town Officials should investigate Newport's efforts to protect structures to prevent/minimize the effects of sea level rise.

I support Industrial Solar in Brown Fields, Roof Tops and Commercial Districts. I do not support clear cutting or the placement of Industrial Solar within or around residential neighborhoods.

5. What opportunities do you see

for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

I strongly believe that outside of Town and School opportunities for Taxpayer cost savings, there are opportunities to contain the costs of future growth via partnership(s) with our surrounding city/towns via enhancing or merging:

- Police and Fire Dispatch
- Animal Shelter
- Transfer Station

6. Yes / No: a. Do you support a \$60M bond to build a new safety complex?

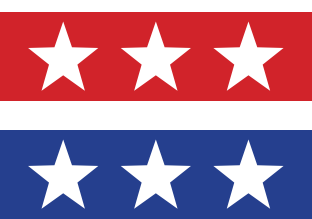
Candidate did not respond with a yes or no answer.

b. Do you support a \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

Candidate did not respond with a yes or no answer.

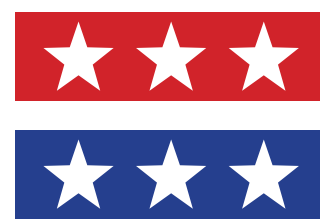


Be Sure to Vote on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.



North Kingstown General Election Candidates

NORTH KINGSTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Richard A. Welch
Independent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I plan to make the operation of our town government more transparent than the current town council has been on several subjects that will affect our taxes in the future, they have not been forth coming with the necessary details and specifications for the up coming bonds that will be on the ballot in November. It is very apparent that without this information, no financial institution would provide funding and RIDE, which must approve of any school project over \$500,000 even if no state funding will be used, will require the same. The voters have previously rejected both bonds by more than 60% yet this town council does not understand what NO means. I have been living in North Kingstown for more than 40 years, served on the North Kingstown School Committee as chairman, elected to the North Kingstown Town Council three times and served as president for one term. I have also served on many town boards and commissions, all of which provide me with a wealth of information about

our town. Working to solve the traffic problems on Post Road, providing more revenue for the town, using federal money to install sewers on Post Road that were approved by the voters over 11 years ago and working to find a solution to the problems of access on to and crossing Route 4 at Oakhill Road and West Allenton Road. Making life better for all in North Kingstown is my goal.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing in North Kingstown is very close to the state's goal of 10% of our housing units. We have approved development plans which when built out will put us over that goal. All new developments must include 10% of the total units be affordable in order to get approved. The state must support this effort with financial aid to help assist the development of this housing if more units are to be built. The town in not in the position to make this happen with out that assistance.

3. What ideas do you have for

improving life in North Kingstown?

We need to install the approved sewer project for north Post Road with the use of federal money that was made available by the Infrastructure Bill that will help fund the sewer project. This money has not been available in the past. Remove the road diet on Post Road that has caused traffic problems with backups running from Camp Avenue to the light at Wickford. Returning to a 4-lane road would help move the traffic along and avoid the backups that are now a daily occurrence. We need to return the wells that are not in service at present which is 5 out of service, leaving 5 to cover the town's water needs. Presently these wells are being over pumped and will eventually cause them to have problems as well. We need to ad an additional well to a site that we presently own. Jamestown is currently asking for a signed agreement that we will supply water to them in an emergency. We need to make sure we can provide water to our town before we can consider helping out Jamestown which has done nothing to improve their water system since the last time we helped them which was before the new Jamestown bridge was built.

4. How would you work to prepare the town for the long and short term impacts of climate changes? Please be specific.

North Kingstown needs to work with the University of Rhode Island and the federal government to prepare for the rise in the bay. Flooding happens more frequently now which is causing damage in low areas of town, the Brown Street business area and Wickford. The federal government is currently working on plans for communities along the ocean but we also need to be included in these plans as soon as possible. If the town council was more forth coming the town residents would know what if anything is being done in this area. It is important to improve the transparency of our town government with this vital information in a timely manner.

5. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

Working with our neighboring communities to help cut down on

operational expenses of like areas such as purchasing and tax assessing should be easy to accomplish. We need to also work out other areas that would lower our cost of public works, transfer station and better working between the school department and the town on building maintenance and snow removal. Any area of like services should be a natural for cooperation and cost efficiency. Vehicle and equipment purchases should be done on a state wide basis, we all need the same equipment, why aren't we joining in together to get better pricing?

6. Yes / No: a. Do you support a \$60M bond to build a new safety complex?

Candidate did not respond with yes/no

b. Do you support a \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

Candidate did not respond with yes/no

YOUR VOTE
Counts



NOVEMBER 5, 2024

POLLS ARE OPEN 7AM - 8PM

Find your polling place at

<http://vote.sos.ri.gov/>



SCAN FOR VOTER SERVICES



SCAN TO JOIN LWV

North Kingstown General Election Candidates

NORTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Robert David Case
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

As a member of the School Committee since 2022 who is currently serving as Vice-Chair, a parent of three children attending all three levels of NK public schools, and an asset management professional with over 17 years of experience, I bring significant experience to the School Committee. I am passionately dedicated to working with our district to manage its budget and resources wisely, as well as develop fair and just policies, in order to help every student in our town excel.

Currently, I am honored to serve as co-chair of the Temporary Advisory Committee on District Discipline, a committee established to ensure that all disciplinary policies and procedures are equitable and just for all students. Collaborating with a dedicated group of students, teachers, parents, and administrators, our committee has reviewed the multiple discipline procedures utilized in NK schools. Moving forward, I am eager to further explore the incorporation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and develop the implementation of a consistent discipline policy across the district.

In addition to the advisory committee, I would like to continue my service as a School Building Advisory Subcommittee member. I wholeheartedly support the initiative to build a new Wickford Middle School for NK and to establish it as a net-zero school to reduce operational expenses for future budgets.

I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and remain committed to my service to our district. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to drive positive change for our schools and community.

2. How would you balance the

opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Our professional educators and librarians possess the expertise and experience to make the best choices regarding curriculum and educational materials, and I wholeheartedly support their decisions. That being said, I also recognize and respect the right of parents to advocate for alternative lessons or different literature for their children. Open communication between educators and parents is crucial in addressing concerns and clarifying the educational significance of specific texts. If a parent remains concerned, providing an alternative book or lesson for their child might be a viable option when appropriate.

I strongly believe that books should not be banned from our school libraries and classrooms. Banning books disregards the expertise of our educators and impinges upon the freedom of choice for other parents and students. Let us honor the professionalism of our educators while fostering open dialogue and inclusivity in our educational community.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

Yes, I support RIDE's policy. At any age, the process of discovering who you are and then revealing your authentic identity to your family and others is one of the most private and vulnerable things an individual can do. There is a risk of being ostracized by your friends and family or even kicked out of your home or physically assaulted.

Growing up today is stressful enough, but even more so for a young person who is coming to terms with

feeling different and questioning their identity. I believe our schools must be safe places for all students, including those who are exploring their gender identity or transitioning. I fully support students being encouraged to include family members in their process of discovery and hope that families would be open and accepting. But if a student feels uncomfortable or scared for their safety, the ultimate decision to bring their family into the conversation lies solely with the student, not educators or the school district.

4. When it comes to budgeting for the School District, what are your priorities and why?

As we allocate our school budget, it is imperative that we continue to prioritize the needs of students and teachers. We must provide the resources and tools that teachers need to ensure that all of our students have the support they need to thrive. This is especially important given the district's recent focus on closing the learning gaps caused by the lasting effects of the COVID pandemic. The School Committee should continue to rely on teachers and administrators to identify the best use of budgetary resources to increase academic achievement.

There are three additional initiatives that I believe should be prioritized:

1) I firmly advocate for the expansion of our preschool program, aiming to make it accessible to all families in NK who wish to participate. Research consistently demonstrates that a high-quality early childhood education program significantly enhances future educational achievements and fosters long-term success.

2) I also support the continued expansion of our Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at the High School, offering diverse pathways for students who may not

be inclined towards traditional college education and wish to enter the workforce right after graduation.

3) We must allocate additional resources to support the mental well-being of all of our students. By fully funding staff and resources needed to address mental health needs, as part of a holistic approach to education, we make it possible for all students to learn and thrive.

5. Do you support the \$137.2 million bond for the construction of a new middle school and other school repairs? Please explain your position.

I am in full support of the bond for a new middle school and the necessary repairs to our existing schools. The landscape of education has changed significantly since the construction of Wickford Middle School in the 1930s. Today's education revolves around collaborative small group activities and project-based experiential learning, which demand adequate space and modern technology. The new middle school is being meticulously designed for the current and future educational requirements of our students. I also support this new school to be a net zero facility, capable of meeting its own energy needs, thereby substantially reducing operational costs. This endeavor presents a win-win situation — an investment in the building now reduces our carbon footprint, contributing to environmental sustainability, but also results in budget savings for the district.

I am also in favor of repairs and educational enhancements for all of our schools. There is an urgent need to address maintenance issues and prevent further deterioration of our school infrastructure. Specifically, every school building in town requires roof replacement or repairs. Every school will also receive renovations aimed at creating a healthier and

safer environment for students and teachers. These include the installation of new security vestibules at school entrances, improved ventilation systems, and upgrades for ADA accessibility amongst other projects. It is important to act promptly, as construction costs continue to rise annually. Any delays in maintaining our schools will lead to higher expenses in the future. The time has come to end the deferred maintenance of our schools.

6. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience?

During my high school years in the mid-1990s, I engaged regularly with the SRO at my high school, and the experience left a positive impression on me. I am also fully aware that not every student may have the same experience that I did. School Resource Officers (SROs) play a necessary, crucial role in safeguarding our students and staff and supporting the educational environment. As a member of the school committee and a parent of a student at the high school, I am grateful for Officer Menec and have great respect for the work he does to foster positive relationships with students and keep our schools safe.

The US Department of Justice and the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) have recommended training protocols for SROs, including regular refresher training to ensure that SROs are updated on the latest techniques, policies, and research. I support following these protocols.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Justin R. Kinnes
Independent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

If elected I hope to bring more openness, communication, and honesty to the issues the school committee is responsible for. I believe that in order to improve our school system, families and taxpayers need to be well informed on the decisions that the school committee is contemplating or has made. I have found that many people don't really know what the proposed bond money will be spent on, nor do they have enough information to understand how much it will affect them or the younger generation. Sensible budget planning is going to be crucial in the next few years to ensure the long-term sustainability of our schools. I hope to ensure that our school system has solid curriculum offerings that will help students who are looking to go straight into the workforce. The CNC Machinist program is a perfect example of where we can provide additional educational opportunities to these students. As a 2019 graduate, I will bring my personal school experiences to the school committee. I believe that the perspective of someone who has recently been through our school system could be of great benefit to our students.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

A school committee needs to be able to listen to and consider concerns coming from both the families and the staff of our school system. These are the people that are dealing with these challenges firsthand, so it is vital that we take into account their perspective and set clear and cohesive goals. We must create a more open environment for parents, students, and staff to voice their concerns. This would help promote constructive dialog on how to address the development of our future curriculum and literature offerings.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student Policy? Please explain your position.

The RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student Policy is a fairly well written document, but it is not perfect. I believe that we have taken some good strides in dealing with these issues but there are still some concerns about the policy we have in place. When students wish to bring their concerns up to a teacher, or any other staff member at their school, there should be a clear and safe process that helps the students feel secure. While I believe school staff could be the first line of contact for a student, parents by default should be brought into the conversation shortly thereafter. School policy should provide clinical resources to help guide school staff in the process of bridging the gap between students and families. There may be times when paren-

tal involvement could be in question, but in those instances, if it is believed there is an unsafe environment at home, additional family services should be brought to bear. We cannot hide major life events of our students from their parents or guardians because we think it might be unsafe, and then send them home every night to that very same environment.

4. When it comes to budgeting for the school district, what are your priorities and why?

Priority 1 would be providing 100% transparency on every penny spent by the school committee. Taxpayers deserve to know where their money is going. With the bonds that have been proposed, many of the project details have been changed, some several times since initially proposed, and many people feel that there are better and more prudent ways of dealing with these issues. We need to take a more detailed look at funding sources such as temporary grants or programs vs annual tax revenues along with how our funds are being spent, so we can get a clearer understanding of how to develop a long-range school sustainment budget. I believe that CTE and trade skills programs would provide an excellent return on investment to our students. "Hands on" learning has always been my favorite way to learn, and I think we should explore ways to fund and expand this type of curriculum. Along with this I would like to increase funding for our classrooms. It's only common sense that our classrooms are funded for the necessary supplies to provide each student with the essentials to

fully participate in class. This in turn will relieve the burden on teachers and parents to personally pay for things that should be provided by the school. These are a few ideas I hope to bring to our school district so that we further enhance the education of our next generation.

