

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space, P.O. Box 821, Clifton Park, New York 12065

SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONS:

ALEX BLAIS – ANSWERS:

1. How would you respond to the sustained depth and extent of public support within the district for keeping the 34 acres in the public domain? Please share your views about a potential future for this property.

The voters made their feelings very clear on April 4th. Not only does this community not support a sale of this land to BBL/a developer, but they have also shown that the land is priceless. The BBL offer of \$2.05 million was widely regarded as the “best/highest offer” the district would receive. The resounding “No” regarding this sale to a developer shows that there is no amount of money that would make the commercial development of those 34 acres worthwhile.

In my view, the only reasonable response (as well as the one I support, personally) by the board/district is to work quickly to come to agreement with the Town of Clifton Park on plans to transfer ownership of the parcel, with stipulations that it be maintained as open park space. I would also like to see a component of the agreement include a formal ongoing arrangement with the district to allow for use of that land by the school for educational/athletic purposes.

2. Throughout the RFP and subsequent Referendum process, the School Board appeared to take a subservient position to that of the Superintendent. How would you use your position as a school board member to put the impetus for school policy back into the hands of the school board?

The Board of Education members are elected to independently represent the residents and taxpayers, on behalf of whom they service, in their work for the district and its students and staff. This undoubtedly requires a significant amount of close collaboration with the Superintendent, but the Board does not work for the Superintendent.

I have experience with governance/board process as both a board member of community organizations, and also as a staff person who works very closely with my organization’s board. This provides great context and understanding for the way that boards should and are intended to function. I would certainly carry this, front of mind, into my role as a Board of Education member.

I also feel that of relevance here is my status as a newcomer, someone who does not have an established history of service to the district and the related existing relationships. While there is absolutely a place for this, balance is important and my new, independent perspective is valuable in terms of maintaining the Board’s independent voice and prerogative.

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3. How can the School Board strive for more transparency, and improve communications on key issues in order to interact with residents more effectively?

Throughout my campaign I have proposed several modifications to the Board's practices related to public engagement, communications, and transparency.

My proposals (released initially in a press statement on April 17th) include:

- ***New monthly, open sessions led by the Board to facilitate more open dialogue with resident***
- ***Requiring a supermajority in order to adopt any proposal the first time it appears on the Board agenda***
- ***Limiting executive sessions to matters of true necessity***
- ***Increased public comment time at school board meetings, and a process for board response***
- ***Moving items of community interest to the beginning of the Board agenda***
- ***Formation of public advisory committees for major policy decisions in order to provide the public with information on challenges, alternatives, and priorities while receiving input to enhance planning and decision-making.***

The goal of these 'community engagement' proposals is to encourage the Board to move toward a model that values gathering and representing the public perspective, and not proceeding with decisions on significant matters in absence of that input. Ultimately, with these simple changes, school board decisions will be more transparent, effective and ultimately receive greater public support.

Disclaimer: *Friends of Clifton Park Open Space does not endorse or oppose any candidate and provides this information to prospective voters as an educational service. Our intention is to encourage informed and active participation in the upcoming election.*