

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES  
Thursday, August 10, 2023**

**7:12 PM**

**HYBRID**

**Present**

Kevin Matthews, *Interim Chair*;  
Cara Endyke-Doran; Lucy Maulsby; Ravi Simon; Mary Warzynski.

**Also Present**

Dr. Andrew Stephens, *LSRHS Superintendent/Principal*;  
Jim Hutchinson, *Chair of Lincoln's Select Board*; and  
Janie Dretler, *Chair of Sudbury's Select Board*;

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:12PM.

**Public Comment**

***Mary Warzynski, Sudbury, MA.***

"I'm so grateful that there are three people that came forward with the willingness to serve on the committee. It's really great that we have a choice. I am just grateful to the three folks who are here tonight, trying to help us all serve."

**Interview with Soterios Zoulas at 7:15 PM**

**Kevin Matthews:** "Would you like to give an open statement?"

**Mr. Zoulas:** "I would like to give to the community. I have volunteered my time in Sudbury by taking photographs. I also have a television show with Lynn Purro at SudburyTV called "Global Village". My background is in education. I've worked for the State Department of Education. I've worked for the State Board of Higher Education. I'm still teaching at MCPHS University in Boston. I was chair of a department at Eastern Nazarene College. My whole career is about education and communications. I think it's been the theme of my career. I believe I can add value and experience to the school committee."

**Kevin Matthews:** “Please explain what you know about Lincoln-Sudbury High School?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “My only experience with Lincoln-Sudbury is my television show, which is broadcasted and produced at the studio in the high school. My connection with the school is limited.”

**Cara Endyke-Doran:** “Please tell us, why do you want to serve on the LS School Committee?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “I’ve lived in Sudbury for 15 years. The same way, I decided to do a television show- to lend help and bring in local people. I enjoy attending all the parades, walking around and taking photographs. I especially like the Re-Creators at Wayside. For all those reasons, I contribute, I teach part-time, and I’m knowledgeable about education.”

**Janie Dretler:** “Please tell us what you would bring to your service on the school Committee?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “My experience in education, both in K-12 and higher education, on the state level, I’m familiar with policy level. I’ve worked for the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, which is a school reform institute funded by Walter Annenberg. I’ve experienced school reform too, as well as the more traditional institutions like the State Board of Education. I can contribute my knowledge and experience in education.”

**Kevin Matthews:** “You spoke about working for the State Board of Education, tell us a little bit about that experience, and where you think maybe the overlap is with the local school?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “I was a special assistant to the commissioner. I was in charge of information dissemination and I was involved in the busing situation in Boston where the State Board of Education at the time was the catalyst for requiring Boston to desegregate its schools. The plan that was put into effect back in the 70’s was developed by the State Board of Education. So, I’m knowledgeable about policy making, I’m knowledgeable about disseminating information, making sure that the information goes to the right people and that people are informed about what’s going on in the school. I think transparency is important and sharing information with the public, with the residents is crucial, vital for any success of any school.”

**Lucy Maulsby:** “Will you have the time to devote to this position?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “Yes, I will teach part-time at MCPH University, teaching a couple of courses. I will devote my time to learning about the high school. I think my willingness to learn is colored by the fact that I have experience in education, both on the state level, pay-to-travel, higher ed, but also in school reform.”

**Cara Endyke-Doran:** “You mentioned school reform and policy making. How would you use that experience in a governance role?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “The demographics are changing, so are the paths, of course, that have changed in urban high schools. Even suburban high schools are changing. I would like to learn more about the individual situation at Lincoln-Sudbury and share my expertise, my knowledge, and maybe influence policy making.”

**Ravi Simon:** “What do you judge as the challenges of Lincoln-Sudbury?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “I cannot be specific, because I don't know about the individual situation at Lincoln Sudbury. As I said earlier, demographics is one of the changing demographics. The importance of the liberal arts. At the loss of things like English, literature, philosophy, art. It seems to me there needs to be a balance. Fuse the importance of business as well as STEM. In order to be a citizen, in order to be an informed citizen, you need to know history. You need to know philosophy. You need to know literature.”

**Jim Hutchinson:** “ In reference to these challenges, how would you address them in your role as a member of the school committee?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “I think talking to the superintendent, the principal, making sure that he and I can stay in tune. Looking at the curriculum, making judgments about the occurrence. What are students learning? And I'm sure that the normal measures of success are present. But are we missing something? Are some students falling through the cracks? Can we help those students who are having a difficult time? Are there other issues that are family issues or personal issues? Because you can't separate the academic success from the personal issues of a child's life. I know, for example, at the university where I teach, the university now is providing food for students, because they can't afford to buy food. And every day during the semester, I see students who are suffering from mental health issues and need compassion and empathy to have them succeed. I think all of those things are important. And as a board member, maybe that would be an influence I would have on the superintendent.”

