

“Who Runs the School?”

Mr. Samuelson may run Waterford High, but he still has a boss. He reports to the Superintendent, who reports to the Board of Education, the nine elected officials who oversee the entirety of the Waterford Public Schools system. The Board is the driving force within the district, creating all the town’s education plans and policies.

Each month, the Board meets in Town Hall to discuss and formalize proposed changes to the education system. The meetings are open to the public and streamed online, with several school administrators, town officials, and citizens commonly attending to stay connected to the school community.

The nine members are elected by the people of Waterford before serving on the Board. Each member serves four years per term, with a staggered election schedule. This past Election Day, four seats were up for election. In two years, the other five will be on the ticket.

This year, two incumbents chose to run for re-election, along with several newcomers running for the two empty seats. In line with the slew of electoral upsets across the country, all four candidates elected to the Waterford Board of Education are members of the Democratic Party, three of whom were not incumbents beforehand.

While the teachers and school administrators may focus extensively on their school, the Board must consider the town as a whole while making decisions. The Board serves as the link between the people and the school district. Each of the members must be approved by the people. Additionally, if parents wish to provide feedback or complaints about the schools, they may do so through the Board.

Many of the Board members have previously been close to the school system. Some have worked as teachers or other employees for the district; others are parents whose kids have graduated or will soon. For all, it is a way to give back to their community.

Let’s meet some of the members.

Pat Fedor currently serves as the Chair of the Board. She worked for 23 years as a teacher, and then another 20 as an administrator. She initially joined the Board because she “wanted to keep contributing and felt that serving on the Board was a good way to do that.” When she was later nominated to serve as the Chair, she felt that her knowledge and experience would be able to better help the school district.

Corlyn Webster was just elected to the Board this November and will officially join at the start of the next session this December. She is the mother of sophomores Collin and Connor Webster. She had been wanting to “contribute to our town in some way.” Having experience in education as well, she had eyed the Board to do so and officially chose to run after a former colleague encouraged her to. When she begins her term, one of her largest focuses will be to “ensure that our students are adult-ready,” no matter their post-secondary path. She is also committed to preparing graduates for a fast-changing world.

Marcia Benvenuti has been serving on the Board for several years to give back to her community. Overall, she aims to provide the “best possible educational opportunities for all our students.” Throughout her tenure, she has debated and worked on the dress code and cell phone policies. For the

upcoming year, Benvenuti plans to put her effort into the schools' budget and to "delve deeply into every line item" to minimize the spending.

Laurie Wolfley has also served on the Board and worked for the best in our school district. Alongside other prevalent issues, she is looking to combat "distractions that can isolate and alienate [students]." One of her first priorities is to ensure "an environment in which all students—regardless of their abilities, race, ethnicity—feel safe, seen and heard."

These are only four members; they and five others together compose the full Board. They all work together to run and improve our schools. They have looked out for Waterford schools in the past, and they will continue to do so far into the future.