5. Do you support the \$137.2 million bond for the construction of a new middle school and other school repairs?

I fully support asking the taxpayers for the money needed to fund the construction and repairs needed for our schools. However, I do not feel confident that the current bond proposal will serve our town or our students well. It was stated at a school committee meeting that the price of replacing roofs on some of our schools, which was estimated around \$28 million at the time the school committee voted to approve the bond language, has risen by about \$5 million in just a few months. This should be of great concern to everyone. If that estimate has changed so drastically in such a short amount of time, do we really expect construction of a new school to come in on budget? And if it doesn't, the money will be pulled from other school repair money and those repairs will go unfinished. We must be honest with the taxpayers, the bond proposal falls 10's of millions of dollars short of fixing current, known and necessary repairs. And how long before another school needs replacing? I hate to say it because no one wants to hear it, but any objective evaluation of our current schools will tell you that in

order to maintain suitable facilities, the school district will need to ask for more money in the near future. We need a better plan before we spend \$137 million taxpayer dollars. And we need to ensure the school committee is held accountable for every tax dollar spent.

6. What are your views on school resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive and the value they bring to the students' experience?

I feel school resource officers are very important for the protection and the safety of our schools. I believe that having a resource officer provides a feeling of safety and security for students and provides them with an environment where they can concentrate on learning. I trust our police department to keep our town safe, and I am confident that the leadership of our police department ensures our school resource officers have the proper training to keep our students safe. Regular collaboration between the school committee and the police department to ensure a positive student/resource officer experience is a good thing. Resource office duties, responsibilities, and training may evolve over time, but should always be primarily focused on the prevention or elimination of any threat to our students' safety and security.

7. Yes/No: are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



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of South County, Rhode Island



North Kingstown General Election Candidates



NORTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Donna M. Lico
Democrat

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

As a member of the school committee my goal would be to assure that all students have access to an excellent education that is appropriate for each of their unique set of aspirations and talents while providing support and remediation when necessary. Having over 30 years of experience as a classroom

teacher provides me with a unique perspective on the needs of our students, their families and the faculty members that are working in our classrooms on a daily basis. As the treasurer of the Exeter-West Greenwich Teacher's Association and member of the Executive Board for much of my career, I have experience in both budgeting and contract negotiations. I have also been a homeowner in North Kingstown for 22 years and my two adult sons completed their entire education in the North Kingstown Schools. Through the years I have volunteered in my children's classrooms, run programs for Cub Scouts dens, volunteered with Ocean State Soccer, and served on the Conservation Commission.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Strengthening academic programs and creating a positive school culture with decisions based on research proven practices is the cornerstone of an outstanding educational system. To ensure the best possible outcomes for students school administrators, faculty, parents and students need to work together. Good communication between all parties is essential to a positive school environment. Building on current opportunities for parent involvement in the school lives of

their children and providing uniform procedures that allow for parental input on what is most appropriate for their child on an individual basis would allow school administration and classroom teachers to develop programs that are research based and best for students while providing some flexibility to respond to individual family concerns.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

RIDE policy guidance is created by a group of dedicated, educational professionals who are most interested in doing what is best for children. That means that they consult experts, look at data and read research before taking a position on an issue. Based on my own reading of the RIDE guidance and investigation of available information, I am convinced that the current RIDE policy is in keeping with what experts and research say is best for children. Ideally a queer or questioning student who is fearful of being fully honest with their parents would be able to access professional help to bridge the communication gap within their family but the services necessary for that to happen are not typically available. Helping a child who is questioning their gender identity is necessary and it is important for that child to be treated with dignity by honoring their request at school. Ideally the school mental health professionals would also provide

support for parents who want help learning the skills necessary to create opportunities for open dialog with their children. In our society people are referred to in different ways based on where they are and who they are with; think of terms like Mr/Mrs/Ms, Dr, first names, nicknames, titles like "coach" or director, etc., I see no harm in using a student's preferred name in class and their birth name when speaking with parents if that is what will help the student be more comfortable and engaged in school.

4. When it comes to budgeting for the School District, what are your priorities and why?

Schools are first and foremost academic institutions. Education should always be the primary budget priority with a focus on the foundational skills developed in the primary grades. Secondary programs that help to prepare students to be productive members of society with workforce training pathways in high school are also essential elements of a school community. Physical spaces need to be updated to provide the best possible environment for learning and should be the second financial priority. Well maintained buildings contribute to the social/emotional health of those using the space and students need to feel good about being in school in order to make the most of their time there. Involvement in the arts have been shown to improve achievement in traditional academic areas so maintaining those

programs should be a priority as well. Finally, great curriculum and well maintained schools need quality educators to guide learning on a daily basis so providing teachers and staff with all of the resources necessary to attract and keep quality teachers to our district should be a high priority.

5. Do you support the \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs? Please explain your position.

Our town can not continue to postpone the upgrades and general maintenance necessary to provide a 21st century education to our students. While having a new middle school that would have provided all students in town with the same advantages would have been more equitable, I do believe we need to continue moving forward with the current bond plan because the town has invested a considerable amount of time and financial resources into it. In addition, it is also necessary for our community to develop a long term vision of how we want to provide all students with a quality education, including what kinds of spaces are necessary for those programs, and then work toward turning that vision into reality so all students have equal access to safe, quality learning environments.

6. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they

receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience.

There are benefits to having School Resource officers in the school buildings, especially at the elementary level. A Resource Officer can provide a sense of security, allow for positive interactions between students and officers and provide a level of surveillance of the grounds that school staff would not be available to conduct. While Resource Officers in middle and high schools can also serve the functions mentioned above, their interactions with the student population would require additional training specific to the nuances of interacting with adolescents; especially those who have had traumatic life experiences involving law enforcement. In schools where physical security upgrades have been made to the buildings I see a lower need for officers on the grounds but where teachers and staff believe an SRO would provide a more secure environment, the placement of an officer should be supported. Training specific to School Resource Officers that include specialized information about working with a multicultural population should be required of any officer placed in a school.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Jennifer S. Lima
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

Students should be involved in decision-making at all levels. I want to expand voting roles for middle and high school students to include all advisory committees. With a student council recently established at WMS, we should create one at DMS and consider leadership councils at the elementary level. Student input is crucial as schools exist to educate them.

Disparities in assessment scores require new strategies, including engaging students and families, reviewing the assessments themselves, and ensuring culturally relevant curricula and accessible testing.

The Equity Audit found disciplinary referrals disproportionately high concerning race, gender, socio-economic status, and disability. I aim to make the Temporary Advisory Committee on District Discipline permanent and develop restorative justice and

anti-bias discipline training for staff.

Implementing Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and more cultural competency training will help address the mental health crisis and create a supportive environment for LGBTQ+ students.

Supporting MLL students with an asset-based approach, inclusive curricula, and culturally responsive materials is essential. Educational equity requires reforming practices, policies, and procedures to ensure academic fairness and inclusion.

I will continue to strive for educational equity across all levels, improving accessibility in facilities, programming, materials, and communications.

I was elected to the school committee in 2020. I am a former NKHS booster club member, PTO volunteer at HES and WMS, and founder and president of a non-profit focused on anti-racist policy reform and advocacy. Professionally, I analyze market data to improve forecasts, budgets, and sales across various departments.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Rhode Island schools are required to adopt high-quality curriculum materials, selecting from a list of RIDE-approved materials that best fit the needs of their students, teachers, and community. North Kingstown adheres to a curriculum revision calendar, which is continually updated and currently extends through 2027. Parents/guardians with concerns about specific materials their student is learning should first reach out to the teacher. The teacher and department chair will engage in a conversation with the parent/guardian to understand the root of their objections and provide a rationale for the inclusion of the material. If necessary, options for an alternative

assignment can be explored. This approach allows for flexibility while maintaining the integrity of the curriculum and ensuring that all learning objectives are met.

The selection of media center materials in the NKSD is, per the policy, "a cooperative process, with media specialists, teachers, administrators, and students all having a part in creating an adequate and workable collection. Titles are selected on the basis of literary quality, appeal to students, excellence in format, authenticity of content, suitability for the normal range of reading abilities, appropriateness to the curriculum, and social value." Members of the school community may register criticism of materials they consider objectionable following the process outlined in the policy.

Every family, and every child, is different. And while a parent/guardian unquestionably can decide that they do not want their child reading a certain book, they do not have the right to limit another child's access to it

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

Yes. In 2024 I brought forward a revision to the NKSD policy that defined more specifically how we are supporting our students who are transgender and/or non-binary to make the language affirming and non-stigmatizing. The revision was passed 3-0. Research in the area of LGBTQ+ students has shown that protective factors such as supportive adults within the school, supportive peers, protective policies, and inclusive curricula, can all buffer the negative impacts of discrimination and bias in school and can help all students thrive.

We received some pushback on the change in policy and I can understand that; but being uncomfortable is not the same thing as being unsafe and school officials have a

responsibility to ensure the safety of all students. Schools have permitted all students to access restrooms and locker rooms based on gender identity for many years. That's how everybody moves through restrooms in their daily life. Here in Rhode Island nobody is asked to prove their gender before they use a bathroom. To try to enforce any other policy is unmanageable and invasive.

Where possible, the goal should be to support the student and family to be on the same page and that the family would accept the child's gender identity. However, that doesn't always happen, and I think our responsibility is to protect the student. There is a wealth of research-backed expert knowledge that supports best practices for transgender youth, particularly in medicine and education. Those best practices are reflected in the NKSD policy.

4. When it comes to budgeting for the School District, what are your priorities and why?

My priority is to ensure that we are providing every student in our community with equitable access to an academically rigorous, well-rounded education, in a safe and inclusive school.

Our budget should reflect the district's top priorities, focusing on giving our students the best chances to succeed. We need to use data to make informed decisions to make sure that resources are allocated based on need, especially to help close academic gaps. This means directing funds toward high-impact strategies like hiring quality staff, supporting instruction, and providing personalized learning opportunities.

It's also important to create an environment that prioritizes the well-being of both students and employees. When we do this, we can attract and retain the best professionals in their fields. Students learn better, feel safer, and build stronger relationships with their peers and teachers when their social and emo-

tional needs are met. This is why we need to staff our schools with certified mental health professionals at recommended ratios. These professionals are essential for promoting wellness, preventing issues, and providing early intervention.

Historically, about 80% of our operating budget has gone toward salaries and benefits. This is good news because it shows that most of our resources are invested in the people who directly impact our students' daily experiences. However, the remaining 20% of the budget, which covers things like purchased services and supplies, leaves little room for adjustments. This means we must be especially careful and strategic in how we use the limited funds we have available.

5. Do you support the \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs? Please explain your position.

Yes. We have to put forward a bond that will pass, that is proposed with consideration to the impact on taxpayers, and that provides facilities for our students that are accessible, keep them safe, and provide a 21st century learning environment.

While I would have preferred a combined middle school plan to maximize impact on the largest number of students, I support the current plan because inaction is not a viable option.

Wickford Middle school needs to be addressed. According to a recent feasibility study, renovating the school is not cost-effective. It would also require temporary accommodations and cause significant disruption to the students' learning environment for approximately 36 months.

The \$137.2 million bond for a new middle school and other school repairs plan is a solid approach based on our current constraints. It addresses our oldest facility and supports needed repairs and renovations at all other buildings across the district.

6. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience.

I've been vocal about my stance on School Resource Officers in schools, and that I believe in funding additional mental health resources, not officers. But if the district is going to have an SRO, I think it's important that there be an agreement in place that defines what their role is, how they are selected, what training they need to have, and will provide accountability and safety for all parties involved. Statistics show that students of color, LGBTQ+ students and students with disabilities are disproportionately impacted negatively when an officer is in the school.

That's why in January 2023 I brought forward the model MOU that Massachusetts uses. For the following year plus, the NKSC and the NKPD engaged in discussions to reach a consensus and in April of 2024, an updated MOU was approved 5-0 that aligns with best practices suggested by the DOJ and by the National School Resource Officer Association. My push for this MOU had nothing to do with the district's current SRO. This is not about the person who is currently filling this position, this is about the position itself.

