

## **Your Canton Municipal Candidates Respond to the League**

One of the main missions of the League of Women Voters of Canton is to educate voters on current issues that affect the citizens of our town and our state. We encourage citizens to vote on Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> and to be well-informed voters. We are a non-partisan organization. The 2017 League of Women Voters of Canton, Voter's Guide, was developed to inform voters of pertinent issues, by asking our candidates for Board of Education, Board of Selectman and Board of Finance a series of four questions on current issues. Below are their responses which were limited to fifty words.

Please be sure to come to our L.W.V. Candidate's Forum on Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, at the Canton High School Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. to see and hear these candidates and to pose your own questions for them.

### **THE 2017 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CANTON, VOTER'S GUIDE**

The candidates running for the **Board of Education** are:

*Julie Auseré, Republican*

*Maria Bradley, Republican*

*Ryan O'Donnell, Republican*

*Michael Pendell, Democrat*

*Jack Powell, Democrat*

*Ana Cavanaugh, Democrat*

QUESTIONS for the Board of Education candidates:

#### ***1) What skills and experiences qualify you to be an effective Board of Education member?***

*Ms. Auseré: As the current Chair of the BOE, I have the leadership skills to collaborate, communicate, and execute initiatives in the Canton schools. In this role, I have grown skill sets in the areas of budgeting, school policies, effective communication, and visioning that keeps Canton on the cutting edge of education.*

*Ms. Bradley: I have served for 2 years on the Board as well as on the Communication and Policy subcommittees. I've spent time in the classrooms and on the PTO board. These experiences combined with being a good listener and having an open mind make me an effective board member.*

*Mr. O'Donnell: In my law practice, I often represent municipalities and Boards of Education. I understand the unique challenges Boards face—both from a legal and procedural standpoint. As the father of three young children, my professional experience is complimented by an understanding of the concerns and challenges facing our District.*

**Mr. Pendell:**

**Mr. Powell:** *I am passionate about education. I have spent 30 years as a university professor and work with curriculum issues on a daily basis. I have immersed myself in best practices in education, how students learn, what makes an effective teacher, and what colleges are looking for in high school graduates.*

**Ms. Cavanaugh:** *I have demonstrated a deep commitment to the education of all of Canton's students as a current BOE member. While I am a parent of three children in the District, my decisions have always been predicated upon what is best for the District as a whole.*

## **2 ) How would you prepare the non-college bound student for the work force?**

**Ms. Auseré:** *We need to educate our students for the world in which they will live. A core foundation must be built on communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and citizenship. You can then add specific skills through technology education, financial literacy courses and opportunities for externships with Canton Chamber of Commerce businesses.*

**Ms. Bradley:** *Opportunities are provided for students in Technical and Vocational schools. Other possible ideas to help the non-college bound student would be internships/apprenticeships as well as a career day. All students in Canton are expected to be critical thinkers, collaborators and responsible citizens regardless of their career path.*

**Mr. O'Donnell:** *Students who choose not to attend college deserve the same challenging curriculum as their college-bound peers. However, this "traditional" high school education should be supplemented with more practical, career-oriented course offerings and apprenticeship opportunities. Job placement services and career counseling should be available.*

**Mr. Pendell:**

**Mr. Powell:** *Internships! Students would benefit from real-world experience to prepare them for the work force, whether they are going to college or not. We need to work with businesses in the community and we need to continue to offer courses that will prepare students for both jobs and day-to-day living.*

**Ms. Cavanaugh:** *My decisions as a BOE member have always been based on what is best for the District as a whole. Not every student will be college bound and for those we need to assure that we have a pathway to success. This may include having available local internships or apprenticeships.*

### **3) How would you balance funding for the special education program with the rest of the education budget?**

**Ms. Auseré:** During my tenure on the BOE, Canton has implemented a more personalized learning environment, which benefits all students by giving each student more individual attention. I will continue this focus on student-centered learning, focus on early-learning intervention to better uses resources, and advocate for the state to fully fund special education costs.

**Ms. Bradley:** It is our duty to educate all students of Canton. The best way to balance funding for special education students with the rest of the budget is to continually look for ways that all students can be educated within the district. This benefits the students as well as the taxpayer.

**Mr. O'Donnell:** Early intervention strategies are critical to both helping special education students realize their full potential and keeping program costs under control. Likewise, by strengthening Canton's special education programs, it is possible to decrease "out-of-district placements, which, in turn, helps balance special education costs with the rest of the budget.

**Mr. Pendell:**

**Mr. Powell:** Every piece of the education budget must be balanced with all the other pieces. We should certainly pursue efficiencies, but we must always prioritize special education. I have seen first-hand its benefits and the impact it can have on a child and we cannot allow it to be neglected.

**Ms. Cavanaugh:** The last four years have been tough for public education in the State of Connecticut, however the education of the students in Canton, has continued to improve including in the area of special education. We will need work in continuing to improve our educational deliverables in a fiscally sustainable manner.

