

Q&A with the School Committee Candidates

WaylandNews has submitted the following set of questions to each of the candidates. Candidates were given a limit of 100 words per response, and warned that longer responses would be truncated. Truncated responses are noted below so that readers will know the candidate included more information. However, full responses for each candidate are included in a document collecting all full responses from each responding candidate.



Candidate Louis Jurist has chosen not to participate due to work, family and campaign commitments that made it difficult to find time to respond to these questions as well. He refers readers to his [candidate statement](#).



Write-in candidate Jeff Baron has chosen not to participate. He sent [this statement](#) as his explanation for this decision.

1. Are you prepared to implement the Loker partial closure or do you want to see the decision reopened?



FLETCHER: I see no reason to open dialog about this decision again. I understand that this decision has created difficulties for many families, particularly in the Loker community. After weeks of thorough review of information, several public forums and extended public comment periods, and countless hours of work individually, as well as deliberation as a committee, I am confident that consolidating the elementary schools at this time is in the best interest of the district. The Administration, teachers, PTOs are tirelessly working together to help the students and families make this a smooth transition. (truncated for length)



GLOVSKY: The sudden adoption of the 2 1/2 school model is probably the most incompetent and poorly planned change in any aspect of Wayland life that I have witnessed. I have absolutely no faith or confidence that it will save any money, and yet it will fundamentally impact our elementary school population. I cannot imagine any plan more critical to advance study and analysis before implementation. Yet our School Committee and Superintendent have elected to implement and then plan. It should be stopped immediately.

2. What, if any, alternatives to the Loker partial closure should have been considered?



FLETCHER: I believe the decision to move to a 2½ school consolidation represents the best balance between providing a high quality educational program and recognizing the fiscal constraints facing the town. The consolidation, in light of declining enrollment, allows the district to retain teachers, maintain average class sizes and continue current programs and services,

while achieving cost savings. This change would have taken place the following year and is an example of the work our committee has done to reduce ongoing operating expenses. When 80% of the school budget's expenses are personnel-related, \$400,000 in savings cannot otherwise be found without negatively impacting the educational program



GLOVSKY: Adoption of a well considered school restructuring plan in light of tightening financial circumstances and declining enrollments should be a top priority of the School Committee. A commitment to this effort would very likely have produced ready Town support for an interim operating override at the level originally proposed. Jumping at such a radical change in school operation for such a small projected savings makes no sense and brings into question the fundamental judgment of those in support.

3. Are there any other school planning initiatives that you would like to see changed or begun?



FLETCHER: I would like to see the School Committee continue its current progress on three important initiatives: 1. the Long Range Strategic Planning effort we began two years ago, 2. the ongoing efforts to find a solution for the High School facility and 3. the implementation of the recommendations of the technology audit. In addition, I would like to consider the Administration's evaluation of certain key initiatives including closing the achievement gap, greening of the schools, introducing a Chinese program, and placing greater emphasis on health and wellness as part of the physical education program.



GLOVSKY: Wayland needs a system-wide extra-curricular activity office. The spirit of a full educational experience is largely dependent on opportunities found outside the classroom. While our teachers and school staff must be relating with each other, there is no system allowing either parents or even students to do more than react haphazardly to new offerings. The absence of such a coordinating force may well be the source of significant wasted dollars the loss of which threatens continuation of the activities themselves.

4. Do you support the current class size guidelines? Do you believe class size matters?



FLETCHER: I believe class size is important and I support the current class size guidelines. Although the research on this topic is not entirely conclusive and depends on many variables, smaller class sizes, particularly in the early grades have proven beneficial. As I believe that teacher quality is the most important determining factor in a student's experience, teachers do find advantages to having smaller class sizes. They allow for fewer disciplinary issues and provide more opportunities for individualized attention and assessment, differentiated curriculum development, and focused time on learning.



GLOVSKY: Certainly class size matters at the elementary school level, and present class size levels there should at least be maintained. At the Middle and particularly High School levels, class size should not be a rigid standard. Students in many subjects would not be affected by larger class sizes, particularly where the opportunity of one-on-one support

outside class is made available. A mixture of large and small course opportunities would offer our students preparation for their future learning experience beyond Wayland.

5. Do you support METCO, including special education resources spent on METCO?



FLETCHER: Wayland is currently celebrating 40 years with the METCO program. I believe the METCO program offers many benefits not only to the Boston families but also to Wayland residents. The direct costs associated with the METCO program are funded through a state grant, including the Director, staff members, transportation, and after-school programs. The program conducts private fundraising to support these and other activities. Furthermore, the Town will receive in FY09 \$150,000 from the grant which will cover any direct one-on-one services, including special education services.



GLOVSKY: Disadvantaged, urban children come in more forms than the historic guidelines that the METCO program assists. I would support a METCO like program open to all disadvantaged students, but after 40 years of METCO, we have hopefully moved past the urgency and perhaps appropriateness of such a particularly narrow program. As to spending special education resources on METCO, in the absence of 100% state or Federal reimbursement, I am opposed.

6. Are there curriculum changes you would like to see at the elementary level?



FLETCHER: For specific curriculum changes, I look to the administration and teachers for such guidance as this is their area of expertise. However, there are certain areas that I would like to see strengthened, such as the use of technology in the classroom. I eagerly await the results of the technology audit so we can move forward with this initiative. In addition, the Administration has identified full day kindergarten as an area that should be evaluated in the near-term. This is very complex and there are many issues to consider such as funding, curriculum changes, and level of interest by families. (truncated for length)



GLOVSKY: Our son received a remarkably broad educational experience at Loker.

