

THE SPARK FOR HOLDEN MA

WELCOME TO OUR INAUGURAL EDITION

This newsletter is intended to make it easy for the citizens of Holden to stay informed about the political issues that effect our town, region and state. We hope to inspire meaningful conversations that lead to civic action, and to give voice to your concerns and ideas. Future editions will be available online, as well as in print. We welcome your feedback!
Please subscribe at thesparkforholden@gmail.com.

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FROM THE HOLDEN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

By Stephanie Mulroy
Chairman

It is an honor to serve as Chairman of your Board of Selectmen, and it has been a very busy year indeed! Holden has faced some unique challenges, and while I cannot speak to all of them here, I would like to bring one to your attention that requires immediate engagement. The BOS has called a Special Town Meeting (STM) to be held on October 16th at WRHS at 7pm to address a time-sensitive issue affecting Holden students.

Over several years the overcrowding at Dawson Elementary School has grown significant enough to require hiring two new classroom teachers (approved at Annual Town Meeting in May). "Classrooms" for these new teachers were created by dividing up the school library, as well as converting the teacher's lounge to a classroom, leading to crowded learning conditions that are far less than ideal. For example, some second graders are disrupted 20+ times a day by the flow of other students constantly entering and exiting the school for recess. For many children such stressful conditions can compromise their educational environment, to say nothing about obvious safety issues.

But hope is on the horizon! In a windfall, several concerned parents were able to locate two modular classrooms sitting unused in a nearby town. Our Town Manager, FINCOM, and the WRSD Superintendent have worked aggressively to arrange financing for leasing these units and may have them set up as soon as Thanksgiving, relieving a great deal of the strain on Dawson's students and teachers. This budget change will be outlined at the STM and requires a vote of approval from Holden residents.





WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP!

By George Kaminski

Holden Member - WRSD School Committee

(Disclaimer: I wrote this piece as a private citizen and not as a representative of the school committee.)

A school is a place of learning, of education, of giving students an opportunity to gain intellectual competence and to succeed in their chosen career. Or at least it should be. The unfortunate state of educational quality is finally on the agenda of the next Wachusett Regional School Committee meeting, which is scheduled for Monday, October 2nd.

Did you know that the percentage of our students who are not proficient in reading/language arts has grown from about 2% to 18% since 2018, and the percentage of those not proficient in math has gone from about 8% to 25%? Our college readiness index is now at an alarming 36.9 out of 100.

The WRSD administration likes to talk about so called "high quality instructional materials." The recent changes in the curricula have cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars each year but, as can be seen from the downward trend in test scores, the money and effort are wasted. In many cases, the old textbooks were better. For instance, the switch to Eureka Math was a disaster! It was unnecessary, caused much grief, and it has apparently contributed to the decline of quality education in math.

According to the latest report from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

- 53% of our third graders and 50% of eight graders are not meeting the expectations in math.
- 46% of eight graders are below expectations in English.
- 8% of the tenth-grade students are not doing well in science in technology .

Of course, the school committee members do pay attention to some issues. The majority has actively voted (three times now!) to remove Columbus Day from the district calendar, even though it is officially a federal and state holiday. Some committee members insisted that the WRSD should not recognize Columbus and his historic discoveries in any way, that it should be up to students to research him *if* they are interested. Conversely, the district schools chose to honor "pride month" by glorifying and celebrating LGBT people in school announcements every morning. On June the 6th, it was Harvey Milk who was commemorated, not the brave men who sacrificed their lives on that day in 1944 when they stormed the beaches at Normandy. These issues reflect the priorities of the current school committee majority.

What can you do? First, it is important to stay informed. Talk to your kids about their school experience. If you do not have children in the district, you can still be actively involved.

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NOTICE: THE SPECIAL STATE PRIMARY WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10TH

There are 2 Republican candidates vying to win the nomination for State Senator to run against the Democrat candidate in November, to fill the seat in the State Legislature vacated by Democrat career politician, Ann Gobi. The election contest is between citizen **Bruce Chester** and State Representative **Peter Durant**. Please research both candidates and exercise your right - and duty - to VOTE at the polls on **October 10th!**



Bruce Chester is a conservative, a teacher, and an Iraq War veteran. He lives in Gardner.
votebrucechester.com



Peter Durant has served as a State Representative for 12 years. He is a lifelong resident of Spencer.
durantforstatesenate.com

MULROY - BOS

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Annual Town Meeting is often attended by only ONE PERCENT of eligible voters. This handful of people make many impactful decisions for our entire town. I implore you to research the issues (all BOS meetings can be seen on-demand at HoldenTV.com) and carve out the time to come and exercise your right to vote, not only in the Special State Primary on October 10th, but for your hometown at the October 16th at Special Town Meeting.

I look forward to updating you in coming issues of The Spark on exciting projects being done behind the scenes to beautify Holden, better serve our senior citizens, and provide greater access for residents of diverse abilities. Please follow me on Instagram @Mulroy4Holden or on Facebook for updates, and feel free to message me any time with questions or concerns. Holden Rocks!