**Mary Warzynski:** “How important is the committee to what goes on in the district?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “It seems to me that the school committee is the policy-making board. It's not the implementation, that's the superintendent, but it makes policy, makes decisions, important decisions about policy. I would think it's pretty influential because it helps the superintendent guide through changes if they're necessary in the curriculum, in personnel, in all the major pieces of running a major organization. I think of the superintendent as the orchestra leader, leading the entire staff at the high school. With us overseeing, governing one, helping them to maneuver and change.”

**Jim Hutchinson:** “How do you imagine the interaction/communication is happening between the committee and the superintendent?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “I imagine it takes place during your regular meetings. I see that as the vehicle for those regular meetings. I'm not familiar with the day-to-day operation, it would seem to me that the committee should not get involved in individual matters, but create policies. At least that's how I learned it dealing with two boards, that the boards make policy, and the superintendent or the commissioner or the chancellor implement.”

**Cara Endyke-Doran:** “Can you talk a little bit more about what type of policies you developed?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “In my two positions at the State Board of Education. I was the Special Assistant to the Commissioner. Busing was the major issue. The other issue at the time was special education, the implementation. I was involved in policy decisions regarding those previously mentioned issues years ago. I was one of many, including the lawyer, the general counsel, the assistant commissioner, the commissioner, and some others. There were always discussions in private, to come up with policies and then implement those policies; once there was a consensus developed.”

**Kevin Matthews:** “Would you like to give a concluding statement?”

**Mr. Zoulas:** “I would make a good candidate because of my experience in education.”

## **Interview with Catherine Bitter at 7:30 PM**

**Kevin Matthews:** “Would you like to give an open statement?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “My family and I moved to Lincoln about 10 years ago, since then my two children have made their way through the Lincoln School. My son started in Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School this past year as a ninth grader, going into 10th grade this school year. My daughter is going into 8th grade and will be continuing on to the High School the following year. I'm really invested in seeing LS be the best school they can be. I always tried to be as actively engaged as possible in the Lincoln School. Starting with a variety of volunteer positions. I was in the National Guard and Peace Corps for three years. Then I worked with the PTO as an Enrichment Chair. I worked with Lucy (Maulsby) on the Lincoln School Foundation as part of the grant board. As well as the chair of the LFS for two years. I think being on the school committee seems like a great opportunity. Especially with a new superintendent and principal. Professionally, my career has been in the field of education. I was, many years ago, a high school chemistry teacher for a couple of years, and then transitioned into education research and policy. For the past 20-plus years, I've worked for an organization called American Institutes for Research doing studies of education programs, primarily around K-12 school reform, innovative learning practices around deeper learning, competency-based learning, and more recently around post-secondary preparation strategies. I feel like that experience within the education field suits itself well to being able to play a role in a school district in terms of support. In addition- I look forward to potentially running as a candidate after this one year.”

**Kevin Matthews:** “Please explain what you know about Lincoln-Sudbury High School?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “My son has been attending the high school this past year. I've gotten a good sense of his experiences, which fortunately has been really positive. There's several things, I think, that have excited me about the school in terms of the choice he's had with respect to courses and opportunities to get to know Sudbury students. I've reached out to Sudbury communities in making some connections there. I've tried to do a few volunteering things; like the Zen Zone- where students can participate in fun activities before finals. But, mostly my experience with the school is through my son's experience this past year.”

**Jim Hutchinson:** “You have had a decent amount of experience on the Lincoln side. Would you mind highlighting one thing that you've done there that you're proud of?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “I worked on the Lincoln School Foundation. During that time, the Lincoln School Foundation really tried to promote innovative instructional practices of teachers by giving grants to teachers who have really interesting ideas. While I was on the Lincoln School Foundation, we tried to increase applications for grants to get the word out to teachers. I was particularly excited about having teachers going out to other schools in the area, who were also participating in innovative things, but observing/learning what other schools were creating to possibly see what Lincoln School could adopt. The event was well received, because it resulted in a couple of week-long projects in creating a community.”

**Cara Endyke-Doran:** “Please tell us, why do you want to serve on the LS School Committee?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “I have a very strong interest in education, a passion for education, and obviously a strong connection to the school district. I have an interest in being able to see what other ideas people in the community have for improving the school and finding partners.”

