

# **NPC Introductory Letter to Applicants for Nominations to Bronxville School Board of Trustees May 16, 2023 Election**

**THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTION:** The heart of Bronxville Village is the Bronxville School. A key factor in the continued excellence of the school is an outstanding Board of Trustees. This May, the Bronxville School District will hold elections to fill two open board seats for three-year terms.<sup>1</sup> The NPC will then nominate two candidates (one for each open seat) to be placed on the ballot for the district-wide election on the third Tuesday in May, which is May 16th.

The mission of the Bronxville Non-Partisan Committee (“NPC”) is to ensure that qualified candidates stand for the election of school trustees to serve on the Bronxville Board of Education. Insofar as New York State local school board elections are nonpartisan, the Committee’s criteria for consideration of applicants is intended to avoid discussion or consideration of partisan affiliations in its selection process, and focus on an individual’s overall qualifications to serve as trustee. The NPC Plan and Rules of Procedure outline the committee’s stated criteria for applicants, as well as its duties to the community in recruiting, vetting, and selecting nominees. The NPC Rule’s state the criteria for selecting candidates as follows:

*It is the policy of the Committee that a nominee for Trustee shall be an individual whose educational or professional background and/or volunteer experience will enhance the candidate’s effectiveness and who will make a substantial contribution to the deliberations of the Board. The candidate must be knowledgeable about the needs of the Bronxville School and community and must be a registered voter in the Bronxville, N.Y. election district. Candidates must be aware of the heavy time requirements for service on the Board of Trustees, and prepared to make allowances in their vocational and personal commitments so that they will be able to attend all meetings and fulfill committee assignments.*

**THE TRUSTEE ROLE:** The role of school trustee is defined under New York State law. Trustees set broad policy for the direction of the school. They provide leadership and direction to the school’s administrators and make important decisions and judgment calls on many subjects.

The School Board may address a wide array of topics, including:

- **Strategic Planning and Setting Priorities:** How will the Board work with the school administration to implement the strategic plan?
- **Curriculum:** How should the curriculum be reviewed and evaluated? What should the respective roles of the Board, administration, faculty, and community be in setting priorities?
- **Technology:** Where do we want to be in three, five, and ten years? How should the school move forward on the recommendations of the strategic plan?
- **Personnel Issues:** How can the school make improvements in hiring, nurturing, and retaining talented faculty and administrators?
- **Finances:** *Budget* - how can the Board and administration prepare an appropriate budget that meets the school’s strategic goals and is acceptable to the community? Will voter resistance negatively affect school budget growth? Are there alternative sources of revenue

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<sup>1</sup>Those seats are currently held by Michael F. Finley and Jennifer Russo. Vacancies on the Bronxville School Board of Education are considered separate, specific offices; candidates run for specific seats.

that the school could pursue? *Tax Certiorari Claims* - How will tax certiorari claims affect the budget in the coming years? *Funding* - What level of support can the district expect in the future from the state and federal governments? Are there other sources of funding?

- Construction: How can the Board best manage current and future projects?
- Facilities: What is the strategy for capital improvements – plan for renovating the old part of the building? What additional capital projects need to be considered?
- Student Body: How should the school stay tuned-in to their needs and interests?
- Demographics: Do the estimated enrollment numbers allow for additional tuition students? How can the school best manage the rise in elementary student enrollment?
- Community Relations: How can the school and the School Board improve communication with the residents of the district?

All applicants to the NPC should familiarize themselves with the current set of issues facing the current school board of trustees by watching or attending school board meetings.

**THE INDIVIDUAL:** The successful Board Member is:

- Strong in decision-making skills, especially group decision-making.
- Capable of taking a leadership position as part of a team.
- Possessed of excellent judgment, based on penetrating thinking.
- Knowing when to seek additional information to help solve a problem.
- Willing and able to devote considerable time and energy.
- Willing and able to make a meaningful contribution quickly.
- Able to distinguish between setting policy, oversight, and micromanagement.
- Experienced in strategic planning.
- Fiscally responsible.
- An articulate and effective speaker.
- Informed about the needs of the school and the concerns of the public.
- Approachable and committed to the concept of openness with the public.
- Sensitive to those with different opinions but capable of taking a firm stand against popular opinion or request.
- Recognizes, and can deal with, the possible conflicts between the welfare of the district and the welfare of his/her children.

