



The Bolton Independent

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Select Board candidates answer questions at forum

By Lynda King

About 20-30 people gathered at the Houghton Building on Monday, April 5, to meet the two candidates for the open seat on Bolton's Select Board: Emily Winner of Ballville Road and Alan DiPietro of Teele Road. Facilitated by Town Moderator Doug Storey, the meeting offered the candidates an opportunity to showcase their talents, ideas and opinions. [The program was also live-streamed by Bolton AccessTV.]

Winner told the audience that in her nine years of residency in town, she has been involved in town government and an array of community activities that she said would help her "bring fresh ideas to the board." Besides serving on the Conservation Commission (five years) and the Agricultural Commission (one year) she is also involved in Cub Scouts as treasurer and a den leader. She stressed the importance of involving children in the community, saying that she tries to teach her children about how the town works and about volunteering.

Capping off her resume, she added, "I have a background in commercial construction, which I think is valuable for this position."

DiPietro, in his opening statement and his concluding remarks, described his experience as a former chief engineer at iRobot. He said that, having just celebrated his 50th birthday, he decided it was time to "give something back."

"I don't think things are going that well in the world, and maybe in the town," he said, "and maybe I should do something about it instead of just sitting home yelling at the television."

DiPietro further explained his motivation to run, couched in his concern about the impact of high taxes—especially a projected increase when the high school building project gets under way—which will hit residents already facing increasing prices for gas and food.

He said, "I'd like to make sure that Bolton residents who find themselves in financial trouble are helped by the town." He offered the suggestions of "community gardening, composting, and firewood processing to help residents heat their homes." Adding to his wish list, he spoke about his passion for



The Bolton and Harvard Girl Scout Service Unit hosted Safari "Someone Special" dance on Saturday, April 2 at the Florence Sawyer School with 218 guests attending. The UNIT fundraising event featured refreshments (shown above), corsages, portraits, crafts and a photo booth, along with dancing. More photos on page 16. Jackie MacDonald photos

farming, especially in these times. He said, "I'd like to see a town-operated CSA (Community Supported Agriculture program). If we're going to have people this year who need food, maybe we should grow food here, ourselves."

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Serving on the Select Board

When the floor was opened for questions from the audience, DiPietro fielded the first two. Kate Buyuk of Wheeler Road asked him, "Can you please tell us what you have done in terms of community engagement and participation that qualifies you to serve on the Select Board?"

DiPietro answered, "I wasn't aware there were any pre-qualifications to serve on the board! I guess you're asking why I'm qualified for the job." His final response was, "I've lived here my entire life. I operate a farm in the town. I went to school here."

Lisa Wilkins of Kettle Hole Road asked if DiPietro would support a new high school building. DiPietro said, "Someone is supposed to be doing a report [on the building's status]. I

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Candidate's Night

The Bolton Candidates' Night forum was held on Monday April 4 at the Houghton Building. It was also live-streamed by Bolton AccessTV and is available for viewing on their YouTube channel. Pictured above are (l-r) Select Board candidate Emily Winner, Moderator Doug Storey and Select Board Candidate Alan DiPietro.

From BoltonAccessTV video

Nashoba news and sports, Bolton calendar of events, letters, classified ads, Bolton pics can all be found throughout the paper.



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couldn't possibly tell you if I support it without seeing this report."

Laura Roberts of Annie Moore Road asked both candidates what they see as the prime responsibility of the Select Board.

Winner emphasized that the board has to build good working relationships with various committees and boards and town departments, but noted that their main goal should be "to represent the will of the community."

DiPietro said that the most important things they do is appoint the rest of the committees in town. "If you appoint the rest of the committees in town, then you'd better pay attention to what they're doing." He suggested they might want to have more oversight on those groups. (As a point of clarification, Moderator Storey pointed out that the Select Board doesn't appoint all the other boards and committees, and, in fact, some are elected positions.)

Brian Boyle of Sampson Road asked if either candidate could think of an issue that may have come before the Select Board with which they disagreed. Both were hard-pressed to answer, and DiPietro deferred the first response to Winner, who said she would have been in favor of purchasing the Taggart parcel on Forbush Mill Road [the final vote by the Select Board was 2-1 in favor]. DiPietro then commented on a similar decision before the board relative to the Girl Scout land on Hudson Road, saying he would have been in favor of using Community Preservation Funds for that if Bolton had voted that program in.

Lauren Mahoney of Spectacle Hill Road challenged the candidates with: "With the country and Bolton becoming more diverse, how do you plan to bring all the voices into the conversation, so they have representation?"



Di Pietro answered, "People have to do it themselves. They're going to have to come down to these meetings, ask questions; they've got to participate. It's open to everybody."