I know some families find great comfort with having an SRO, but there are families who have very different thoughts on them and we in this District are responsible for protecting all of our students. The School Committee owes it to every child in this District to make sure that we're doing everything we can to protect them.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Debra Lee Lukacsko
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

As a member of the North Kingstown School Committee, I hope to provide the best possible educational experience for the students that improves all students' academic outcomes and closes the gaps that exist between schools and students. I will support the continuing repairs and upgrades to the current school buildings so students can attend school in a safe & healthy environment. I hope to see the current CTE program begin and would like to see the CTE programs expand.

I am a retired Nurse Practitioner who was the medical director at a college in New Jersey. I am very focused on health, safety and quality education. I served on the Board of Education in Sussex County, NJ for 8 years prior to moving to Rhode Island. I am also a retired paramedic from New Jersey serving for 20 years in that capacity in my community. I am a product of public education from kindergarten through my Nurse Practitioner training. Students in Public Schools deserve the same education as a student in private schools or charter schools. I have worked in the education system for more than 37 years and am familiar with state budgeting and budget processes.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

It is inevitable that some of the choices of curriculum and books will

conflict with someone's views. Students must be permitted to explore these views as part of their learning process. Censorship, whether it be removing a book or restricting access to it, does not allow for critical thinking and questioning.

Educators have the prime responsibility to prepare students to be informed members of society. The education process must allow for a broad variety of views. The goal of a professional educator is to fulfill an educational purpose. I would support the opinion of the professional educator as this is their area of expertise.

The librarian is responsible for assembling a collection of books & developing a curriculum that represents all students and encourages them to learn about themselves and the world in which they live. I would support the librarian in the choice of books and curriculum that meet the needs of the students and educational goals.

I would support a parent's objection to a book for their child but would not allow a parent to make that decision for all children. Parents may make a choice of books based on their personal as well as religious beliefs. These beliefs may not agree with the educational goal. If a parent is concerned about a book, they have a right to opt their child out.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Diverse and Transitioning Student Policy? Please explain.

Yes, I fully support this policy. Every student is entitled to an education in a safe and supportive environment. Many LGBTQ+ students face bullying, harassment, and all forms of discrimination simply because of their sexual orientation

and gender identity. These are not choices, but rather who the student is. This harassment and discrimination threaten the student's ability to participate fully in their education as well as their very ability to thrive. Students who feel threatened, harassed or discriminated against do not attend school on a regular basis and have higher rates of absenteeism, an issue facing Rhode Island today. All students, regardless of their identity, are always entitled to a safe educational environment.

4. When it comes to budgeting for the School District, what are your priorities and why?

Developing a school budget is a very labor-intensive project and the most important annual project that the school committee undertakes. This is where the goals set by the administration and the school committee will be achieved if properly represented in the budget.

My priority is to provide a safe and healthy environment that meets the needs of the students, faculty and staff. Continued maintenance of all the buildings has long been neglected in North Kingstown and this needs to be changed. I fully support the ongoing repairs to the schools as well as the bond for a new middle school.

Teachers need to be able to teach in classrooms that meet today's educational needs. The days of chalkboards, pen and paper are long gone. Technology needs to be continually upgraded and updated. I support funding these initiatives.

Students need to be safely transported to the school. I would like to see the school committee invest in technology on the buses that ensures a safe commute to and from school, such as having cameras installed

on the buses. I would support this initiative fully.

Staffing is always a priority. I support funding to allow the hiring of needed staff to provide the district with the best possible schools that can be had.

Safety is a major concern in the world in which we live. Having locked and secured classroom doors, a vestibule so that direct entrance into the school or classroom is avoided, is also needed. I fully support all safety initiatives.

5. Do you Support the \$137.2 million bond for the construction of a new middle school and other school repairs? Please explain your position.

Yes, I fully support the bond issue for the construction of a new middle school and other school repairs.

The Wickford Middle School was built in 1932. Much in education as well as in building safety have changed in 92 years. The school needs extensive improvements to meet the needs of the 21st century. The upgrades planned for the common spaces, gym, auditorium, library/media center and science labs are well overdue. The school lacks adequate safety and security and is not energy efficient. Upgraded equipment regarding air quality is needed. The school needs to meet the American with Disability requirements. Unfortunately, all this costs money, a lot of money. The administration did a comparison study on simply repairing/upgrading Wickford Middle School, but that cost was higher than building a new school that meets all the current standards for education today.

The other schools also need upgrading and some standard

care. Roofs need to be replaced, air conditioning needs to be installed/replaced, windows need to be replaced and screens put into windows to name a few.

North Kingstown needs to invest in the future of our town. This investment will pay off not only in the education provided but it will also increase the property value of each homeowner over time. Schools are a critical issue when someone looks to purchase a home, and our current schools will not remain as a positive criterion for much longer.

6. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience.

I fully support having a School Resource officer. The value of having a trained officer on site makes the school a much safer place for students to learn. The training that they receive, in addition to the standard training that a police officer receives, is invaluable to the students/staff/parents. I have spoken to students, and they all felt comforted knowing the officer was on site, was available for them to speak with about concerns they may have, and they were glad that the officer was a resource to them on many issues, not just police related. Also, the administration, teachers and staff were also pleased to have a resource officer at the school.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes

North Kingstown General Election Candidates

NORTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Pamela R. Pinheiro
Independent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I decided to run for the school committee after attending numerous meetings and recognizing the challenges our district faces in moving forward. Although I have not previously pursued political ambitions, I felt compelled to step up and provide a more balanced perspective on the committee. The divisiveness, one-sided discussions, and tension between the school committee and administration are concerning. I believe there's a need for all voices to be heard and respected, and my goal is to foster an environment where different perspectives come together, creating opportunities for compromise and balance.

I'm running as an independent to approach each issue objectively, free from political influence. The current one-party dominance has left some citizens feeling voiceless, contributing to tensions in our district. As a proud NKHS alumnus, with my mom having worked as a bus monitor and my dad having been a local builder, I have deep roots in this community. This town and its people are important to me, and I am committed to providing the same strong community support for my children that I experienced.

With years of experience as a volunteer developing and leading programs for children and adults, along with my role as a department director, I bring valuable leadership skills to the table. These experiences have equipped me to bridge diverse views and find common ground. I am dedicated to ensuring every parent and citizen has a voice in shaping our district's future.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Balancing the opinions of professional educators, librarians, and parents on curriculum development and book selection requires clear policies, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. Establishing well-defined procedures ensures that all voices are heard, and decisions are made

through a transparent and consistent process. It's crucial to communicate these processes effectively, making sure that all parties understand how decisions are reached and what options are available, such as the ability to opt out of certain curricula.

I believe in the value of forming subcommittees that include a broad range of stakeholders, including parents, community members, and school administrators. For example, as a member of the Wellness Subcommittee, I participated in the review of the Health Curriculum for grades K-12. The inclusion of diverse voices led to robust discussions and thorough evaluations, culminating in a transparent process where the subcommittee voted on the curriculum before it moved to the school committee for final approval.

While the process was comprehensive, I see room for improvement in how we communicate with the broader school community, providing more opportunities to pilot curricula prior to approval, and engage more stakeholders. Clear, consistent communication with parental input, particularly regarding options like curriculum opt-outs, is essential to ensure that all families are fully informed and can make the best decisions for their children. My focus will be on enhancing this communication and involving more voices in these critical decisions.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

I support the majority of the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student guidance, as creating safe spaces and protecting children is essential. However, I have concerns about concealing information from parents as the current school committee encourages, as I strongly advocate for robust parent-school relationships. Imagine a scenario where a child doesn't want their parents to know they are transgender, but the parents would be supportive. How would the school navigate this if the parents were later informed? This aspect wasn't fully discussed, and the answers would impact my stance on this guidance.

I worry a policy excluding parents could set a precedent for schools to

withhold other important information from parents. There needs to be extensive conversation about this part of the guidance and its potential implications for future policies. It's important to remember that current teachers and school administrators are mandatory reporters which protects children who may be at risk. We need to make policies that include all children, not just one population.

Too often, discussions on this issue seem polarized, with little effort to find common ground. I strongly believe in parental rights and fear losing them. My concerns aren't theoretical—I've faced challenges accessing my child's test scores and limited opportunities to review curriculum. If we could validate these concerns and engage in meaningful dialogue, I believe we could reach a more balanced approach that respects both the needs of students and the rights of parents.

4. When it comes to budgeting for the School District, what are your priorities and why?

When budgeting for the School District, my priorities are centered around ensuring a well-rounded and equitable education for all students while maintaining fiscal responsibility. First, I would prioritize investing in core academic programs to ensure that every student has access to high-quality instruction in key subjects such as math, science, literacy, and the arts. These are fundamental to student success and long-term academic achievement.

Second, I believe it is crucial to allocate funds to support student mental health and well-being. Investing in counselors, mental health programs, and support services is essential for helping students navigate challenges and succeed academically and personally. Creating a supportive environment can greatly impact student engagement and performance.

Third, I would prioritize professional development for teachers. Providing educators with ongoing training and resources is vital for maintaining high teaching standards and adapting to new educational strategies and technologies. Well-supported teachers are better equipped to deliver effective instruction and support student learning.

Fourth, I would focus on maintaining and improving school facilities. Ensuring that schools are safe, clean, and conducive to learning is

fundamental. This includes investing in infrastructure, technology, and resources that enhance the learning environment.

Finally, transparency and community involvement are key. Engaging with parents, teachers, and community members to understand their needs and priorities ensures that the budget reflects the values and goals of our district. By balancing these priorities, we can create a well-rounded budget that supports student success, teacher effectiveness, and overall district health.

5. Do you support the \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs? Please explain your position.

I have adjusted my previous stance and I generally support the \$137.2 million bond for the construction of a new middle school and other school repairs, as it addresses several critical needs within our district. My support stems from the recognition that the existing middle school, Wickford Middle School (WMS), requires significant updates to meet modern educational standards and provide a safe and conducive learning environment. Having attended WMS myself and with one of my children currently enrolled there, I understand firsthand the need for improvements.

Previously, I opposed the bond due to concerns over the one-middle-school model, the proposed location, and the inclusion of the safety complex in the same bond. However, the current bond has evolved to better address these concerns. The focus on updating WMS is a positive development that aligns with the need for enhanced facilities.

To ensure transparency and community trust, I believe there must be clear and consistent communication regarding the bond's implications. This includes providing detailed information about the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects, the scope of district maintenance needs, and the tax implications for residents. Engaging with the community through open forums and clear updates will help address any concerns and ensure that stakeholders are well-informed.

In summary, while I support the bond in its current form, it is crucial to maintain ongoing dialogue with the community and provide clarity

on all aspects of the bond to ensure it effectively meets the needs of our schools and taxpayers.

6. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience.

I support the presence of School Resource Officers (SROs) and am pleased to see one assigned to the high school. From my perspective, SROs play a crucial role in ensuring safety within schools, fostering a secure learning environment for students. My daughter's positive interaction with the current SRO when we met at an event this summer further reinforced my belief in their value. These officers not only contribute to physical safety but also help build positive relationships between students and law enforcement. I believe it is essential for the school department and committee to develop and maintain a strong, collaborative relationship with the North Kingstown Police Department.

Our North Kingstown Police Officers undergo extensive ongoing training to stay adept in our rapidly evolving landscape. This training includes updates on legal standards, crisis intervention techniques, deescalation, mental health training, active shooter training and the latest best practices for community policing. It is designed to ensure officers can effectively address emerging challenges, adapt to new technologies, and respond sensitively to the diverse needs of the community. Each of the SROs at the high school, go through NASRO training which is considered the gold standard for school-based law enforcement training. Then each year, they go through annual training to stay current on the latest tools and information available.

In summary, I support the presence of SROs for their safety benefits and role in fostering positive relationships between students and law enforcement and believe they have extensive training in the areas needed.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Megan M. Reilly
Independent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I'm a school teacher with a master's in education and have taught in public and private schools in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Jersey. For the last two years, I've subbed in North Kingstown, giving me the opportunity to work - and develop relationships - in almost every school in our district. I've also served as a board member of a private high school, giving me experience navigating the innumerable decisions schools must make to operate efficiently - from staffing, to facilities, to academics and more.