### **4) What should the BOE do in order to encourage tolerance of diversity in each of the schools in the district?**

**Ms. Auseré:** As a BOE member, I will hold the district administration accountable to its current plan to encourage tolerance of diversity. Examples of plan actions are: cultural proficiency training for staff, tolerance programs run by the Anti-Defamation League, restorative justice workshops, and school wide/small group "listen and learn" conversations.

**Ms. Bradley:** The Cultural Proficiency and Equity Action Plan addresses this specific issue. This plan covers how topics of diversity have been and will continue to be dealt with in all the schools from educating staff to bringing in outside speakers to embedding the teaching of cultural proficiency into the curriculum.

**Mr. O'Donnell:** Genuine tolerance for diversity can never be realized through quotas. Students are not numbers or data, and should never be treated as such. True tolerance requires empathy

*and shared experiences. As a member of the BOE, I would advocate for programs that embrace this empathy-based concept of diversity.*

**Mr. Pendell:**

**Mr. Powell:** *Our schools should encourage more than tolerance. We need to strive for understanding and acceptance. Our schools should emphasize the value of diversity in all of its forms through our curriculum and through the ways we treat each other. Students should appreciate there are other perspectives than their own.*

**Ms. Cavanaugh:** *I will continue to respect, value and encourage the involvement of Canton's parents, students and community as it takes a village to educate our children and with that showcasing programs and speakers at each of our schools that will focus on tolerance and diversity.*

**The candidates running for the Board of Finance are:**

**Brian First, Republican**

**Jennifer Rottkamp, Republican**

**Sarah Faulkner, Democrat**

**QUESTIONS for the Board of Finance candidates:**

**1) What skills and experiences qualify you to be an effective Board of Finance member?**

**Mr. First:** *Extensive experience, fiscal conservatism, attention to the details, and a commitment to transparency and collaboration are my strongest qualifications to be re-elected to a third term on the Canton Board of Finance. I have served as Board Chairman for 2 terms and believe deeply in public service and community involvement.*

**Ms. Rottkamp:** *I am a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries and have worked in the finance department at Cigna Corporation for over 21 years. I have also served the town as a member of the Canton Intermediate School PTO Board serving for one year as Treasurer and two years as President.*

**Ms. Faulkner:** *In my professional positions as a school administrator, non-profit director, and business manager, as well as my personal experiences as a single parent and taxpayer, I have diverse and extensive experience with budgeting, grants, personnel, and prioritizing expenses. I'm honest, frugal, and an advocate for transparency in government. I've lived in Canton for 33 years and participated actively in town government all this time.*

**2) What can the Board of Finance do to manage the impacts on Canton of the state budget impasse (or, if a budget passes by the time this question is asked, "the contentious, finally-approved state budget")?**

**Mr. First:** *The BOF already utilizes a long-term budget planning model evaluate various expense and funding scenarios over multi-year periods. We have prepared in advance for unreliable and reduced state funding by maintaining very healthy town finances and built up a 15% general fund balance to help address any revenue challenges.*

**Ms. Rottkamp:** *The Board of Finance can look for areas of overlap and redundant spending throughout our town budget as well as review newer grant funding options and technologies available to our community.*

**Ms. Faulkner:** *This is a very thorny and emotional issue. State budget cuts may have a large impact on our local budget. Our Board of Finance is likely to be faced with a serious shortfall in income. I think that we should actively engage and listen to our residents in the process of planning any necessary cutbacks, with full disclosure to the public about the costs and benefits.*

**3) How would you balance the need for long term planning with fixed expenses and infrastructure costs?**

**Mr. First:** *Prioritizing needs over wants with all town boards and properly maintaining our existing infrastructure are critical to our town's long-term financial success. We must also promote non-residential tax base expansion consistent with the character of our community. Following this strategy has earned Canton a highly respected "AAA" S&P bond rating.*

**Ms. Rottkamp:** *First, I will look to ensure the infrastructure costs and fixed expenses are being spent in the most prudent way possible. Second, any long term planning needs to be reviewed with consideration of all short term and long term options and an understanding of the return on investment.*

**Ms. Faulkner:** *I am a huge advocate for keeping the long-term needs of the town in mind when developing budgets. Too often our budgets make short-term cuts that end up being more costly in the long run. This is why we've had some roads and catch-basins that have periodically become emergencies – due to a lack of fiscal planning. I strongly support 5- and 10-year expense planning, ranking and prioritizing needs, and serving the needs of all of our residents.*

#### **4)How do you think you could keep our mill rate from rising this next year?**

**Mr. First:** Requiring detailed budgets built from the bottom up, not based on prior year expenses, controls overall spending and provides the ability to achieve zero or limited impact on the mill rate. This approach has resulted in nearly a decade of expense and tax increases that have averaged less than 2%.

**Ms. Rottkamp:** I will work with my fellow members of the Board of Finance as well as the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education to identify alternative spending options. Additionally, we will work with the Chamber to promote new revenue from our business community by working to make Canton an attractive location.