Winner said, "That is an issue that is very important to me in general." She said she had been involved in several related community events in town, including as the co-organizer of the Black Lives Matter rally two years ago. She added, "I was also co-organizer of the first Pride parade and rally last year. We're working on planning the event for this year." She said she also recently applied to join the board of the Nashoba Area Justice Alliance.

One of her hot buttons on this topic is accessibility to town buildings. "We got a grant to put in all these accessible sidewalks in town," she said, noting that they "go to buildings that are not accessible." She said, "It is very important that we find ways to be inclusive of all different people throughout our town, within our community, personally with our actions, and our town buildings."

Town Government

Joe Myerson of Main Street asked the candidates, "What do you think can be done in trying to get more people involved in town government, and what is the selectmen's role?"

Both candidates had difficulty answering this one. Winner said, "It's not something you can beat into people by saying 'This is important!' She talked about trying to rally people you know and leading by example, but said it was a topic she had struggled with and didn't feel she had a good answer.

DiPietro said, "I think technology is going to help us. But people have to know about it (i.e., Town Meeting)." He added, "Talk about things people care about! You have to be doing something that matters to them, instead of just 'running the wheels around'—doing the same thing year after year... I don't know what the answer is either."

Taxes

Another audience member asked how comfortable the candidates were with how the tax assessment in town is allocated. "Are we paying too much, just enough, or not enough for our children's education?"

DiPietro said he was concerned about how taxes are allocated overall. "I'd be interested in ala carte taxing," he said, adding, "Not everyone has children in school." He noted, "There is a slim chance that any of the students who graduate from Nashoba will ever be able to find a job in Bolton after graduation or will be able to afford to live here."

Winner observed that approximately 65 percent of the tax budget is for schools. She said, "We don't have a lot of flexibility with our school budget." She added, "I think teachers are underpaid. I'd like to see teachers through the country better paid."

Bolton and the World

Warner Road resident Sharon Shepela asked the candidates, "How should or could the town of Bolton be addressing the climate crisis?"

Winner responded that currently the town's conservation agent is working with other towns on pursuing state-funded grants. "It's important that we work with surrounding towns to have a real impact," she said. She added that development in town is a growing concern. "We need to be considering our conservation land and ways to protect ecosystems and wetlands. If we destroy all these ecosystems, our planet doesn't function."

DiPietro said, "Everyone here is burning oil in their homes. We're not going to be able to do much about that. I think the biggest thing we can do is grow more food here in Bolton," and he pointed to the costs in dollars and fossil fuels to import food to Bolton's tables from across the country or across the world. "The more we can do locally, the less we pollute the environment." But, he added, we should be incentivizing people to make changes that would ultimately help the environment, using more of the "carrot" approach and not the "stick." "Let's stop forcing people to do things they can't afford to do," he said.

"Where do you sleep at night?"

Wheeler Road resident Kate Buyuk asked about what she called "the elephant in the room" with two questions for DiPietro. As background to the first question, she said that the assessors' records she had looked at showed that all of the lots he purports to own are listed as land-only with no buildings on them. She asked, "Where do you sleep at night? Where do you reside?"

DiPietro responded, "I live at 110 Teele Road in Bolton. That's where I sleep; that's

FLORENCE SAWYER SCHOOL HONOR ROLL TRIMESTER II

Honor Roll

Grade 8 Highest Honors

Emily Bechara, Odile Berzonskis, Emily Beyranevand, Jadzia Bravo, Grace Cardoso, Anne Childs, Katerina Davis, Vanessa Davis, Alexander Dow, Abigail Fantana, Charlotte Hess, Sara Iyer, Nathanael Jastrab, Lilly Johnson, Grace Jusseume, Owen Mahoney, Isaline March, Paige Mason, Brady Mignault, Renee Mitchell, Eli Molzahn, Allison Mortimer, Finnian Murphy, Jacob Murphy, Deirbhile Nagle, Mackenzie O'Brien, Jerry Pan, Kelly Rickard, Gavin Rogers, Sean Sargent, Nikhil Siano, Dante Snoonian, Connor Thornberry, Nathan Thornberry, Ryan Thornberry, Adler Tuck, Benjamin Wilkinson

Grade 8 High Honors

Chiara Bravo, Julia Fiore, Evan Green, Chloe Hughes, Caroline Mattocks, Calleigh McCammon, Gavin McCarthy, Carter Neuschaefer, Emerson Peterson, Lucy Romeo, Logan Schweppe, Samantha Sharma, Charlotte Thoin, Sean Tommasini, Ella Weadock, Faith Windzio

Grade 8 Honors

Ryan Balewicz, Joshua Dixon, Anthony Giannetti, Gavin Hutchens, Reese Jeffs, Alison McQuoid, Olivia Mitchell, Gage Palermo, Scarlett Paradis, Aidan Shaw, Sawyer Smith