7. Do you support the High School Building project?



FLETCHER: With the collaborative approach taken by the Massachusetts School Building Authority, I am in full support of the High School building project. Since the moratorium has been lifted by the state, Wayland has been chosen as one of 49 projects to move forward with the next phase of receiving state funding. The state will work with the town to identify the need and to find a solution to meet that need. Specifically, the state will tell us the projected

enrollment, the square footage per student and the total cost of the project for which reimbursement will be given. (truncated for length)



GLOVSKY: Building a new High School has become a fantasy Wayland must move beyond. Not only is the state unlikely to support a new construction project, but under present and foreseeable financial circumstances, even a 40% state contribution to the cost would not bring the project within the Town's reach. Particularly with the prospect of declining enrollment, we need to embrace a renovation plan which is also what is most likely to win state assistance.

8. Describe circumstances in which you would not support a budgetary override to fund the schools.



FLETCHER: Wayland, like so many other communities, is facing very challenging times with less state aid and double digit increases in healthcare and pension expenses. In FY09, the increase allowed under Prop 2½ barely covers these increases in healthcare and pension expenses alone, giving no room for growth in programs without making reductions elsewhere. I believe that the school department has managed its budget efficiently and has explored every option to increase revenue, including lobbying at the state level for a reasonable, dependable funding stream, and decreasing expenses where possible. Therefore, I support the current override and will continue to do so under these circumstances



GLOVSKY: Operating overrides should be reserved for emergencies. An emergency is defined as "an unforeseen combination of circumstances". While the present circumstance of a need to consider school restructuring may now have taken on the character of an emergency, such is the result of poor or absent past planning and a reliance on overrides for routine funding purposes.

9. Would you change the district's current busing policy and if so how?



FLETCHER: The transportation of our students to school is a complicated issue. Our policy states that students who live beyond 1 1/2 miles from their elementary school or two miles from middle school or high school shall be eligible for bus transportation. Students who live within the 1 1/2 and 2 mile limits may ride the bus with permission from school officials. Permission to ride the bus will be based on bus capacity, route times and safety considerations. I believe we need to look for efficiencies with our current busing practice but also try to accommodate our families where possible.



GLOVSKY: No comment at this time.

10. Do you think it's critical to maintain the current quality of our schools?



FLETCHER: I believe all children should have access to a high quality public education. The quality of our schools is one of the primary reasons young families move to Wayland and, as reported in the Wall Street Journal, helps to retain house values. That being said, I recognize that this is a public school system and I am a strong advocate for maintaining the quality of our schools in a fiscally responsible way. We are fortunate to live in a community that values education.



GLOVSKY: Yes!

11. If you can, then please name anyone of prominence in Wayland, either inside or outside of town or school government, that you admire, and state why?



FLETCHER: Even though her life was cut tragically short, Jean Seiden had an incredible impact on this community and is someone who I greatly admire. Jean always put others before herself as she courageously fought cancer, as she co-founded the Wayland Angels, as she rallied her supporters through Team Jean and as she cared for and loved her family. I believe her impact is still felt in Wayland as her efforts continue to help others and as those who knew her, including myself, try to carry on her spirit and values.



GLOVSKY: Peter Gossels our Town Moderator. There has to be an element of egotism involved in his continued service in that role, and I've certainly muttered a curse or two at him under my breath, but year-after-year and with a certain style and grace he manages our Town Meetings with both care and appreciation for the process.

12. What creative solutions have been explored to maintain the schools without increasing taxpayer funding every year? What would you add to those?



FLETCHER: As part of the Finance Committee's Long Range Plan, the school department is working with the town to look for efficiencies in areas of like functions such as business, facilities and information technology. We have also worked closely with other town boards with regard to salary negotiations. Finally, the consolidation of the elementary schools in light of declining enrollment is a way to reduce our largest expense while maintaining the programs and services, average class sizes across the district and retaining our quality teachers. This change is currently being undertaken a year in advance given the fiscal constraints facing the town. (truncated for length)



GLOVSKY: As far as I'm concerned, there haven't been any such creative solutions explored or implemented! Our School Committee pays lip service to energy conservation studies and commodity level purchasing while the lights burn and the janitors labor well past school hours. These resources need to actually be controlled, particularly as we see energy

costs rising. The High School makes a point of requiring community service; perhaps charity should begin at home, and we could "Tom Sawyer like" place the burden for emptying wastebaskets on our students.

13. Are there any other issues that you would like to address?



FLETCHER: From my experience on the School Committee these last three years, I have learned that the issues faced by this committee are very complicated and that there are no easy, quick fixes. I have tried to make our work as open and transparent as possible, to ask questions, to make decisions based on facts, data and appropriate analysis and to improve communication of our thinking and decisions to the community. I would hope that those who have followed our meetings over the last several years would see that this committee works in an open, diligent, thorough manner to provide a high quality educational program in a fiscally-responsible manner to our students. (truncated for length)



GLOVSKY: We need a traffic cop at both the Middle and High School entrances in the morning and afternoon. At present, there is only a crossing guard at the Middle School and nothing at the High School. I'm not convinced that we need the proposed street light at the High School, but at least for those brief periods every school day we need a traffic cop there!

[Link to full detailed responses, or additional information supplied by candidate](#)



FLETCHER: Some responses above have been truncated due to length. Full responses are available in a [single document here](#).



GLOVSKY: Responses shown above are available in a [single document here](#).