**Janie Dretler:** “Please tell us what you would bring to your service on the school Committee?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “My professional background has given me a landscape of what schools in Massachusetts are doing. I do a lot of work with the Department of Elementary Secondary Education. I have a good background knowledge about their priorities within the State Department of Education. I do a lot of project management at work, working with teams, managing teams. I can bring, hopefully, a good sense of collaboration and willingness to be inclusive of everybody's opinions.”

**Lucy Maulsby:** “Will you have the time to devote to this position?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “Of course!”

**Ravi Simon:** “What do you judge as the challenges Lincoln-Sudbury?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “I don't have a list of things I think need to be improved at Lincoln Sudbury. I see this role as being a liaison with the community and finding out what folks think needs to be improved and what challenges there are. I think there are several challenges that go beyond Lincoln Sudbury, that Lincoln Sudbury has faced. That includes current issues with mental health among students. It's just a big issue that everybody's facing, and it really adds pressure to come back from the pandemic. I think that's an area that is going to be a continued area of focus. I think trying to work on ensuring equitable access to high quality, engaging, learning experiences and curricula is also, I think, a challenge not just statewide. But even in high-performing schools like Lincoln Sudbury, ensuring that those AP classes or accelerated advanced classes are representing all types of students in those courses. That seems to also be something that would be a continued priority. I think just continuing to look at the curriculum and seeing if the school is providing the opportunity.”

**Jim Hutchinson:** “In reference to these challenges, how would you address them in your role as a member of the school committee?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “I think as a school committee member, I would try to collaborate with everybody here, and with the superintendent principal, by advocating for policies that can help support Lincoln-Sudbury and continue to work towards resolving those challenges. For example, on the mental health piece, I know that they're starting an advisory program to try and build more connectedness with students, and I imagine that the school committee has some role in helping to make that part of the strategic goals of the district; looking at policies that can support those goals and the strategic plan.”

**Kevin Matthews:** “Do you not see the school committee having a role in evaluation of these implementation policies, strategic plans and school goals, etc.?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “I'd also include that evaluation. Based upon my research background- it's first and foremost in my mind to look at the data. What does the data say? How much progress have we made? Are there surveys going out to students so that we have a sense of their level of connectedness? Is there data on achievement gaps? Are we looking at different subgroups to understand whether policies have an impact? How does this work? Did it have the effect that we thought it would?”

**Cara Endyke-Doran:** “Do you have experience, like, developing different matrices to monitor school improvement over time? How would you apply that in your research?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “In my role in research, I'm not a quantitative person. They use a model for data, which I have experience with.”

**Mary Warzynski:** “How important is the committee to what goes on in the district?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “This is a committee elected by the community. I have a responsibility to represent the community's views towards the district. I see this as an important role. I think the policy piece and developing strategic plans and strategic goals for the district is really, really critical. I think that collaboration with the superintendent and principal is important.”

**Kevin Matthews:** “Would you like to give a concluding statement?”

**Mrs. Bitter:** “I would be super excited to do this. Hopefully, I answered any questions you have. I'd be happy to answer more offline.”

## **Interview with Harold Engstrom at 8:15 PM**

**Kevin Matthews:** “ Would you like to give an open statement?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “I offer myself as a qualified person to fill the gap for a year. In the best interest of Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School, I don't have any agenda other than wanting to help.”

**Kevin Matthews:** “Please explain what you know about Lincoln-Sudbury High School, and your history/experience with the School Committee?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “All three of our kids went through LS. We have a 26-year-old, a 24-year-old, and a 25-year-old. who have all gone through LS. It was a good experience for them. I never served on the finance committee or as a chair or co-chair, but I did assist with the superintendent evaluation, the superintendent search, the capital committee, and was a liaison to a number of other groups. I think my experience was spent in trying to be as constructive as possible. There were a few things that I had hoped to be able to do on the committee. Due to COVID I didn't have the opportunity. I feel like my last three years on the school committee were well spent. Especially this last year, where we emerged with pretty good results.”



**Cara Endyke-Doran:** “Please tell us, why do you want to serve on the LS School Committee?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “I think three new people is potentially problematic, especially during the year of a new superintendent joining. It takes a year just to get your feet under you. I think I can bring some experience for a year and be really helpful, be a placeholder until we can actually elect somebody, which I also think is really important that people on the committee should have at least been elected at some point. I'm a known quantity. I just want to be as constructive as possible.”