Most importantly, I'm a mother of four children who have all attended NK schools starting in either preschool or kindergarten. Three of my children continue to thrive in NK, with one entering the high school this year. Private school provided an environment that was better suited for one of my children, so my family and I made the decision for him to switch.

I mention these diverse experiences because they give me a deep understanding for different educational environments, and how they serve the needs of each child and family. I firmly believe politics do not belong on the school committee, and I'm running as an Independent to bring balance and respectfully work across viewpoints. My perspective is enriched by discussions with my spouse (a registered Democrat) which help me foster a more inclusive and thoughtful decision-making process.

My goal is to ensure EVERY student receives the best education possible. I hope to strengthen the connection between parents, teachers, and the administration, ensuring all voices are heard.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Balancing the opinions of professional educators, librarians, and parents is crucial to creating a well-rounded educational environment. As a school committee member, I would prioritize open communication and collaboration among all stakeholders.

Professional educators and

librarians bring valuable expertise in curriculum development and book selection, ensuring our students receive a comprehensive education grounded in educational standards. However, parents play a critical role too, as they deeply understand their children's needs, values, and the community's expectations.

An important aspect of this balance involves carefully considering the content available in school libraries, which serve a wide range of ages, personalities, and maturity levels. Unlike public libraries, where parents can guide their children's choices, school libraries need to be more cautious with books containing mature content or illustrations. It's vital to ensure that such materials are reviewed, and that parental permission is obtained before a child accesses them. Just as old movie and bookstores had discreet sections, often separated by a curtain, school libraries should design and implement similar controls that work in their unique environments to ensure content is accessed by an appropriate audience.

I would advocate for structured forums where educators, librarians, and parents can engage in meaningful dialogue. Advisory committees with representatives from all groups could review and discuss curriculum and book selections, fostering a collaborative approach.

Ultimately, by working together and valuing each other's input, we can create a curriculum and library that reflect our shared goals of providing the best possible education while respecting diverse viewpoints.

3. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) does not have an official policy on transgender, gender diverse, and transitioning students but rather provides a set of recommendations aimed at guiding schools in creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all students.

I believe it is crucial to approach this issue with sensitivity and a focus on the well-being of every student. RIDE's guidance is designed to help schools navigate complex and personal situations by encouraging respect, privacy, and safety for all students, regardless of their gender identity.

Supporting these recommendations aligns with the fundamental

goal of providing a safe and inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive. Schools should be a place where all students feel valued and respected, and these guidelines help ensure that transgender and gender diverse students are not marginalized or discriminated against.

However, it's also important to acknowledge and respect the concerns of parents and the broader community. Open communication and collaboration between schools, parents, and students are essential to implementing these recommendations in a way that respects everyone's perspectives.

As a school committee member, I would work to ensure that any measures taken are balanced, fair, and considerate of all viewpoints, while still prioritizing the safety and well-being of our students. My approach would focus on fostering an environment where every student has the opportunity to learn and succeed, free from discrimination or prejudice.

4. When it comes to budgeting for the School District, what are your priorities and why?

When budgeting for the School District, my primary priority is ensuring that our resources directly support student learning and well-being. This means prioritizing funding for classroom instruction, educational materials, and support services that enhance the educational experience for all students. I believe that investments in our teachers, who are at the heart of student success, should be a top priority. This includes competitive salaries, professional development opportunities, and resources that enable them to deliver high-quality education.

Another key priority is ensuring that our schools have the necessary resources to address the diverse needs of our student population. This includes funding for special education, mental health services, and extracurricular programs that provide a well-rounded education. I also believe in the importance of maintaining and upgrading our school facilities to create safe, modern learning environments that are conducive to both teaching and learning.

All of these things deserve appropriate resources, while understanding that taxpayer dollars need to be allocated responsibly to maximize the value we get from them. Any fiscally responsible organization must operate with limited resources, and for a

school department, the most effective way to do so is with transparency. I would advocate for a budget process that is transparent and involves input from educators, parents, and the community. This ensures that spending aligns with our district's educational goals and reflects the community's priorities.

My budgeting priorities focus on maximizing the direct impact on student learning, supporting our educators, addressing diverse student needs, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

5. Do you support the \$137.2 million bond for construction of a new middle school and other school repairs? Please explain your position.

Investing in our school facilities to enhance educational opportunities is important, but requires more than money. It also calls for proper planning, management and fiscal responsibility, characteristics our district has sorely lacked. For those reasons, I cannot support this bond - at this time, as written. There are a myriad of unresolved concerns including (but not limited to) the suitability of the proposed construction site, particularly regarding wetlands/flooding issues; the vaguely worded bond, allowing funds intended for maintenance to be redirected to new construction overages; and capital improvement projects for existing facilities, which are still in flux.

Compounding these issues, the school committee made a rash decision in June, against the recommendation of the superintendent, to dismiss the director of facilities. Now the district will have to hastily onboard someone new into this position that's critical for overseeing large-scale projects, but should first be focused on caring for existing facilities.

I have proposed a smaller bond, focused on maintaining existing facilities - a problem that has plagued our district for decades. This approach will allow leaders to rebuild trust by demonstrating that projects can be completed on time and within budget.

Many who oppose this bond might reconsider if they had leadership they could trust. While it's difficult to put the near-term gratification of a new facility on hold, we need to in favor of long-term solutions. Before making massive new investments, we need to rebuild trust by being better stewards

of our town's excellent school system, taxpayer investments, and children's future.

6. What are your views on School Resource officers in terms of the need for them, the training they receive, and the value they bring to the students' experience.

I have tremendous respect for the North Kingstown Police Department (NKPD) and support how they have approached the role of a School Resource Officer. Recent leadership changes within the NKPD include a new Chief and administrators who have demonstrated a deep commitment to our community, students, and training. Partnering with the school department is one of their top priorities, as evidenced by their voluntary collaboration with the school committee on a non-binding memorandum of understanding (MOU) and the launch of an Anti-Bullying campaign in partnership with minority and advocacy organizations—a campaign with widespread participation across our schools.

School Resource Officers (SROs) play a vital role in maintaining a safe learning environment. Their presence goes beyond responding to potential threats; they are key figures in preventing incidents before they occur. By being a consistent, positive presence in the schools, SROs build strong, trusting relationships with students, staff, and parents. These relationships are crucial, often allowing officers to identify and address issues early, whether related to bullying, mental health, or other concerns. The SRO is balanced by important contributions of counselors, teachers and administrators. Together they create a comprehensive support system, ensuring that schools remain safe and secure environments for all students.

As outlined by the new chief, the department continues to commit to annual, relevant training so that all officers, including the SRO, are well-prepared to respond to today's challenges. By establishing trust and familiarity within the school community, SROs can effectively deescalate crises, providing critical support when needed most.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes

SHERI L. KENNEDY - I - no response



South Kingstown General Election Candidates

SOUTH KINGSTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Patricia A. Alley
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I hope to maintain the momentum we have begun during the last two years. Much of our focus has been on the overarching goal of preparing our community for the future. We celebrated our 300th anniversary last year and I want to ensure we do all we can to prepare South Kingstown for the next 300. It is essential that we make the most of our community assets with transparency and as much community conversation as possible.

Repurposing town owned properties into housing people of varying income levels can afford is vitally important to maintaining our unique sense of place here in SK. Additionally, I am committed to ensuring we all deliver what the voters charged us with in May when they approved the high school bond.

I have lived in South Kingstown for almost 20 years, more than that if you count the four years at URI. I have always been involved in the community, as a mom, a business owner and a caregiver. Having our bakery Patticakes during the years our daughter Morgan was in the school system was a wonderful way of being a part of the community.

I became involved in politics in 2020, after a family tragedy and began advocating for a secure gun storage bill at the Statehouse in 2021. Governor McKee signed the secure firearm storage law on June 13th, 2024 and I was honored to give the keynote address. I am determined and I do not quit until the job is done.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Most importantly, he terms "affordable housing" to "affordable and

moderate income housing". In order to qualify to buy the average home in South Kingstown, you have to make \$170,000. As a result, one third of SK residents are cost burdened and fully 30% of homes in our town are purchased by people from outside the area.

It's not just the very poor who need help finding affordable housing anymore; it's people with solid jobs, those making good money. The situation has changed and therefore so. Today those earning between 30% and 120% of the average median income may be eligible for some kind of assistance.

Affordable housing means a functional future for SK. Economic diversity means a place at the table for everyone. During the pandemic there was a lot of talk about "essential workers". These are the people who keep things going when times get tough; first responders, educators, health care workers, food services and retail workers. These are the people in the neighborhood that Mr Rogers talked about; I am one of the people who believes that most everything we need to know in life, we learn in kindergarten. Diversity just makes sense.

During the past two years, the Council has worked diligently to go through the necessary steps to be able to begin community discussions and plans to repurpose South Road School, Wakefield Elementary School and Oliver Watson House. The community conversations begin this week and I am committed to pushing these efforts forward.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

The beach is an important part of life in South Kingstown and we have a robust plan for beach renourishment. Our town staff works hard as a first line of defense for the town beach and they work hard to mitigate the

damages as they arise.

Additionally, like every coastal community in the State, we have working partnerships with other agencies, including Coastal Resources Management Council, Department of Environmental Management and the Department of Transportation. We also enjoy strong partnerships with our State Representatives and Senators, as well as with our Representatives from Congress who work hard at every level of Government to ensure we have the funding to address problems at the shore.

One area we are currently working to improve is accessibility for all; our Parks and Recreation is replacing the mats that can be used by people in wheelchairs to move through the sand. Ensuring access by all is a top priority and as the situation at the coast continues to evolve, this will always be something I keep in mind when making decisions.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget and contain costs. Please be specific.

The towns of Narragansett and South Kingstown currently collaborate on Senior Services; I have attended meetings of a joint committee that has worked together over the years towards this end. Our Senior Center is amazing, so the towns have a fee for services arrangement.

Last year we came to the table with Narragansett and formalized a working partnership that is fair to both towns and works for Seniors.

I believe this provides a road map as to how we could structure similar arrangements, with a fee for service model. This is something that could be explored with services ultimately offered via the new Community Learning Center at Peacedale Library or perhaps at the Guild.

Narragansett and South Kingstown also collaborate on wastewater man-

agement and this makes this massive task more manageable for each town, as well as the University of Rhode Island. Keeping these partnerships in good working order is something that is vitally important and I have a lot of confidence in our town staff in this regard. I believe ongoing dialogue with staff is the best way to recognize areas where savings can be realized and I will remain vigilant and engaged in that pursuit.

5. What should the town address the frequent street flooding we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

We are experiencing unprecedented volatility in our weather; our rain comes down in sheets, some years it doesn't come at all. No matter what you call it; South Kingstown, like every other coastal community in Rhode Island, knows that Mother Nature is in charge and she is unforgiving.

Whatever the situation, our town staff is there, doing what needs to be done to keep roads open and the community functioning. In an emergency, the Town Manager becomes the Head of Emergency Services and works together with the Chief of Police and other Department heads to handle whatever comes our way. We are very fortunate in South Kingstown to have highly competent and knowledgeable staff in all of these roles and I have full confidence in their ability to handle whatever comes at us.

One of the first things we passed as a Council two years ago was the hiring of a grant writer, so we could redouble our efforts to win grants to help us extend the town's resources further and alleviate burden on the taxpayer. This has been enormously successful and I would like to continue this work. As communities across the state and the nation grapple with the challenges that weather volatility presents for our roads; opportunities will arise for grants to help address the need, we

will be ready when they do.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure the new high school is completed on time and on budget?

The best defense is a good offense and to that goal, we have been exacting in the decisions we have made throughout this process. When we learned that \$125 million would not be enough to get the job done; although it pained us to do so, we went back and made it right.

One of the biggest things we have done is to hire a Project Manager At Risk; a company by the name of Left Field. They are responsible for making sure we get what we have contracted for, at the price we agree upon with Gilbane. If they don't, it impacts their bottom line.

In choosing Gilbane, a number of qualified residents as well as the School Building Committee and a representative from the Council came together and decided that this company was the best choice for getting the job done right.

I have a great deal of confidence in the school building committee; this committee has been on this project since the beginning and has been a cohesive and well-functioning team. The Town Manager is a member of this committee and briefs the Council at each meeting about where we are in the process.

I think that all of the systems we currently have in place will continue to serve us well moving forward. I believe that communication and ongoing decision making, community outreach and involvement is going to be a huge part of the work over the next two years.

