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Ballot questions, town council, school committee seats on the ballot for Randolph election

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Randolph voters will be asked to make decisions on legalizing recreational marijuana dispensaries in town and temporarily raising taxes to pay for a new elementary school at the upcoming municipal election, as well as choose town councilors and school committee members.

Five at-large town council positions, four district councilors seats and six school committee seats will all be on the ballot at the Nov. 2 election, as will two ballot questions. The at-large seats are the only contested positions.

On Tuesday, candidates attended a virtual **forum** hosted by Randolph Votes 2021 and discussed clean water, transportation, schooling and more.

Oct. 8, 2021: The Randolph Election Notebook

At-large incumbents James Burgess and Natacha Clerger defended their positions on the council, while challengers George Magazine Jr. and Cynthia Strong made the case for their election.

At-large incumbents Richard Brewer, William Alexopoulos and Ryan Egan did not attend the **forum**, nor did challenger Miochy Lamour.

WATCH: Randolph Town Council, School Committee candidate **forum**

District councilors Ken Clifton, Jesse Gordon and Katrina Huff-Larmond also appeared at the virtual **forum**. They are running unopposed in districts 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

Incumbent Christos Alexopoulos, running unopposed for the District 4 councilor seat, did not attend.

Two ballot questions deal with marijuana, school funding

Residents will be asked to approve a debt exclusion to pay for the town's \$22 million portion of building a new Lyons Elementary School. The bulk of the money would come from a state program for school infrastructure. If approved, residents would agree to temporarily pay more in property taxes until the debt is paid.

The elementary school would be built on the site of the former Devine Elementary School in North Randolph.

Dec. 29, 2020: Randolph councilors narrowly approve new site for Lyons school

Also on the ballot will be an initiative to allow for recreational marijuana dispensaries, as well as grow houses and manufacturing facilities, in town. Currently, only medical marijuana dispensaries are allowed in Randolph.

Candidates make their case

Incumbent James Burgess said he has been around so long that everyone knows who he is, and what his strengths and weaknesses are.

"I don't mind talking," he said. "Some people get shy about rocking the boat. I tell you, sometimes you need to rock that boat."

Natacha Clerger, first elected in 2017, said she is a strong supporter of education, public safety and public health. She opposes the ballot initiative to allow recreational marijuana dispensaries in town, but will support the voters' choice if it is approved.

She said she wants to stay on the council to see her dream of building transitional housing for the homeless in Randolph.

On the issue of supporting small- and minority-owned businesses, Clerger said she is conflicted because there are so many empty spaces downtown, but many business owners don't live in Randolph.

More: Randolph candidates to square off in forum

George Magazine Jr., a challenger, was succinct in his messaging during the **forum**. He said he is running on a platform of term limits.

"It's about term limits and diversity," he said. "They need to stop playing with taxpayer money like it's Monopoly."

Magazine said he would be in favor of the town joining the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority if there was someone to oversee the program.

At the community center, programs for those aged 16 to 25 are missing, he said. If elected, he said he would work to change that.

Challenger Cynthia Strong said she wants to listen to the concerns of residents. When asked about support for a bus line going to Stoughton and another to Holbrook, she said she did not know if it is needed. If it is, she would support it.

Strong said she supported projects voted down by the town council recently, such as allowing people to read election literature in languages other than English, more funding for the schools and starting a nursing program at the community center.

School committee candidates running unopposed

After the first **forum** for town council candidates, attention shifted to the race for the school committee. Six people, including four incumbents, are running for six seats.

Challengers Jaime Ackles and Allaphia Sackeena Richards attended the **forum**, as did incumbent Ida Gordon.

Incumbents Cheryl Frazier, Lisa Millwood and Andrea Nixon did not attend.

Gordon, Ackles and Richards agreed on many points during the **forum**, including a desire to shift away Randolph's relationship with the Blue Hills Regional Technical School, to sell off or repurpose the Lyons Elementary School building if a new one is built and to ask town councilors to attend yearly walk-throughs of school buildings.

Richards, who said she is an activist, clinician and social worker, talked about her frustration dealing with the schools and a desire to bring services from nonprofits to the district.

Ackles said he wanted to get involved more heavily with the school committee over the last two years, and that the school district needs a better culture at the top.

Gordon was first elected to the board in 2009 and said she has accomplished a lot during her time on the school committee.

Yahaira Lopez said in an email on Tuesday that she is running for the school committee as a write-in candidate and described herself as a former Boston Public Schools employee.

Polls for Randolph's town wide election on Tuesday, Nov. 2 will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. For information on polling locations or to apply to vote by mail, visit randolph-ma.gov.

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