Grade 7 Highest Honors

Noah Ali, Demetri Boormeester, Robert Caisse, Matthew Cammilleri, Madeline Cotter, Kelsey Dinjian, Sadie Gorr, Katherine Hoffman, Aisha Iyer, Alisha Iyer, Matilda Jacobsen, Madeline Larrabee, Allison McGlone, Finn Mond, Noa Myung, Cormac Nagle, Michelle Pan, Connor Pape, Luke Reed, Sydney Rigby, Lily Robinson, Joshua Sanger, Avery Shea, Natalie Solimeno, Chloe Sparks, Daniel Toland, Lily Vancura, Ethanael Vecchiarelli, Mahdia Yaqoobi

Grade 7 High Honors

Anderson Coe, Gavin Cotter, Connor Duhamel, Antonio Erat, Luke Eska, Anabella Figueiredo, Kate Grutchfield, Alison Kelley, Catherine Mattocks, Melanie Mehling, Tyler Murphy, Tyler Niccoli, Elizabeth Rancourt, William Schneider, Sophie Sheerin, Easton Soucie, Carlton Traywick, Jacob Vessels, Ryely Webb, Maya White, Elena Winiarski

Grade 7 Honors

Evan Auger, Hannah Dwight, Kate Eriksen, Hannah Hart, Alexander Hedstrom, Grace McGregor, Elijah Minnich, Caera Montgomery, Brock Rosadini, Jackson Silen, Jacob Spicer, Subith Sudhakar, Katherine Varadi, Shannon Walsh

Grade 6 Highest Honors

Andrew Balewicz, Sydney Balewicz, Katelyn Bessette, Alexander Beyranevand, Xavier Butrym, Wesley Centofanti, Nicholas Costanzo, Dimitry Davis, Leah Eidelman, Connor Friedinger, Maksim Frost, Kathleen Gaetz, Olivia Goegel, Violet Hohn, Jacob Horesh, Yuzuki Igarashi, Aaron Jastrab, Margaux Kantor, Mae Larkin, Anthony Lazaro, Victoria Masucci, Samuel Merrill, Alivia Messier, Josiah Minnich, Hadley Myler, Arya Nagale, Vaughn Neron, Maria Popescu, Chase Rancourt, Lucas Rickard, Caden Rogers, Otto Rogers, Nell Russell, Charles Schneider, Edward Schneider, Marlena Smith, Andrew Sullivan, Anderson Tackle, Brooklynn Thoin, Ellia Tuck, Kamilla Valdares, William Warren, Oliver Wilgress-Pipe, Nathan Wilkinson

Grade 6 High Honors

Juliet Biagini, William Bradica, Nadia Churchill, Isaac Cohen, Ryan Dixon, Allen Elzey, Madeleine Gallant, Sawyer Hurd, Christian Karlon, Lucas Keefer, Luc Laflamme, Ella Libby, Samuel McQuoid, Julia Melillo, Claire Metterle, Brea Mond, Renn Monstad, Jonathan Mortimer, Abigail Neuman, Chloe Neuschaefer, Nabeel Olona, Cooper Peron, Jonathan Pileeki, Caroline Prudente, Alara Stone, Michael Strus, Ian Varney, Kaled Zaouk, Connor Zina

Grade 6 Honors

Lily Cote, Andrew Dumas, James Hamilton, Charles Hart, Martin Hristov, Travis Hutchens, Mason Kochis, Tinuviel Matthews, Ethan Melillo, Hunter Ricci, Mackenzie Schmadeke, Ewan Stone, Avery Tambolleo, Jack Wolk

where I reside. I'm registered to vote in Bolton, and that's how I can run for selectman."

Buyuk countered with her second question, which was about DiPietro's judgment in a tax lien case in which the town of Bolton is actually owner of the property DiPietro says is his. She alleged, "This is because you have not paid real estate taxes for years, and there is a judgment against you for \$70,000, in addition to other judgments against you by other creditors."

DiPietro acknowledged, "I have been unable to pay my taxes. I have asked since 2016 to have already-approved permits released so I could sell one lot to pay the taxes. The town has refused to engage me in any way over that, and I still have time to vacate that judgment. I intend to pay those taxes."

* [The Independent confirmed that DiPietro is a registered voter in Bolton as of October 2020. The 2022 Assessor's Valuations show five lots, all classified as single residential, with the address of 0 Teele Rd and Alan DiPietro listed as the owner. The "0" in the address indicates a lot of land that has not had any permits issued for a dwelling. The valuations are based on the prior year's data. The Worcester County Registry of Deeds recorded foreclosure of the five lots in January 2022.]

This meeting was also broadcast live over Bolton Cable Access TV and was recorded for viewing on their YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/BoltonAccessTV>. Voter's will have a chance to choose their candidate on Election Day, Monday, May 9.