

IN SUDBURY SELECT BOARD
TUESDAY DECEMBER 9, 2025
7:00 PM – REMOTE MEETING
JOINT MEETING WITH
SUDBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Meeting can be viewed at www.sudburytv.org)

Present: Chair Lisa Kouchakdjian, Vice-Chair Janie Dretler, Select Board Member Dan Carty, Select Board Member Charles Russo, Select Board Member Radha Gargeya, Town Manager Andrew Sheehan

Chair Kouchakdjian called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Roll call: Dretler-present, Russo-present, Carty-present, Gargeya-present, Kouchakdjian-present

Also Present: SPS School Committee Members – Karyn Jones, Nichole Burnard, Jessica McCreary, Elizabeth Sues

Karyn Jones called the SPS School Committee meeting to order; Roll Call: Burnard-present, Jones-present, McCreary-present, Sues-present

Vice-Chair Dretler motioned to open a joint meeting with the Sudbury School Committee to meet with candidates, deliberate, and vote to fill a Committee vacancy. Board Member Carty seconded the motion.

It was on motion 9-0; Carty-aye, Dretler-aye, Russo-aye, Gargeya-aye, Kouchakdjian-aye, Burnard-aye, Jones-aye, McCreary-aye, Sues-aye

VOTED: To open a joint meeting with the Sudbury School Committee to meet with candidates, deliberate, and vote to fill a Committee vacancy

Opening Remarks by Chair

- Welcomed Sudbury School Committee Members and School Committee candidates to the joint meeting
- Explained the candidates would be presented and interviewed in the order of application submission

Candidates

Candidate Ellen Lederer-Defrancesco, 54 Blackmer Road, Sudbury

Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco stated she is currently an ESL educator in Framingham, was a former PTA president with years of classroom experience and related policy work. She has lived in Sudbury for a year.

Question: Ms. Burnard asked how the School Committee should use community feedback in consideration of best educational practices.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco responded that the Committee must listen to all comments/feedback and act in complete transparent fashion and all voices must be heard.

Question: Board Member Carty asked about personnel management experience the candidate has.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco stated she had experience with selecting/interviewing school superintendents and also had considerable human resource/personnel management experience in the private sector businesses.

Question: Ms. McCready inquired about the candidate's view regarding School Committee goals.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco responded that her primary goal was to foster trust, collaboration and open, transparent communications.

Question: Vice-Chair Dretler asked about how to advance a more collaborative approach between Town officials and school officials, especially in consideration of school budget.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco responded that educating all about the budget process is very important.

Question: Ms. Sues asked how to approach school budget cuts in a challenging budget season.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco responded that prioritizing and distinguishing between needs and wants is most important, and one must study future budget items.

Question: Board Member Gargeya asked about how to obtain related knowledge and prepare for School Committee responsibilities in a short period of time.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco stated that she was willing to research and loves to meet and talk to people when information gathering.

Question: Ms. Jones asked about healthy collaboration and deliberation with School Committee Members.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco responded that listening is key in order to maintain a strong team approach.

Question: Board Member Russo asked if there was anything the candidate would add or change regarding the SPS goals listed on the website.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco noted that collaboration between parents and teachers should be recognized as well as acknowledging student goals.

Question: Chair Kouchakdjian inquired about the candidates' 3 top SPS priorities.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco responded – transparency (with emphasis on budget choices), communications and technology implementations.

Question: Board Member Russo asked if the candidate would consider running for the permanent School Committee position.

Answer: Ms. Lederer-Defrancesco responded in the affirmative.

Candidate Julie Durgin-Sicree, 80 Woodmere Drive, Sudbury

Ms. Durgin-Sicree stated she is a senior HR leader with some 20 years of related experience in med-tech industry. She has lived in Sudbury for ten years.

Question: Ms. Burnard asked how the School Committee should use community feedback in consideration of best educational practices.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree responded that active listening, surveys, supportive data and partnership are key.

Question: Board Member Carty asked what personnel management experience the candidate has.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree responded people leadership and review of performance represents a large part of what she does.

Question: Ms. McCready inquired about the candidate's view regarding School Committee goals.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree responded that important goals included community engagement – ensuring that families are partners; advancing trust and transparency.

Question: Vice-Chair Dretler asked about how to advance a more collaborative approach between Town officials and school officials, especially in consideration of school budget.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree stressed the importance of sharing priorities, considering available funding, maintaining transparency, objectivity and dealing cooperatively with the Town.

Question: Ms. Sues asked how to approach school budget cuts in a challenging budget season.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree highlighted the importance of objectivity, to examine criteria with focus on stakeholder perspectives and overall knowledge.

Question: Board Member Gargeya asked about how to obtain related knowledge and prepare for School Committee responsibilities in a short period of time.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree explained that she works with scientists and asking thoughtful questions is imperative and the use of sources including: related data, advisory group inputs, parental input and asking for recommendations is important.

Question: Ms. Jones asked about healthy collaboration and deliberation with School Committee Members.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree responded that such collaboration must always support service to students and the community and actively listening to what other School Committee members are saying. She noted that understanding differences in opinion can be beneficial.