7. Yes/No Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full time residents.

Yes



Dorald W. Beasley
Independent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

If elected here are some of the things I hope to accomplish:

- End twenty-eight years of Democratic control of the South Kingstown Town Council with a coalition of unendorsed, unaffiliated (Independent), and Republican candidates
- Advocate for more transparency and accountability in the annual budget process, dispel the mistrusts that muddy the process, and lower property taxes by controlling spending
- Consent to a long overdue Town Charter review, and let the voters, not the special interests, decide which reforms would bring fairer and more accessible government to South Kingstown, such as non-partisan ballots, and how the council president is chosen

Other than my time in college and the military I've lived in Kingston since my family moved to RI in 1955. I believe I've attended more town council, school committee, and school building committee meetings over the past seven years than anyone else.

Education: Bachelor of Arts degree in Russian and Eastern European Studies from MacMurray College. Occupation: Retired Non-Degreed Process Engineer for Electric Boat.

I was a member of the U.S. Army Reserve for 31 years, last rank held Master Sergeant - MOS (11Z50) Infantry. Junior warden of St. Augustine's Church in Kingston and Little League coach. My current commitments to the community are as a member of the Route 138 Reconstruction Project Area Committee and as the tax assessor for the Kingston Fire District. More recently I was a member of a subcommittee for the School Building Committee and on the Designer Selection Team for the School Committee.

2. What does affordable housing

mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

This is an exceedingly difficult subject that encompasses income inequality and exclusionary biases. I believe affordable housing is housing that is attainable for families with middle to lower-middle class incomes.

If you drive around the Wakefield and Peace Dale you'll see homes of varying sizes along both sides of the streets. That mix of housing allowed people of different income levels to live together in the same neighborhood. This started changing in 1976, when town leaders, afraid SK would become like Warwick approved "downzoning," which increased the minimum sizes of vacant properties that could be sold. It raised the cost of buildable land, incentivizing developers and contractors to build bigger and more expensive homes to maximize profits. It's also led to near zero population growth, a barely expanding tax base, and higher property taxes.

According to the latest figures from rihousing.com South Kingstown's percentage of "low- and moderate-income housing" (LMIH) is decreasing, not increasing. In 2022, of SK's 10,900 housing units only 585 are LMIH putting us 505 units shy of the 10% goal. Other than an occasional Habitat for Humanity offering no one is building affordable or attainable housing, like the Berger "starter homes" of fifty years ago. This is not just a home ownership problem, it's an affordable rental property issue as well. And being a "college town" only exacerbates this. Hopefully a town initiative, just beginning to look at the possibility of turning the South Road and Wakefield Elementary School properties into residential housing, will bear fruit.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

As much as I hate to say this, I don't believe there is a viable plan to save RI's state and town beaches from the ravishes of storm erosion due to global warming. In 1988 the South Kingstown Town Beach opened a beautiful new pavilion with all of the amenities, and a raised boardwalk network which extended a quarter of a mile down the beach towards Charlestown. That boardwalk no longer exists, a casualty of multiple coastal storms which over time took down section after section. In fact, I believe the pavilion has been moved farther away from the beach at least once. A series of three coastal storms this past winter washed away another 4 to 6 feet of sand and soil at the town beach exposing large diameter drainage pipes. I believe the best thing that could be done now is install large pieces of granite and riprap up against the newly exposed embankment to possibly slow down further erosion for the near term. Having said that, I don't think any coastal property with an elevation below 10' today is a long-term viable location for any town facility, business, or private dwelling. If elected, I will advocate for a study to look at the effects that rising ocean levels will have on the tax bases of RI's coastal communities in the next 25 years, and beyond. We need to be proactive with this eventuality.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

The only feasible opportunity we have to collaborate or partner with another community which could contain costs enough to reduce our annual budget is to convince the Narragansett and South Kingstown School Districts to regionalize. Both towns have seen precipitous 40-50% declines in enrollment over the past quarter century. Regrettably, even though our towns have the two highest per pupil costs of any K-12

districts in the state, there is no political will in either community to even begin discussions. Besides, we just approved a \$150M bond referendum in May to build a new high school on School St. Narragansett's enrollment decline may eventually force them to regionalize. My guess is that if that time comes Narragansett will sound out North Kingstown instead.

The thing is we don't need to collaborate with another community to reduce our annual town budget. No, what we need is a 3-person town council majority willing to finally tell the school district that after twenty-four consecutive years of declining enrollments they're getting funded on a per-pupil basis in FY26 as allowed by RI General Law § 16-7-23.

Our district could save the taxpayers even more money if we would set aside \$5-6 million over the next four years and get into the electric school bus business. By acquiring our own buses and vans, and hiring our own drivers and monitors, we could cut the \$6 million we're paying now to Ocean State Transit in half. And that's money saved year, after year, after year.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

Similar to what took place throughout New England as communities were formed in the 16th and 17th centuries, the business centers of Wakefield and Peace Dale were located near the confluence of the Saugatucket River and outflows of the surrounding shallow ponds to harness the power of water. Unfortunately, the infrastructure of bridges and dams built to channel this water were not sized to handle a flash flood brought on by a 3-6" downpour, let alone 100-, 500-, or 1,000-year flood events. Today's record temperatures have intensified the duration and intensity of storms globally as our oceans warm. If you log onto the

SK Web GIS system and activate the "Special Flood Hazard Area Overlay" and the "FEMA Flood Zones" you will see how much of our community is in danger. But the issue of streets flooding in and around South Kingstown during and after heavy rain events cannot be solved without the full cooperation of RIDOT, because some of the worse areas are along state highways like Routes 108, 110 and 138. As a member of the town council, I would request that a thorough study be undertaken to pinpoint the key infrastructure deficiencies and ask for our state legislators assistance in getting the full cooperation of the DOT to help find and fund solutions.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

South Kingstown has followed the advice given to the SK School Building Subcommittee during our tour of the new East Providence High School which was to hire a Construction Manager-at-Risk (CMAR) to oversee the project shifting much of the financial risk and responsibility off of the town. After a thorough vetting process South Kingstown hired Gilbane, Inc. one of America's leading construction firms to be our CMAR. This construction model provides for more accurate and competitive bids, greater efficiency and shorter timelines from increased collaboration and consultation, which can lead to an overall better-quality build. When combined with "value engineering" it can increase overall value, usually by finding alternatives that either improve quality at the same price or maintain quality while reducing costs associated with things like change orders. I believe we're in good hands.

7. Yes/No: Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes



Deborah D. Bergner
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office, and what civic, community, and life experience do you bring to be successful?

Thank you to the League of Women Voters for this opportunity. My husband CJ Bergner and I have lived in SK for 25+ years and raised our children (Casey-29, Hailey-27, and Michael-24) who are proud graduates of SKHS. A native Rhode Islander, I hold a BA from Brown University in Urban Studies, a master's degree from Springfield College in Counseling Psychology. I recently completed the Master of Social Work program at Rhode Island College. Residents are invited to contact me: debbergner@gmail.com or 401-515-5771.

It has been an honor to serve on the South Kingstown Town Council for the past four years. As a Democrat with an independent perspective, I bring values such as honesty, collaboration, and integrity to my role. I've been a consistent advocate for responsible governance, affordable housing, and mindful spending of our tax dollars. My goal is to continue being a voice for the residents, ensuring that decisions are made with both immediate and long-term consequences in mind. Living in South Kingstown and raising my family here, I understand the community's needs deeply. My previous achievements, including expanding the elderly tax abatement program and advocating for a new EMS facility station. During my most

recent term, we have secured grants to construct a new dock at Marina Park and to improve the Peace Dale Library. Our local businesses will be able to use ARPA funds to renovate their properties. I am committed to continuing this important work for the positive benefit to our community.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you, and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing is one of the most pressing challenges in South Kingstown. Home prices have soared and are out of reach for many of our neighbors. Yearly rentals are scarce and expensive. We must ensure that both young families and seniors can afford to live in our community. Since joining the Town Council, I've supported policies that increase housing options, such as adopting the Comprehensive Plan and approving Cottage Zoning and Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinances. I have initiated the exploration to repurpose South Road and Wakefield Elementary schools, to increase housing options and support economic vitality. These initiatives are just the beginning. Moving forward, I believe we need to develop additional strategies to address the complex issue of housing affordability.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long-

term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

The recent storms have underscored the urgent need for a robust beach resiliency plan. My approach involves working closely with environmental experts, state agencies, and community stakeholders to develop a long-term strategy. This plan will focus on strengthening natural barriers, such as dunes and wetlands, and investing in infrastructure that can withstand severe weather events. Additionally, I support efforts to secure state and federal funding to enhance our beach areas and protect them from future storms, ensuring they remain safe and accessible for all residents.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce the budget/ contain costs? Please be specific.

Collaboration with neighboring municipalities has the potential for reducing costs and enhancing services. We currently partner with the town of Narragansett for animal shelter services and senior services. Annual reviews of these services ensure they continue to be beneficial for South Kingstown. We rely on the Kingston and Union Fire Departments for fire services, and I deeply appreciate our volunteers and their vital contribution to our community. By pooling resources with nearby

towns, we may reduce overhead costs and increase efficiency. We could explore joint purchasing agreements for essential supplies and equipment, allowing us to benefit from bulk pricing and further reduce our overall budget. To make shared municipal services successful, we also need to set clear goals and measure how well we're doing. It's important to keep an eye on the quality of services to make sure they don't drop if resources are spread too thin or if there are disagreements about how things should be done. We also need to make sure that each town involved still has some say in how things are managed, so no one feels like they're losing control over their services. If the community supports pursuing shared services, I am eager to collaborate and make this initiative a reality.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

Frequent street flooding is a growing concern that requires immediate and long-term solutions. In the short term, we need to prioritize maintenance of our stormwater drainage systems to ensure they function properly. This includes clearing debris from storm drains and repairing damaged infrastructure. A comprehensive stormwater management plan includes upgrading outdated systems and incorporating green infrastruc-

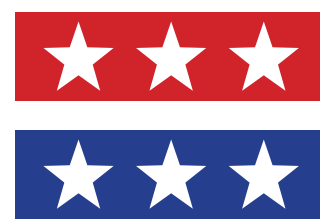
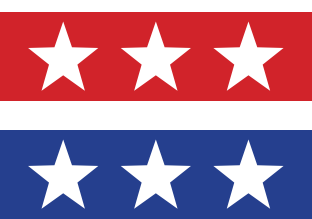
ture, such as permeable pavements, to improve water absorption and reduce runoff. We should also explore opportunities for state and federal funding to support these critical infrastructure improvements.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

Ensuring that the new high school is completed on time and within budget is one of my top priorities. I will continue to advocate for public updates on the project's progress, including any potential challenges. Keeping the community informed fosters trust and allows for proactive problem-solving. Having served on the Town Council since 2020, I have demonstrated decision-making keeping immediate and long-term consequences in mind. Managing our tax dollars wisely is crucial; Collaboration is key; I will work closely with other council members, project managers, town staff, and school administrators to address any issues promptly. If re-elected, I will remain committed to being responsive to our constituents, ensuring the new high school is a project we can all be proud of.

7. Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes



South Kingstown General Election Candidates

SOUTH KINGSTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Michael E. Day
Republican

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

During my term in office, I aim to achieve several key objectives that will benefit our community. I am committed to passing a Homestead Act, which will provide significant tax relief to homeowners, helping to make homeownership more affordable. Additionally, I plan to streamline regulations and cut unnecessary expenditures to ensure that our government operates more efficiently. My goal is to enhance the services we provide to our residents while keeping costs manageable, all without increasing taxes.