**Ms. Faulkner:** A lot will depend upon the State budget. We may be facing severe cutbacks and need to be ready to make substantial cuts to town services. Canton has a history of being frugal, and that means that our budget is already lean. I propose a series of public forums to solicit residents' ideas for cuts.

#### **The candidates running for the Board of Selectman are:**

**William Canny, Republican**

**Larry Minichiello, Republican**

**William Volovski Democrat**

**Gail Deutsch, Democrat**

#### **QUESTIONS for the Board of Selectman candidates:**

##### **1) What skills and experiences qualify you to be an effective selectman?**

**Mr. Canny:** I am a current member of the BOS, past member of the BOF and have also as an alternate on the IWWA. I've found that being a member of the BOS is a very rewarding position since it requires hearing the voice of the townspeople and acting on their behalf.

**Mr. Minichiello:** Thirty years of learning, listening, questioning and conversing in the public sector places me in a strong position as an effective citizen representative.

BOS (2 years); BOE (6 years, 2 Chair); Water Pollution Control Authority (7 years); town-wide issue advocate.

Decades of private sector experience in finance, risk management, sales.

**Mr. Volovski:** As a lifelong resident of Canton I have a long view of how the town has grown and developed. I have also worked in municipal government in neighboring towns for over thirty years. Each year I have to help develop and work within a budget, and strive to deliver high quality public services.

**Ms. Deutsch:** Active service on the Canton Land Conservation Trust, Democratic Town Committee, and future Dog Park demonstrate commitment to Canton. Professionally, I've been a teacher, school technology coordinator, administrator and corporate consultant, with a doctorate in Educational Leadership. My experience in education, technology and finance ensure I'll be an effective Selectman.

## **2) You will be overseeing the fiscal needs of the town. What are your chief concerns in this area?**

**Mr. Canny:** My chief concern is having the proper amount of money to run the town effectively. With the State budget still in limbo, it certainly has put a strain on our own town budget. I believe my experience on the BOF and BOS will help guide those very difficult budget decisions.

**Mr. Minichiello:** Monitoring the State of Connecticut's allocation of State and Federal tax receipts back to Canton.  
Collaborating with fellow Selectman, Chief Administrative Officer and Board of Finance to justly allocate possible negative tax receipts.  
Protecting the town's fund balance.  
Involving citizens by communicating possible changes in service levels.

**Mr. Volovski:** The town needs to continue to seek out grants and alternative financing to reduce the tax burden on residents. We should be actively using new tools and policies to promote economic development opportunities and to encourage growth of existing businesses.

**Ms. Deutsch:** We must demonstrate economic responsibility for planned growth while maintaining Canton's character. Using a data-driven approach, I'll work to:

- Attract innovative, future-facing small industries,
- Adopt renewable energy, and
- Preserve the Farmington River.
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Combined with mixed-use development, this will reduce Canton's dependence on expensive energy and increase our tax base.

### **3) What are the three most important priorities for the Board of Selectmen in the coming years?**

**Mr. Canny:** *The top priorities for the Board are to: meet the financial needs of the town, including infrastructural demands; increase the tax base through business opportunities; maintain the quaint charm our town historically provides.*

**Mr. Minichiello:** *Meeting the basic needs of our citizens.  
Continuing to effectively communicate with our citizens.  
Continuing to foster active debate on high profile matters without rancor.*

**Mr. Volovski:** *A) Develop new policies to promote economic development.  
B) Continue to adequately fund road and infrastructure repairs. Short sighted planning just makes the repairs more expensive later.  
C) Long term planning to address fire station needs and the delivery of emergency services to residents.*

**Ms. Deutsch:** *To improve property values, promote growth, and increase pride in our town, we must:*

- *Give our children a quality education to create a robust future workforce,*
- *Insure millennials have both job opportunities and affordable housing, and*
- *Provide quality services to our large and increasing population of senior citizens.*

### **4) The hoped-for redevelopment of the Collins ax factory has been stalled for more than a decade. What can the BOS do to move the restoration along?**

**Mr. Canny:** *The Collins Company holds tremendous opportunity for businesses and mixed use. The main objective would be to attract buyers and perhaps implement a tax based incentive. This has been discussed in recent BOS meetings. Our foresight remains hopeful that a plan could come to fruition and benefit our Collinsville area.*

**Mr. Minichiello:** *The Board must be realistic. We have gone great lengths to be a pro-active partner. Tax Incremental Financing tool is in place. This effort cost taxpayers tens of thousands. The private sector rebuffs the site. The price is too high! Tax abatements? We must recognize the risks to existing taxpayers.*

**Mr. Volovski:** *We have taken some steps already with the study of tax incremental financing to assist potential developers of the property. I also support the proposed tax abatement policy and form based zoning codes as progressive methods to encourage developers to consider the site.*

**Ms. Deutsch:** *As a BOS member, I will seek to offer attractive tax incentives and apply for available grants to encourage investor participation in restoring the factory. My communication and collaboration skills have moved difficult ideas forward in educational and corporate environments. My strength is bringing people together to accomplish big goals.*