

On April 17th the Brookline Community Aging Network (BCAN) and League of Women Voters (LWV) co-sponsored a candidate forum at the Senior Center. School Committee candidates had four minutes to answer one question, which we were provided ahead of time. Read my response below or [watch the video](#) (starting at 18:20).

"Brookline residents have just had a 10% property tax increase and more overrides are likely on the way. These costs - borne by homeowners directly or passed on as rent hikes - disproportionately impact older adults living on largely fixed budgets. The current school budget represents a higher percentage of the Town's total budget than all the other departments put together. How will you balance Brookline's efforts to maintain high quality schools with a community that is affordable, provides excellent services in other areas, and does not rely on repeated overrides?"

I'm Carolyn Thall. I'm going to spend my 4 minutes answering the question, so please visit my web site or contact me to learn more about me personally, and my views on other issues.

I am glad to be asked about balancing excellence and affordability and public support because this complex and essential question – and my capacity to dig into it – is a main, driving reason why I'm running for School Committee.

I am uniquely qualified on this issue. I'm coming in with a track record of being willing to have – often initiating – the conversations that we *have to have* if we want our schools and town (they are one) to thrive.

I am known for being a clear, critical thinker and for asking good, tough questions. And I intend to bring those skills to the school committee table.

I have been a public school parent here for 13 years, and counting – I'm committed to our school system.

AND I have deep experience on the town side of government – I'm a 3-term town meeting member, and I've been on the Advisory Committee, on the Schools Subcommittee. The JOB there is to analyze the school department budget. And I have many questions.

Public schools must focus their limited resources on academics. I want money spent on our schools – on student-facing teaching and learning.

Other choices and peripheral initiatives have to be examined and discussed, thoroughly, and in public. This has not been happening to a sufficient degree-

I'm not afraid to call out over-spending on non-essentials or imbalanced priorities when I see them. I'm not afraid because I love our schools. And I know we have to be clear and careful about what we're doing – and what we're asking of voters. Because anything else will not be sustainable.

I have been outspoken about the FACT that the path we're on is not sustainable.

This includes our approach to school building projects. We are asking the public to fund expensive, enormous buildings that will be costly to maintain.

This, while we're cutting academic programs, laying off teachers, and while this senior center can't even get painted. That is not balance, and it's not right.

Last year, a Warrant Article was proposed for Town Meeting, calling for an outside analysis of the School Department's approach to budgeting.

I am the only School Committee candidate who voted for that article. I supported that idea because I support our schools and I support our roads, parks, first responders, and our seniors.

And I need to be convinced we are being smart enough in our approach to all of this.

We CAN have high-quality schools and town-side services. We do have to make tough choices, and they have to be the right choices. We can't make the right choices without the right or enough information.

We need people at the table who are willing to ask for that information and examine it intellectually and honestly. That's me.

And that doesn't mean I don't love our schools! On the contrary, it's BECAUSE I support our schools and our WHOLE town. School Committee is a town-wide office and I want our whole town to thrive.

I'm happy to discuss this more at any time. Thank you for listening today.