Question: Board Member Russo asked if there was anything the candidate would add or change regarding the SPS goals listed on the website.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree suggested the addition teacher input on the website, including monitoring and encouraging teacher performance.

Question: Chair Kouchakdjian inquired about the candidates' three top SPS priorities.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree itemized the three priorities: Budget – tough choices – must prioritize student learning aspects. Advance community engagement and trust. Support educators and staff through changes including evolving technology and confirm that goals are sustainable.

Question: Board Member Russo asked if the candidate would consider running for the permanent School Committee position.

Answer: Ms. Durgin-Sicree responded in the affirmative

Candidate Tyler Steffey, 5 Checkerberry Circle, Sudbury

Mr. Steffey stated that he is a career teacher, student advocate and is currently a middle school principal. He confirmed he was a former member of the Sudbury School Committee and has lived in Sudbury for seven and a half years.

Question: Ms. Burnard asked how the School Committee should use community feedback in consideration of best educational practices.

Answer: Mr. Steffey stressed the importance of continuing to listen to and collaborate with the community.

Question: Board Member Carty asked what personnel management experience the candidate has.

Answer: Mr. Steffey responded that as a school administrator with a student population of 650 students, he has extensive experience in supervising and managing the success and training of individuals.

Question: Ms. McCready inquired about the candidate's view regarding School Committee goals.

Answer: Mr. Steffey stressed the importance of fiscal stewardship and school management goals. He also mentioned consideration of long-term budget planning and inclusivity.

Question: Vice-Chair Dretler asked about how to advance a more collaborative approach between Town officials and school officials, especially in consideration of school budget.

Answer: Mr. Steffey responded that the School Committee serves the students as well as harmonizing with other Town Boards/Commissions/Committees to advance that mission. He stressed it would be "unethical" not to harmonize.

Question: Ms. Sues asked how to approach school budget cuts in a challenging budget season.

Answer: Mr. Steffey responded the other local communities also have deficits in this area and it would necessary and it was important to review student impacts and guide the Superintendent in cost cutting (especially in regarding to programs outside the school day and to seriously analyze all data.

Question: Board Member Gargeya asked about how to obtain related knowledge and prepare for School Committee responsibilities in a short period of time.

Answer: Mr. Steffey stressed the importance of listening to the School Committee, Select Board and Finance Committee without judgement, and was willing to catch up with all related matters.

Question: Ms. Jones asked about healthy collaboration and deliberation with School Committee Members.

Answer: Mr. Steffey indicated it was important to consider what is most important and necessary for the students.

Question: Board Member Russo asked if there was anything the candidate would add or change regarding the SPS goals listed on the website.

Answer: Mr. Steffey indicated that one important goal would be to include the educational needs of the Boston students and their families.

Question: Chair Kouchakdjian inquired about the candidates' three top SPS priorities.

Answer: Mr. Steffey responded that the transparent budget was imperative, stressed the importance of effectively working with the diverse student population and to continue supporting Superintendent Crozier through his evaluation and deal with difficult issues.

Question: Vice-Chair Dretler inquired about the current "surprise deficit" presented to the Town.

Answer: Mr. Steffey stated a deficit should not be a surprise and stewardship must be considered over time and it was most important to consider how such deficit happened and try to rectify it.

Question: Board Member Russo asked if there was anything the candidate would add or change regarding the SPS goals listed on the website.

Answer: Mr. Steffey indicated that he was not interested in serving beyond the temporary assignment term and stressed that he was ready to fill the current post.

The boards jointly deliberated the pros and cons of the applicants.

Ms. Sues motioned to appoint Julie Durgin-Sicree for appointment to the Sudbury School Committee for a term ending May 26, 2026. Ms. Jones seconded the motion.

It was on motion 7-2; Burnard-no, Carty-no, Dretler-aye, Gargeya-aye, McCreary-aye, Russo-aye, Sues-aye, Jones-aye, Kouchakdjian-aye

VOTED: To appoint Julie Durgin-Sicree for appointment to the Sudbury School Committee for a term ending May 26, 2026

Adjourn

Ms. Jones motioned to close the Sudbury School Committee meeting. Ms. Burnard seconded the motion.

It was on motion 4-0; Burnard-aye, Jones-aye, McCreedy-aye, Sues-aye

VOTED: To close the Sudbury School Committee meeting

Vice-Chair Dretler motioned to adjourn the Select Board meeting. Mr. Carty seconded the motion.

It was on motion 5-0; Carty-aye, Dretler-aye, Russo-aye, Gargeya-aye, Kouchakdjian-aye

VOTED: To adjourn the Select Board meeting

There being no further business, the Select Board meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM.

Documents & Exhibits

1. Vote to open a joint meeting with the Sudbury School Committee to meet with candidates, deliberate, and vote to fill a committee vacancy.

Attachments:

- 1.a Application for Appointment - J. Durgin-Sicree - Redacted
- 1.b Resume - J. Durgin-Sicree - Redacted
- 1.c Application for Appointment - T. Steffey - Redacted
- 1.d Application for Appointment - E. Lederer-DeFrancesco
- 1.e Resume - E. Lederer-DeFrancesco