**Janie Dretler:** “Please tell us what you would bring to your service on the school Committee?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “With my experience, I would bring integrity, and a passion for public school. It's probably the most important thing that binds us together. Making sure LS is functioning as a cohesive force in our communities is really important. I bring a perspective that is helpful to a group. I typically ask questions, which is something that's really helpful, in a committee setting, where a lot of people just talk about what they think. I tend to ask people what they think, and I think that's really constructive as well.”

**Lucy Maulsby:** “Will you have the time to devote to this position?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “Yes”

**Kevin Matthews:** “In the three years that you served on the LS school committee; was there anything you'd like to make some significant change.”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “I wanted to ask and see if we can elicit some way to make the quality of life for the kids and the families higher and get better outcomes, based upon the statistics we received about a year ago. Speak to students and families about their experience. Speak to the METCO directors at other schools and try to find some commonalities that everyone thinks could add value. In addition- maybe I could step up and be co-chair or something like that to manifest my experience in a more productive way for the committee during this interim year, while Ravi and Lucy get more experience.”

**Ravi Simon:** “What do you judge as the challenges at Lincoln-Sudbury?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “I think there are many challenges at LS. Where there may be many challenges, I'd want to ask the new superintendent; ask him what he thinks about the challenges that he sees.

**Jim Hutchinson:** “In reference to these challenges, how would you address them in your role as a member of the school committee?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “I like to ask questions. Asking what our goals are? Why are there goals? How are we going to achieve them? Why are those goals good methods to achieve? and are we measuring those things? Those are the kinds of questions that I like to ask and then understand different perspectives to get a conversation going.”

**Mary Warzynski:** “How important is the committee to what goes on in the district?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “I think it's really important. The committee is the oversight for the community, the district's goal. Starting at the portrait of a graduate and working down. Ensuring that the district is running well. I think the committee has played a really valuable role over the last few years in helping to ensure that. The people who are entrusted with our children are leading the school. We are the oversight for the leaders of the school, that those leaders are paying attention to the things that our community cares about. We've had different people move in and out of the committee. Having different people brings different strengths to the committee. But, altogether, the school committee is able to synthesize those things together into a very effective oversight body.”

**Kevin Matthews:** “Would you like to give a concluding statement?”

**Mr. Engstrom:** “I appreciate being considered. I am applying because I care, and because I think LS is a worthy use of our time and focus. If you choose to have me back for a year, then I'm very happy to help for a year. I'd be very happy to help for another year and try to make a positive difference for the committee and for LS and for the new superintendent.

## **Discussion and Vote**

**Mr. Zoulas:** Soterios had a lot of experience in educational policy, and knowledge in geographic diversity, which is beneficial to the committee.

**Mrs. Bitter:** Five of the six members on the school committee were in agreement, that although Catherine is not an active educator; Catherine is deeply engaged in education. Her commitment to collaborate is an advantage. In addition to her work in project management- the capacity to look at a complex problem, break it down into discrete parts to utilize as a strategy to move forward is a great skill. Bearing in mind, Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School is made up of two communities, in having adequate representation, it makes sense to have Catherine on the committee as another representative of Lincoln. Furthermore- Catherine is currently a parent who has a child attending Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School. As well as, Catherine confirmed her connectedness to both communities.

**Mr. Engstrom:** Two of the seven members of the school committee were in agreement, that Harold has plenty of experience in serving on Lincoln- Sudbury's school committee. Harold has experience with creating policies and assisting in managing budgets, which are all items critical to becoming a productive school committee member. While on the committee, Harold also served on the Superintendent/Principal Evaluation Process. With Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School encountering a new Superintendent/Principal it's going to be very important in ensuring Mr. Stephens' success for the district.

## **Action Items**

**VOTE:** Kevin Matthews asked for a roll call vote in support of Harold Engstrom as Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School's interim School Committee member.

**Mary Warzynski:** "Yay-Harold Engstrom"

**Cara Endyke-Doran:** "Nay-Catherine Bitter"

**Kevin Matthews:** "Yay-Harold Engstrom"

**Lucy Maulsby:** "Nay-Catherine Bitter"

**Ravi Simon:** "Nay-Catherine Bitter"

**Janie Dretler:** "Nay-Catherine Bitter"

**Jim Hutchinson:** "Nay-Catherine Bitter"

**Five(5) out of seven(7) members were in favor of Catherine Bitter via roll call vote.**

### **Adjourn**

Kevin Matthews adjourned the meeting to executive session without returning to open session. Seven out of seven members of the School Committee were in favor via roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:32pm.