My background and experience will help me succeed in these efforts. I proudly served in the US Army National Guard's 119th Military Police Company from 1991 to 2000, where I received an honorable discharge and the Army Achievement Medal. This experience instilled in me a strong sense of discipline, dedication, and a commitment to serving others. My professional education includes an Associate of Science in Video and Radio Production and a BS in Information Science with a concentration in Multimedia, providing me with a strong foundation in both technology and communication. These experiences, combined with my dedication to public service, equip me to effectively represent our community and work toward achieving our shared goals.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing can vary greatly depending on individual circumstances, including income, cost of living, and personal financial goals. For some, "affordable" might mean meeting basic needs without financial strain, while for others, it could mean having the disposable income to save, invest, or enjoy a specific lifestyle. In the context of ensuring that the next generation can achieve the American Dream—owning a home, starting a business, and raising a family—affordability encompasses more than just managing day-to-day expenses. It involves creating an environment where young people are not merely surviving but thriving; where they can build wealth, invest in their futures, and actively contribute to their communities. To address the increasing demand for housing in South Kingstown, reducing regulations and easing zoning laws could make it simpler for property owners to build or add second dwelling units on properties. However, to prevent rapid and uncontrolled growth, it is crucial to cap the number of permits issued annually for new structures. This strategy would ensure that development proceeds at a sustainable pace, helping to preserve the town's character and infrastructure. Additionally, implementing a Homestead Act could offer tax reductions for full-time residents, which would incentivize permanent residency and support those who contribute consistently to the community. By establishing clear eligibility criteria for the Homestead Act and regularly assessing infrastructure needs, South Kingstown can balance growth with sustainability. This approach would enable the town to address housing needs thoughtfully while maintaining

its unique character and supporting its long-term residents

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

Long-term planning for beach resiliency involves a comprehensive approach that addresses both environmental and community needs. To begin, conduct risk assessments by evaluating current beach conditions, erosion rates, and past storm impacts using satellite imagery, historical weather data, and shoreline surveys. Engage local residents, businesses, and stakeholders in the planning process to ensure their concerns and needs are addressed. Collaborate with environmental scientists, urban planners, and engineers to design effective solutions. Focus on reinforcing natural barriers such as dunes, wetlands, and consider upgrading seawalls, breakwaters, and other protective structures. Implement zoning laws to prevent construction in high-risk areas and promote sustainable practices. This strategy balances immediate needs with long-term sustainability, ensuring that beaches remain resilient against future storms while supporting local ecosystems and communities.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

I strongly support collaboration with other municipalities to reduce budgets and contain costs. I will actively advocate for and pursue every opportunity to cut expenses and save money. To be specific, I would need

to research the resources available in South Kingstown and the surrounding municipalities to identify areas where we can effectively share and optimize these resources

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

To address the frequent street flooding in South Kingstown, the town should adopt a comprehensive approach that combines immediate actions with long-term strategies. Upgrading the existing drainage infrastructure to handle increased rainfall, incorporating green infrastructure solutions like rain gardens and permeable pavements, and enhancing maintenance protocols to keep storm drains clear are essential steps. Conducting a thorough flood risk assessment will help prioritize the most vulnerable areas for improvement. Additionally, developing flood mitigation policies for new developments, collaborating with neighboring municipalities on regional flood management, and engaging the community through public education can significantly reduce flood risks. Pursuing state and federal grants will also provide vital funding for these initiatives, helping to improve the town's resilience to future flooding events.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

To ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget, I would support several key policies and procedures. First, I

would advocate for the establishment of a detailed project management plan that includes clear timelines, milestones, and deliverables. This plan should be regularly reviewed and updated to address any delays or changes in scope. Second, I would support the creation of a dedicated oversight committee that includes representatives from the school district, local government, and community members. This committee would be responsible for monitoring progress, reviewing expenditures, and ensuring transparency throughout the project.

Third, I would promote the implementation of a competitive bidding process for selecting contractors and vendors, ensuring that we secure high-quality services at the best possible prices. Additionally, I would encourage the use of value engineering practices to identify cost-saving opportunities without compromising the quality of the project. To further control costs, I would support regular financial audits and require that any change orders or budget adjustments be thoroughly vetted and approved by the oversight committee.

Lastly, I would advocate for strong communication channels between all stakeholders, including regular progress reports and public meetings to keep the community informed and engaged. By implementing these policies and procedures, we can help ensure that the new high school is completed on time, within budget, and to the highest standards.

7. Yes/No: Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes



Debra MacDowell
Republican

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office, and what civic, community, and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I believe the Town Council should be transparent, respond to all requests, be clear and unbiased in their motives, open minded to suggestions and fiscally conservative. I'm retired after thirty-three years as a pottery/gift store owner in Newport. I've managed employees, city and state regulations, and familiar with small business issues. I'm a deacon at church and have been for a total of seven years. Deaconship involves community outreach, such as supplying food banks, soup kitchen, clothing and food drives and visitation to shut ins. My husband is a self employed boat carpenter and our daughter graduated from SKHS and URI.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you, and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing runs the gamut, temporary homeless shelters, Section 8, homeless Vets and working families

etc. SK biggest housing issue is the lack of units for rent, affordable or over priced. I'm pleased SK has embraced the ADU (Accessory Dwelling Units) ordinance. The Council should consider encouraging public and private interests to provide low interest loans to potential developers. I also endorse expediting the permit process. ADU apartments would ease the shortage and lower rent prices significantly. I am opposed to large scale low income housing projects such that Newport has. The maintenance of these buildings have become a heavy tax burden on the community and a generational life choice. Passing a Homestead Act would decrease taxes for local residents especially for our elderly struggling to keep their homes. Helping them maintain ownership should be a priority, not encouraging out of town people to relocate here for low income housing.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long-term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

It's been thirty-three years since the last hurricane but the storm in Dec '23 and the two in Jan '24

hammered our coastline. Bills have been introduced with much fanfare to appropriate funds for CMRC to provide remedies, strategies and eventual projects for beach restoration. Unfortunately there is no easy fix to stop beach erosion. Redepositing sand is expensive and temporary, yet we need to be as proactive as fiscally possible to protect our shoreline for future generations. Seventy-eight percent of our tax revenue goes to the school department, that doesn't leave much after our proposed capital expenditures and municipal expenses.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce the budget/ contain costs? Please be specific.

Joint purchasing and procurement of vehicles/equipment or maintenance, bulk purchasing of motor fuels etc. The biggest savings would have been combining schools but that ship has sailed.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

Street flooding washes oil, gas, litter and pollutants into our creeks and rivers. This affects wildlife and ultimately us. Our river banks should never be stripped of vegetation or trees. Trees make a huge difference not only in water retention they enhance percolation into the soil, fallen leaves create layers of absorption and leaves break the force of falling rain. Trees reduce the expense of pipes and treatment plants. Treeless streets are inhospitable, hot and add to stormwater runoff. I would like to see a subsidized tree planting program like other RI communities. Bare root 6'-10' are purchased (\$85) from the town by individuals and planted by the town. Citizens can sponsor a tree for public right-of-way or setback up to 20' on private property. SK needs to encourage pervious materials for parking lots, driveways and sidewalks. I'm not in favor of mandates or ordinances but incentives during the permitting process. Saugatucket Rd had serious flooding recently and it appears the culvert is undersized. That should be addressed. Homeowners should clear the street drains near their homes and not expect the town to do it for them.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

Area towns can work together on common issues, including education and municipal services. There have been discussions among members of the Washington County Regional Planning council to access federal grants available under the Inflation Reduction Act for coastal resiliency.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

Recent storms have been so intense, dropping a lot of rain in a short time, that it overwhelms the drainage systems in place. A lot of the most heavily traveled SK roads are state-

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

Four out of five school building projects are over budget and seeking a second bond. This should not and cannot happen here. The three other schools in SK need \$32 million in repairs right now. Chris Spiegel of Leftfield Project Management did an excellent job of convincing 52% of the voters that the new high school would open in the Fall of 2027 and on budget. The Town Council has the responsibility to make sure that the contract is adhered to and keep the public aware of the progress. Regular oversight reports from the school building committee should provide the public of any concerns. One aspect of the bond I would not negotiate is the \$11 million dedicated to the athletic field. These funds should not be diverted.

7. Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes



Michael K. Marran
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I hope to continue the work I've been doing with my colleagues, particularly in: 1) overseeing construction of the new high school approved by the voters; 2) changing town ordinances and zoning to improve conditions for construction of more affordable housing; 3) assessing what we can do to adapt to the effects of climate change that are already apparent in town, and prepare for the additional effects that we will see in the future.

My life experience has made me very familiar with the needs and conditions of living in South Kingstown. I grew up at Roy Carpenter's Beach during summers, moved into town in 1992 with my wife Jennifer and our

sons Patrick, Timothy and Sean, and have been here ever since. I've been a practicing attorney for 40 years, served on the SK School Committee, the Charter Commission, and been active in Scouts and Christ the King Church in Kingston.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

There is a specific government formula for "affordable housing" that relates to measuring an applicant's income against Median Income, but generally in this current crisis it means that almost any housing in South Kingstown is unaffordable even by those with good incomes, especially young families. This is a state and national issue, and there are very few opportunities for the town council to

make big changes. We are working on making some town surplus properties available for housing development, and looking at ways to adapt our local ordinances to the new legislation passed by the General Assembly.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

There is no simple permanent answer to the problem of beach erosion, which at least in part is due to climate change and stronger, more frequent storms. This past winter, we delayed buying sand to replenish the town beach until late spring when the worst of the storm season had passed. Mother nature is changing the shoreline yearly, and we have to adapt and respond to each year's changes.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

Area towns can work together on common issues, including education and municipal services. There have been discussions among members of the Washington County Regional Planning council to access federal grants available under the Inflation Reduction Act for coastal resiliency.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

Recent storms have been so intense, dropping a lot of rain in a short time, that it overwhelms the drainage systems in place. A lot of the most heavily traveled SK roads are state-

owned roads (Routes 1, 138, 108, etc.). We can't change those roads or drainage, but we can lobby the state for better maintenance, regrading, and improved drainage.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

We have already required twice monthly updates from the SBC/ administration, and the Owner's Manager has been directed to create a new website for the project for the public to monitor progress.

7. Yes/No: Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes



Rory H. McEntee
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

First off, I love this town and everything it has to offer. I am running for re-election to the SK Town Council because I care about our community and want to continue working for the people of SK to achieve progress for the town. During my tenure on the Town Council, we established a municipal court, subsidized affordable housing, worked on initiatives to expand commercial zoning, got a high school bond referendum passed, and all while passing a budget with no tax increase for FY 2024-2025. But a lot remains to be done.

Over the next two years, the council must ensure the high school project gets built timely and within cost constraints. We need to continue to find tax relief by expanding the tax base, incentivizing development, and offering tax relief in the form of a homestead exemption. We also need to continue to increase the supply of affordable housing options in town. With a few vacant schools, we are currently studying the possibilities of reuse for business and housing capabilities. These are all priorities that I am addressing now and will continue to work on once re-elected.

I am in my third term on the Town Council and am the Town Council President. I am also an Attorney and Certified Public Accountant. My experience on the Town Council and

professional experiences continue to assist me in addressing any town issues that arise.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing is a critical issue. It is becoming increasingly difficult for young families to acquire and own a home in South Kingstown. To address the shortage of affordable housing in South Kingstown, I intend to promote, monitor, and expand the Town's existing affordable housing initiatives (including higher-density housing ordinances and auxiliary dwelling unit tax abatements). Moreover, the Town Council is currently working to establish mixed-use zoning in certain areas of Town. In particular, we are working to establish a mixed-use zoning ordinance along Old Tower Hill Road, which would modify the existing zoning to include commercial and residential and allow for expanded development opportunities. The Town Council is also working to identify the best measures for the reuse of vacant school buildings, including potential mixed-use housing and higher-density housing developments.