The right to vote is among the most sacred rights we have as Americans. It is fundamental to our democracy.

And, this right must be protected.

One way is to ensure election integrity and follow the law.

Why the VOTER ID Law is important!

1. It increases confidence and credibility in the election process.
2. It helps eliminate identity theft.
3. It assures that the person casting a vote is verified as the person on the voter list.
4. It enables people without a Voter ID to sign an affidavit attesting to identity, residency and citizenship.
5. It provides a voter identification process for individuals who vote by mail.
6. It acknowledges the priceless value of a vote that determines governance by *we the people*.
7. This law is widely supported by Republicans, Democrats and Independent (unenrolled) voters.
8. Voter identification laws are already in effect in 35 other states.
9. Voter identification laws are already in effect in 46 European countries.
10. It helps to ensure the continuation of our freedom.



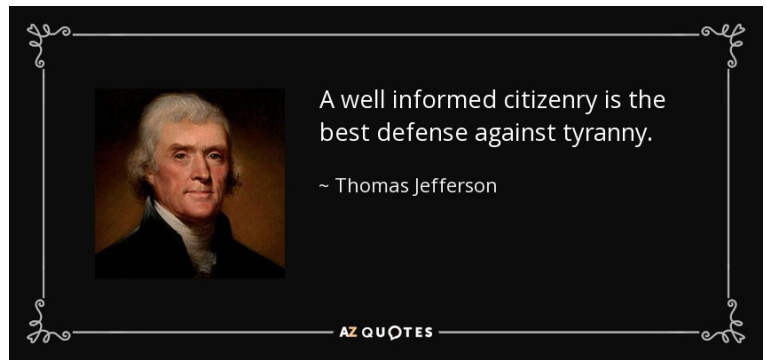
Join Us!

Email: MA4voterID@gmail.com

Call: 413-ID-VOTES (438-6837)

Leave your name, phone number, email address, and your town.

Your support is needed now!



NOTICE: SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MONDAY, OCTOBER 16 AT WRHS AUDITORIUM AT 7PM

To see if the town will vote to fund the installation of modular classroom units at Dawson Elementary School to temporarily alleviate severe overcrowding.

Kaminski - WRSD

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- Watch the recordings of the school committee meetings on at the HoldenTV.com.
- Look up the agendas and minutes at wrsd.net/school_committee/agendas_minutes.
- Speak up at school committee meetings. There is a Public Hearing segment in which anyone can directly address the full committee for 3 minutes, at the beginning and at the end of every meeting.
- VOTE!!! Vote in the Town Elections which are held every year at the beginning of May. Encourage your family and friends to do the same.

Too many people are uninformed about the issues facing our school district, and the candidates who aim to represent them. It is not enough to vote for someone who seems to be a nice neighbor or whose kids are on the same sports team as yours. Make sure you support school committee candidates who share your values and will prioritize high quality educational standards.

It is time to wake up and realize that the situation in the WRSD has deteriorated and is getting worse.

HOLDEN TOWN CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|---|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | BOS 6:30 Town Hall WRSD School Cttee 7:00 | | FinCom 6:30 | | | |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| | COLUMBUS DAY No School | Special State Primary - VOTE | FinCom 6:30 | | | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| | Special Town Mtg 7:00 WRHS ATTEND | | FinCom 6:30 | WRSD Bus+ Fin Subcttee 6:30 | | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| | | | FinCom 6:30 | WRSD Education Subcttee 6:30 | | |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | Meeting dates and times are subject to change. Verify before attending. Recycling weeks are shown in dark grey. | | | |
| | | HALLOWEEN | | | | |

MEETING LOCATIONS:

Board of Selectmen (BOS) meet at the Town Hall on the 2nd floor.

Finance Committee (FinCom) meets on the ground floor at the Municipal Light Dept.

WRSD School Committee meets in the library at the High School.

WRSD Subcommittees meet on the ground floor of the District Office at the old Jefferson School .

BOS Chairman: Stephanie Mulroy
(508) 210-5501
www.holdenma.gov/board-of-selectmen

FinCom Chairman: Paul Challenger
(508) 210-5501
www.holdenma.gov/finance-committee

WRSD Superintendent: James Reilly
508-829-1670
www.wrsd.net

School Cttee Chairman: Scott Runstrom

Town Manager: Peter Lukes
(508) 210-5501
www.holdenma.gov/town-manager

Town Clerk: Jeanne Hudson
(508) 210-5530
www.holdenma.gov/town-clerk

Holden School Cttee Members:
Jana Brennan, Maleah Gustafson,
George Kaminski, Laura Kirshenbaum,
Linda Long-Bellil, Shannon Poole,
Lauren Salmon-Garrett, Asima Silva

The Spark for Holden is sponsored by the Holden Republican Town Committee (HRTC).
Please send your questions, comments and suggestions to thesparkforholden@gmail.com.

The Spark for Holden
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