**DETAILS AND TIME COMMITMENT:** The Trustee commitment is substantial and includes:

- An organizational meeting for new Trustees in July. Monthly Board meetings held from September through June, plus 2 – 3 meetings over the summer.<sup>2</sup> Over the past several years, more frequent special Board meetings have been called and this trend may continue.
- Mandatory training within your first year of service required by New York State, including fiscal oversight training and governance skills training. NYSSBA provides online courses and regional academies to fulfill these requirements and to further your knowledge of public education and your responsibilities as a board member.
- The Board votes on the BOCES budget at a special meeting on the third Tuesday in April and also holds a special meeting on the third Tuesday in May to discuss the budget vote and the election of school Board members.
- Executive or nonpublic confidential sessions are held before each board meeting and are also held to discuss confidential personnel and litigation issues. Moreover, executive

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<sup>2</sup> See BOE Site: [2022-2023 Board of Education meeting dates](#)

sessions are held between the months of February and April to discuss probationary faculty and staff and tenure decisions.<sup>3</sup>

- Participation in either the Finance or Personnel Committee, which generally meet once a month early in the morning. Participation on other special or *ad hoc* committees as needed, such as Technology, Construction Management, Communications, and Policy Review.
- Liaison to one or more school, community, regional, or state organizations such as special education, staff development, the three school councils, the PTA, the Bronxville School Foundation, and BOCES.

Each Trustee has a different perspective on the amount of time participation on the Board requires. Conversations with board members suggest an average minimum of 20 hours a month, though actual hours can vary greatly depending on tenure and position.

**LEGAL REQUIREMENTS<sup>4</sup>:** New York State law requires that a school board member must have the following minimum qualifications:

1. Be able to read and write
2. Have been a resident of the school district for at least one year prior to election
3. Be a qualified voter of the school district (18 years old & U.S. citizen)
4. Not be an employee of the Board of Education or school district
5. Not have been removed from a school district office in the past year
6. Not be the family member of a current Trustee

In addition, it is the policy of the NPC that a candidate nominated by the NPC shall not be:

1. An elected official of the Village of Bronxville
2. A former Trustee who has not been off the Board for more than two years
3. The spouse of a faculty member or employee of the Board of Education
4. A retired member of the NPC who has not been off the NPC for more than one year
5. The spouse of a member of the NPC

## THE PROCESS FOR INTERESTED APPLICATIONS

- Contact the NPC at [bxv\\_npc@yahoo.com](mailto:bxv_npc@yahoo.com) or any member of the NPC as soon as possible to indicate your interest.
- Complete an application and submit it to the **NPC by March 1, 2023.**
- All applicants will be contacted by a member or members of the Application Administration Committee of the NPC who will serve as point persons throughout the process to answer questions, provide information, etc.
- Applicants will be scheduled during March for a one-hour group interview with the 21 members of the NPC to discuss the applicant's experience and qualifications. Additional meetings with a small group of NPC members may be requested by the NPC.
- Due diligence will be conducted by the NPC by contacting references you submitted, as well as feedback solicited from the community.
- The list of applicants will be published online on local news sites, and on the NPC website and emails, where community feedback will be solicited.
- If you are nominated, you may be asked to present your qualifications in a live session that is recorded to be made publicly available, including on the NPC website.

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<sup>3</sup> See BOE Site: [Annual Tenure Letter 2022-23 School Year](#)

<sup>4</sup> Prospective candidates for school trustee should consult the [BOE Site](#) and [NYSSBA "Running for the School Board"](#)

- If you are nominated, you will be asked to attend an informal “meet the candidate” session tentatively scheduled for **April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023**. and you may be asked to participate in a debate with other candidates if the seat is contested.

**REFERENCE CHECK PROCEDURES:** NPC members have an obligation to conduct due diligence on all candidates for nomination to the school board. This includes checking references provided by candidates and searching out information and feedback from all members of the community.

**Reference checks will be conducted as follows:**

The NPC will ask candidates for nomination to submit the names of three individuals as references. These individuals should have knowledge of the candidate in a professional or volunteer capacity. The NPC is most interested in speaking with people who have worked with the candidate and/or served with the candidate on committees or boards, have worked with the candidate as a volunteer in the community, and/or who have seen in action the candidate’s commitment to education.

The NPC may contact members of the Bronxville community who are not listed as references. Professional references not submitted by the candidate will be contacted only with prior notification to the candidate. Active BOE Trustees are not permitted as references.

***Please note: All members of the NPC have signed a confidentiality agreement stating that all discussions and information acquired in the course of due diligence will be held in confidence.***