I intend to work with the Town Council to modify zoning ordinances where appropriate to incentivize developers to build more affordable housing. The Town Council will continue to allocate funds to its

affordable housing fund through its annual budget process to assist and jump-start new affordable housing programs. Over the past term, the Town Council has substantially increased the affordable housing fund to position it better to deploy funds for meaningful housing initiatives. Finally, I support and will continue to support the establishment of a homestead exemption in South Kingstown. A homestead exemption remains a priority of mine, and the Town Administration is currently working to evaluate options for the Town Council's review and implementation.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

The storms over the past year have certainly shown the need for long-term beach resiliency planning. Maintaining the Town's quality beaches is very important. I plan to support more allocations of funds toward beach replenishment and resiliency efforts in the Town's annual budget and capital improvement plan. The Town has and will continue to seek and obtain aid from state and federal grants to improve beach resiliency.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

Several opportunities exist for collaborating with neighboring municipalities to reduce town budget costs. Currently, South Kingstown and Narragansett share in the costs related to the operation of the South Kingstown Senior Center. South Kingstown also collaborates with Narragansett to share the costs related to South Kingstown's wastewater treatment facility and the South Kingstown animal shelter. These agreements amongst towns are examples of shared services and shared costs by the two towns and demonstrate how collaboration with other municipalities can be effective. Another area for shared collaboration is preserving the Narrow River, which borders both South Kingstown and Narragansett. As an important asset to our town, South Kingstown must collaborate with Narragansett to preserve our shared interest in maintaining the aquaculture and recreation opportunities at costs that both towns can share.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

The Town certainly has an interest in mitigating the flooding on streets we've seen over the past year. To address this, the Town Council must expend funds to improve its infrastructure where necessary to ensure drainage systems are working and directing the water effectively. The

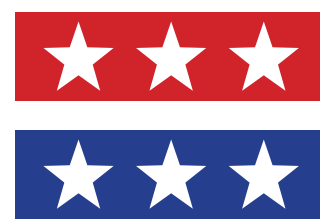
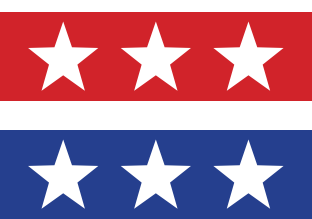
Town Council must work with the Town Administration and Directors to make sure it has all the facts and circumstances to understand street flooding issues and the best and most effective measures to address them.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

The Town Council must ensure the new high school project is built on time and within budget. Currently, the Town Council receives an update on the project status at every Town Council meeting. The Town Council stays apprised of all votes and discussions at School Building Committee meetings. We also hear directly from the project manager, architects, and construction manager involved in the project. Before we vote on any contract requiring Town Council approval, we make sure we hear directly from the professionals involved and gain an understanding of all aspects of their work. The Town Council will continue to do this and hold all parties accountable as we progress toward construction of the new high school.

7. Yes/No: Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes



South Kingstown General Election Candidates

SOUTH KINGSTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Sean O'Donnell
Republican

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I've lived in South Kingstown since 1990. I am a pharmacist at the University of Rhode Island and at the Rhode Island Veterans' Home. I have been active in local politics for about 20 years. My civic involvement has included coaching various youth sports teams. I am currently still involved in SK Post 39 American Legion Baseball. I help lead Bible Study at St. Francis Church in Wakefield. My voice, if elected, would be reasoned, polite, respectful and tilted toward the concerns of the taxpayer; the so-called "Forgotten Man."

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

It has been no secret that available housing, particularly for young adults, is in short supply at an affordable price and has been for some time. First there are underlying fundamentals to recognize. About one third of the property in South Kingstown is protected from ever being developed. We also are very tough on permitting for new property development. These are both supply side realities.

Next, we live in a very desirable location by the ocean that makes demand very strong. GoLocal Prov in 2022 reported that property values in South Kingstown increased at a higher rate than any other town in Rhode Island. One idea to help create more affordable residences is to amplify the concept of mixed-use locations. In this scenario, a business may exist on ground level with available residence above. Here, small business AND local residents work together to the benefit of both parties. I also support

efforts to allow for a second dwelling to be built on an existing property.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

I would support efforts; strategic or structural; that could succeed in minimizing or stopping such erosion. Such support however must present no danger to adjacent properties, be reasonable in cost with regard to overall budgeting and must be constitutionally sound with regard to respect for private property.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

I'm in favor in a broad general sense with the hope of saving tax dollars. I would support consolidating

positions where applicable based on attrition (vacancy or retirement). Where cooperative consolidation can occur; in an effort to reduce expenditures, I am in support.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

If structural changes can be made to prevent such flooding, they should be carried out. The question itself brings to light the following point. Our tax dollars and budget need to reflect the broad needs of South Kingstown. They cannot be hyper focused on just one aspect of the town, without other areas being neglected.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

I am in favor of not going over budget. In the last 25 years we have lost about half of our students and our population of 55 year old and over residents has doubled. There are growing needs in budgetary areas beyond just the schools. Some of these costs are included in a few of the questions on this survey. Let us also remember that there will likely be substantial costs coming up for our grade schools. The \$150 million dollar bond is for the high school project only. Veering off budget would mean ignoring an array of other needs in the town and show a lack of concern for the generosity of the local taxpayer.

7. Yes/No: Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes



Charles Gregory Sweet
Republican Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

Some of my goals for this next term include addressing the short-term rental issue and a homestead exemption. I will also push to update the Town's Charter and develop a long-range plan for the upkeep of town property.

The TC also needs to make sure the public is welcome at our meetings. We need to act to encourage the public to ask questions and provide input. It's disrespectful to make residents wait 3 to 4 hours to talk with the TC. Public comments should be allowed at the beginning of TC meetings and during New Business items on the agendas. For me it comes down to respecting all of our citizens, no matter what political party they belong to, and wanting to hear their questions and provide answers, as well as to hear their ideas.

I am a lifetime resident of SK and truly love this town. I grew up in SK and attended SK's schools, as did my grandparents, parents and my children. I have been involved in

community organizations working for the betterment of SK and serving the public for my adult life, including the South Kingstown Lions Club, and the Chamber of Commerce, where I was president for 2 years. Together with my brother, I have owned and operated KOOLCO, a successful SK business, for 24 years.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing to me means housing that is obtainable as well as sustainable. We want young people to be able to afford their first homes, whether rented or purchased, and our seniors to be able to continue to live in their homes in SK.

This is a complicated issue that town and cities all over RI and the United States are grappling with. In the area of developing new housing, financing and government regulations need to be looked at. The TC needs to ask our State and Federal representatives about loan programs for home buyers and for developers to build affordable units. The town

needs to consider all taxpayers when addressing the issue. And most importantly, we need to have more public meetings where citizens are allowed to address their concerns and offer their ideas. As mentioned above, the TC must actively work to listen to the public. For at least 8 years this issue has been "discussed" by the TC, and only now we have had the first meeting for the public where they seemed to be welcomed.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

SK cannot address this alone. We need to have a discussion with the federal government to find a meaningful solution to the problem. We need to know what our options are, the costs and how to pay for it.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget / contain costs? Please be specific.

We already collaborate with Narragansett with our senior services,

EMS and the wastewater departments. Merging school districts with Narragansett would have been a great opportunity to create savings for both towns. This used to be done until 1977 when Narragansett opened their own high school. While not seeing anything in writing I was told Narragansett did not want to merge with South Kingstown.

I would love to see the 2 town councils get together to discuss other potential savings. I'd want to see it done in a public forum.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

We had a golden opportunity to fix problems like this using COVID money, but it wasn't done. For example, rather than use that money for public safety issues such as street flooding, the town council majority chose to gift \$1.25 million to select property owners in select areas of town. To me that's an unfair gift that will increase the value of those private properties but does nothing to make needed repairs in our town.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

The school project has a NOT TO EXCEED contract for the project. But, like with any project, there will be change orders and "unforeseeable" added costs. With these potential added costs I will insist they make adjustments in other parts of the project to absorb the additional expenses so the total cost remains the same or less.

I will ask for monthly written, detailed project updates. I want to know potential problems that may put the project off the schedule. If there are issues I want the consultants and contractors' to provide ways to solve the problems to keep the project on its intended timeline and cost.

7. Yes/No: Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes



Jay G. Wegimont
Democrat

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community, and life experience do you bring to be successful?

During my term in office, I hope to achieve several key goals: ensuring the new high school project is completed on time and within budget, expanding affordable housing options, supporting small businesses, and enhancing sustainability efforts, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. My experiences include serving as a volunteer firefighter with the South Kingstown Union Fire Department, participating actively in local initiatives, and working in various government roles. These roles have equipped me with the knowledge and dedication to effectively serve the people of South Kingstown. More details on my campaign can be found on my website.

2. What does affordable housing mean to you, and what specifically should the town do to address affordable housing?

Affordable housing means ensuring that all residents, from young families to seniors, have access to safe, stable, and reasonably priced homes within our community. To address this, the town should prioritize mixed-income developments, provide incentives for developers to include affordable units in new projects, and work to secure state and federal funding to support these initiatives. Streamlining the approval process for affordable housing projects is also essential to encouraging more development in this area.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long-term planning of beach resiliency. What is your plan?

My plan for beach resiliency includes working closely with environmental experts to develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses both immediate and long-term needs. This strategy would include reinforcing natural barriers like dunes, implementing sustainable drainage systems, and exploring the use of living shorelines to protect against erosion. Collaboration with state agencies and securing grants for these initiatives will be essential to ensure our beaches remain resilient against future storms.

4. What opportunities do you see for collaborating with other municipalities to reduce budget/contain costs? Please be specific.

There are several opportunities for collaboration with neighboring municipalities to reduce costs,

such as sharing resources for public safety, joint purchasing agreements for equipment and supplies, and regionalizing certain services like waste management and public transportation. By pooling resources and coordinating efforts, we can achieve economies of scale that benefit all participating communities.

5. How should the town address the frequent street flooding that we are experiencing in South Kingstown?

To address frequent street flooding, the town should invest in upgrading our stormwater infrastructure, including the installation of larger drainage systems and the incorporation of permeable surfaces in public spaces. Additionally, we should prioritize areas most prone to flooding and seek state and federal funding to support these critical infrastructure improve-

ments.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

I will support strict oversight and transparency measures, including regular progress reports to the public, independent audits, and a clear project management plan with defined milestones and accountability mechanisms. Ensuring community input and maintaining open lines of communication with all stakeholders will also be key to staying on track and within budget.

7. Do you support a homestead property tax exemption for full-time residents?

Yes

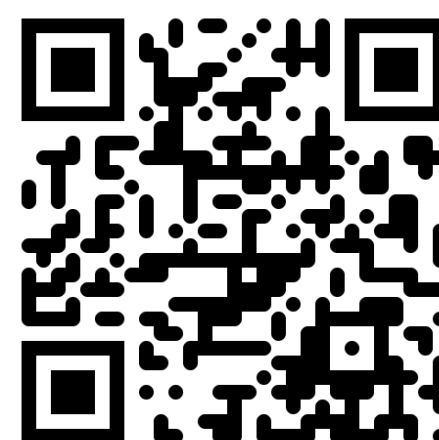
PETER PHELPS - R - no response



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South Kingstown General Election Candidates



SOUTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Michelle Brousseau
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I have served on the South Kingstown School Committee for 3 terms. I was first elected in 2012, and re-elected in 2016 and 2020.

During this past term, we have worked together as a committee to update our policies, and to craft new ones. This work has been necessary due to some of our policies being outdated, containing outdated language and the need to craft new ones in order to address 21st century teaching and learning. I look forward to that work continuing.

We also need to update our Strategic Plan. I look forward to that work, and I hope to include our community in that work.

In addition, we are expecting the results of the Equity Audit for which we have contracted. We will spend some time reviewing and discussing that report, and making plans to implement recommendations.

We have our plans for the new high school well underway, and I look forward to that work moving ahead.

During my time on the South Kingstown School Committee, I have participated in over 300 hours of Professional Development designed for School Committees. This Professional development is offered through the

Rhode Island Association of School Committees, the National School Board Association, the RI Attorney General's Office and the Hassenfeld Institute at Bryant University.

I am an educator with 48 years of classroom experience. I have taught in public schools (32 years, grades 8-12), and am currently teaching at the community college level.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

I believe that I have always had a good relationship with our Educators and our Administrators. With the passing and implementation of the Education Act of 2019, curriculum development and implementation as well as books in our classrooms and libraries are not under the purview of the School Committee. These decisions are solely under the direction of the Superintendent, the Central Office Senior Administrative Staff and the building Principals, and Assistant Principals.

In addition, many of these decisions are directed by Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). In many of these situations, the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education and her Senior Staff decide on a few

"acceptable" curricula, and individual districts can choose which one they would prefer to use from that list. The district professionals together with building administrators and district administrators in the specific discipline would make that decision.

3. Are there areas where you see collaboration with other districts to hold down costs or improve services? Please elaborate.

I would like to discuss some collaboration with other local districts in some areas. I would need to see specifically how much money this would save our district

If such a collaboration were to be implemented, it would mean that our senior administrative staff would have to meet with their counterparts in those other districts, and that would be followed by a meeting of the School Committees from both (or all if multiple) districts.

It is my understanding that this discussion has taken place with other nearby districts and there was no interest on the part of other districts.

I firmly believe that we should approach this topic again

4. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

I believe in parental choice and favor a conservative approach to these issues but will endeavor to include opinions from Teachers, Parents and Librarians on issues of curriculum development and books. I would handle these on a case by case basis and give everyone an equal priority on their opinions since these issues affect these 3 groups equally.

I do not know of any collaboration with other districts at this time. This does not mean there is no current collaboration. I will endeavor to engage with other school committees

to collaborate on ways to hold down costs and improve services. As part of my research I would visit our district and other district schools for 1/2 days.

4. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

This is a sensitive subject. After becoming familiar with the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse and Transitioning policy I will say that my support for this policy is limited.

I agree and support an individual's right to identify themselves as another sex unless it interferes with another person's right to privacy and feeling of safety. Under The current Rhode Island Department Policy Transgenderers are allowed access to Bathrooms, changing rooms and lockers rooms of the sex they identify as even if a Student of the biological sex objects, is offended or feels unsafe by their presence. One solution that The RI policy supports building a

Absolutely. We are public schools, and in my opinion, we need to welcome all young people. We need to make our schools, classrooms and other spaces comfortable and safe for every one of our students. Our students should be able to come into our buildings as they are, without any pressure to conform to any particular perceived societal "norm"

5. Over the past few years, schools have been closed and merged. What do you see as the resulting impacts?

When I was first elected, 12 years ago, our state was seeing declining enrollment in the suburbs while enrollment in urban areas was increasing. In today's world, enrollment in public schools is declining all across the country.

In our district, we have closed 2 schools. We, as a School Committee, had several subcommittees working throughout the entire school year prior to the closing of these schools. These subcommittees consisted of School Committee members, teachers and administrators, parents, and community members. In the lead up to closing these 2 schools, a thoughtful and careful process was implemented, and continually updated in our Public School Committee meetings. The goal was to level out class sizes across our elementary

schools, and to try to even out our students' time on buses throughout our elementary schools. Prior to the closing of these schools, we had a great discrepancy in class sizes across our elementary schools with some classes having 12-15 students, while a classroom in a different elementary school in the same grade having 23 students. We felt that this imbalance was simply not fair to our educators or to our students and their families.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

We have a School Building Committee which consists of School Committee members, our maintenance director, some of our administrators as well as Town Council members and Town employees and some community members.

In addition to this very active committee keeping its eye on the project, we have hired professionals whose job it is to keep this project on time and on budget with our wonderful high school building project

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



John Buehler
Republican

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I hope to make a difference to our Students and Teachers by serving on SK School Committee. I bring extensive life experience through 17 years in the US Navy when I managed Ordnance Divisions on 4 ships and Taught a Navy Technical course. My Civic experience includes 20 years as a City employee for the City of Newport. During this time I participated in NEARI union #840. As the Vice President of this Union I helped negotiate contracts between the City Administration and the Union. As manager of the Trustee committee for my Church I was in charge of maintaining and upgrading the Churches property. Finally, I have personal experience with the school system with 4 kids and 3 grandkids who benefited from RI public, private and Colleges. One of my Grandsons is currently a Senior in a RI High school.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

I believe in parental choice and favor a conservative approach to these issues but will endeavor to include opinions from Teachers, Parents and Librarians on issues of curriculum development and books. I would handle these on a case by case basis and give everyone an equal priority on their opinions since these issues affect these 3 groups equally.

3. Are there areas where you see collaboration with other districts to hold down costs or improve services? Please elaborate.

I do not know of any collaboration with other districts at this time. This does not mean there is no current collaboration. I will endeavor to engage with other school committees

to collaborate on ways to hold down costs and improve services. As part of my research I would visit our district and other district schools for 1/2 days.

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"Unisex" bathroom in addition to the conventional bathrooms in the new construction such as our High School. I agree. I do not support Biological boys competing with girls in certain sports such as swimming. The policy allows any individual to participate in any sport or intramural activity of their choosing irregardless of their biological sex and how unfair it is to others.

The Rhode Island Policy is based on Title 9. President Bidens' effort to lift the current bans on these Title 9 unconstitutional rules that overlook most students' rights to privacy and sexual fairness in sport was over-ruled 2 days ago by the United States Supreme Court.

5. Over the past few years, schools have been closed and merged. What do you see as the resulting impacts?

It is my understanding that 2 SK schools were closed because of the dwindling student population. I believe SK can rent them out to other

districts as needed when and if they are needed by these other districts when they renovate their existing schools. We should keep them in reserve in case our student population increases. This could happen if the housing crisis ends or Homeland security sends us immigrants.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

Hire an independent auditing company and have competitive bidding. Close monitoring by the school committee and transparency with the public will also help.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Stewart A. Lander
Democrat

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

The success I achieve is more about what we as a school committee working together can achieve to provide a safe, inclusive learning environment and assure the delivery of a high quality education for all students.

My community and life experience:

- BA (WCSU 1977) in psychology and a minor in education
- MA (UCONN 1981) in vocational counseling while working for the State Dept. of Education finding resources while having a limited budget helping people with disabilities to retain or become gainfully employed
- served on advisory board at the UCONN School of Business and mentored students for the past 3 years
- worked in financial Services for 35 years building teams, developing territories, managing budgets and working strategically across all functions of the business to ensure success
- trainer and coach for the past 13 years with Sandler Training
- served on the board for Kinder-

Vision, a non-profit organization, which provides educational material to schools to empower children and teens through peer to peer education to prevent victimization

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

This is one of the main reasons I've decided to run for the school committee.

- "Think Nationally, Act Locally"
- Removing books and implementing curriculums that do not allow students to see themselves in the stories or look beyond themselves and see others which will help broaden their understanding of their fellow classmates is not education for all
- Firstbook Study 2023, shows data that suggests absenteeism goes down and test scores go up when schools implement curriculums which include books on diversity and history
- I support ensuring that everyone has a voice and should be heard while allowing the professionals in the SK

school system be the ones we look to for expert advice on issues of curriculum and books in our classrooms.

3. Are there areas where you see collaboration with other districts to hold down costs or improve services? Please elaborate.

Reduced enrollment in many towns throughout the state requires looking at the trends and data forecasting further challenges that we and our neighboring towns will be facing. In the past the school committee has collaborated with Charho on transportation efforts. Wherever possible, the school committees should collaborate on opportunities through open dialogue and consensus that have a beneficial outcome for both districts.

4. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

When the policy was written the school committee consulted with their legal department to assure its intent was in the best interest of all the students. There is a widespread problem whereby students experience

anxiety, are being bullied, considering harm to themselves and not attending classes as a result of harassment. As mentioned above, I was on the board of KinderVision which implemented the Teen PSA's program in schools which "has students choose the issue they want to educate their peers on with the supervision of teachers and parent consent forms. Students are encouraged to create a safer more caring climate in their schools." This is a program I would look to implement in the SK school system.

5. Over the past few years, schools have been closed and merged. What do you see as the resulting impacts?

Declining birth rates and declining enrollment across the state has many towns and cities looking at these trends. SK in the past 6 years has had 22% reduction in enrollment. As budgets tighten and less Federal and State money is appropriated, it's difficult to keep buildings open which have continued need for maintenance costs and less personnel. While assuring programs aren't cut that promote a well-rounded educational experience for all students, I would back an educational model that supports

continuity from K-5, grades 6-8 and 9-12 aids the students in a smoother transition from building to building.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

It's critical that the new high school be completed within budget and on time. The "right people" have been hired including a project manager, architect and construction company. As part of the decision and execution of the project, contracts are in place with a no risk clause. Shortly, a geo-thermal viability assessment will be conducted on the current high school property. In the event I am elected, I will work closely with the committee to monitor the projects progress to stay on time and within budget.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



Bradley Shear
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am focused on every student having equitable access to a high-quality education. We must understand our current students' experiences and honestly examine our shortcomings to achieve that goal. I voted to initiate a district-wide equity audit this school year. The study's results will guide us when we decide how resources are best distributed, what professional education we might need, and what data we need to measure to ensure all our students are successful. Literacy is at the core of student success, and I am focused on getting every student reading at grade level. We have seen some improvement in this area, but it is insufficient. We need to examine how we can continuously improve in this area.

I have spent my professional life working in non-profit organizations that improve communities. This experience has helped me understand how to accomplish goals when resources are constrained in our school district. When my children started attending school in our district, I became involved in the PTO, attended school committee meetings regularly, and later became a Peace Dale School Improvement Team member. I was thankful to be appointed to the

School Committee a year and a half ago to learn more about the workings of the district and play a part in our recent growth.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

Our educators and staff are experts in educating our children and creating curriculum. Parents are experts on their children and their unique needs and experiences. I think both voices are essential, and we need to hear all the points of view in our community. We are a public school system and must maintain a learning environment that is comfortable, welcoming, and effective for all the students who attend our schools. Our curriculum must be focused on preparing students for the new world they will be living in and adapting to the different backgrounds they are all coming from.

It is essential to know that in some areas, the Rhode Island Department of Education has taken a more prescriptive role in determining curriculum, so we must not only be engaged on a local level but our School committee and Administrators must engage with RIDE to have input into changes they are making at the

state level.

3. Are there areas where you see collaboration with other districts to hold down costs or improve services? Please elaborate.

We should collaborate with other districts whenever possible. On a larger scale, we are now purchasing energy in a statewide system that has helped to control costs. It would be worth exploring cooperative buying agreements with other districts to see if there could be savings from group purchasing. There may also be opportunities for cooperative staff education programs if we can align the days we are focused on professional education. I am open to exploring any collaboration that results in a net benefit to our districts and the students we serve.

4. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

I voted to enact a new policy in our district that reflects RIDE's policy. Every student deserves our support and respect. We know that Transgender, Transitioning, and Gender Diverse students are often victims of bullying and harassment, sometimes putting their lives at risk.

Every student in our schools should feel safe and know that the adults in the building will support them. All students should have a trusted adult they can go to safely, and they should be able to identify who that trusted adult is easily.

5. Over the past few years, schools have been closed and merged. What do you see as the resulting impacts?

Declining enrollment has forced our district to make some difficult decisions. After closing an elementary school, our remaining elementary schools are still below their total capacities. Reducing to one middle school has reduced the number of transitions our students have to make during their time with us and, in my opinion, has aligned our grades into the best model for our students.

The savings from closing two schools have meant we can maintain programs and staffing without asking for an increased tax transfer from the town, which helps everyone in our community. Work does need to continue to balance resources and enrollment between schools to ensure equity. We must continue to think ahead, examine enrollment projections, and plan for how our district facilities will best be utilized. This kind of planning will help us avoid sudden changes in the future.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on time and within budget?

Completing the High School on time started before the bond vote when the School Committee committed \$350,000 to get our planning started early. That commitment and trust that our community would be supportive put our project ahead of others beginning around the same time. That early planning likely resulted in many high-quality design and construction firms that bid on the project. We have companies working on this project with the experience and capability to deliver what we need. We must be vigilant about sticking to a plan that will keep us on time and within our budget. There will be many options for us to consider. Still, we must focus on those that will give us the flexibility to provide a 21st-century education while keeping us within the financial limits that have been set.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



South Kingstown General Election Candidates



SOUTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Paula J. Whitford
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you hope to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I hope to bring our special education program up to standard to meet the needs of our students who have IEP'S ,504, and other accommodations and needs. Working collaboratively with Educators,Families,Students and stakeholders in the community. I have been an advocate for SELAC during my current term.

2. How would you balance the opinions of professional educators

and librarians and parents on issues of curriculum development and books in our classrooms and school libraries?

We have to understand that the curriculum has state mandates that need to be followed,understanding that I will listen and ask questions of the leadership to ensure we are following the state's recommendation and the recommendation of the educator and Superintendent. Books need to be at the discretion of our parents and families.

3. Are there areas where you see

collaboration with other districts to hold down costs or improve services? Please elaborate.

I believe we could use collaboration in Transportation as this is a big Issue across the state. Transportation uses about 30% of the budget.

4. Do you support the RI Department of Education's Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Transitioning Student policy? Please explain.

I do! We as people can not help who we are or who we love, meeting

students and people in general where they are is key to success.

5. Over the past few years, schools have been closed and merged. What do you see as the resulting impacts?

I believe we have done a good thing closing and merging schools as enrollment continues to decline,and don't see any real impact to the district.

6. What policies and procedures will you support to ensure that the new high school is completed on

time and within budget?

We will continue to work with the SBC to make sure we create policies that are needed and adhere to existing policies. We will continue to support any needs within the means of the district to support the project, keeping the taxpayers in mind while doing so.

7. Yes / No: Are you in favor of limiting student access to mobile phones during the school day?

Yes



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- _____ \$50.00 one member.
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