

**2023 Voters Guide for the  
Chappaqua Central School District Board of Education  
and Chappaqua Library Board of Trustees Election**

**Tuesday, May 16 from 7 am to 9 pm,  
Horace Greeley High School Gymnasium**

*For information on voter eligibility and absentee ballots, visit the [LWVNC website page](#) dedicated to this election*

**Responsibilities of Office**

**School Board**

The Board of Education of the Chappaqua Central School District is legally responsible for the education of children residing in the District and the operation of the District's public schools and facilities. The Board shall establish policies and practices that ensure a high-quality education for every student and proper governance of all aspects of District operations. The Board shall exercise oversight of and responsibility for the effective financial management, control and reporting. The Board shall seek to interpret community need and formulate short- and long-range plans to meet such need. The Board shall be responsible for presenting to the community a proposed annual operating budget, bond proposals and other matters that require public vote.

The Board shall evaluate the performance and progress of the District versus identified goals and objectives. The Board shall prepare an annual written performance evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools. It shall also evaluate its own performance and progress as a Board.

The Board shall observe all federal, state and local laws and regulations pertaining to education and public agencies.

*From: [Policy 2000: Board of Education – Principles and Organization - Chappaqua Central School District](#)*

## Library Board

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of a New York State Public Library. According to the NYS Education Department, library trustees play a keenly important role in shepherding the dedicated and prudent use of library resources. Always striving to provide the best service which benefits and supports the entire community, trustees must make policy, personnel and fiscal decisions crucial to a positive direction for the library. While delegating the day-to-day activities to competent staff, the library trustees must always be mindful of how their decisions impact the lives of people and the future of their community. As public officers, library trustees carry an essential and vital set of fiduciary and legal responsibilities. (<https://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/trustees/>)

The responsibilities of trustees are few in number but broad in scope. They are:

- Create and develop the mission of the library;
- Regularly plan and evaluate the library's service program based on community needs;
- Select, hire and regularly evaluate a qualified library director;
- Secure adequate funding for the library's service program;
- Exercise fiduciary responsibility for the use of public and private funds;
- Adopt policies and rules regarding library governance and use;
- Maintain a facility that meets the library's and community's needs;
- Promote the library in the local community and in society in general;
- Conduct the business of the library in an open and ethical manner in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and with respect for the institution, staff and public.

*From: HANDBOOK FOR LIBRARY TRUSTEES OF NEW YORK STATE, 2018 Edition,*  
<https://nyslibrary.libguides.com/Handbook-Library-Trustees/duties-responsibilities>

## Chappaqua Central School District Board of Education Candidates

Two seats up for election; 3-year terms; volunteer position  
Top two vote getters will take the seats upon the expiration of the current terms on June 30, 2023

*Note: Candidates are presented below in the order in which they will appear on the ballot. The candidates themselves supply their personal information; the League is not responsible for the content or accuracy of the responses.*

### Candidate: Matthew Auerbach

#### Background

#### Residence: (town only and for how long)

Chappaqua, 3 Years

#### Occupation:

Equity Trader

#### Prior Civic and Volunteer Service:

Kindergarten and 1st Grade NCBSA Softball Coordinator; Boys and Girls AYSO Coach

#### Question 1: Why do you want to serve on the school board?

I feel deeply connected to this community and passionate about the children and families who constitute it, and would love to bring a fresh, unique perspective in making advancements to our district's school system.

#### Question 2: What do you think are the main issues facing the Chappaqua Schools

School safety and security is at the forefront of issues needing to be tackled, but while certainly the priority for me, other issues should not be ignored. Educational foundational success is built at the teacher level, and recruiting and retaining an elite staff, and ensuring their voices are heard is vital to maintaining the level of excellence we have come to expect and should demand in Chappaqua. Tending to the mental health of our students, and making sure that all children in our district are properly cared for and are provided a comfortable environment where everyone has the same opportunity to succeed and excel, should not just be an expectation but a demand.

**Matthew Auerbach, cont.**

**Question 3: What about your experiences and skills listed above will make you an effective member of the school or library board?**

I don't pretend to be an expert on the subjects I lack experience in, but what I am, is a good, open-minded listener, who is passionate about his community and who will work tirelessly to ensure that the needs of our children and our families are met.

**Candidate: Shokoofeh Rajabzadeh**

**Background**

**Residence: (town only and for how long)**

Chappaqua, 2.5 Years

**Occupation:**

Program Manager, Teaching Artist Sustainability and Arts Access

**Prior Civic and Volunteer Service:**

Hearts & Homes for Refugees, Volunteer; Race Before Race, Executive Board Member

**Question 1: Why do you want to serve on the school board?**

I have spent my entire adult life in education working in and with schools. I understand the impact that strong, thoughtful leadership can have on student achievement, health, and family and community engagement with schools. Serving as a Board of Education member will give me the opportunity to leverage my knowledge, expertise, and experience to improve and strengthen our schools.

I want to serve because as an educator and lifelong student, I am committed to ensuring that school is a safe place for curiosity, self-exploration, and learning for every student, because I want to address the mental health crisis that affects so many of our teenagers, and because I want to make sure that students and families feel seen, heard, and supported.

**Question 2: What do you think are the main issues facing the Chappaqua Schools**

Mental, Physical, and Emotional Health and Safety

Equal Access to Academic Success

**Question 3: What about your experiences and skills listed above will make you an effective member of the school or library board?**

Education and Experience: I have an MA from Oxford University and a PhD from UC Berkeley. I have taught preschoolers and freshmen. I currently work with K-12 schools in NYC. I care about the day-to-day details that make up a student's experience, but also take in the big-picture concepts of what creates a healthy school ecosystem.

Communication and Collaboration: In my role as Program Manager, I collaborate with principals, teachers, Teaching Artists, and board members to develop programs for schools. I have extensive experience organizing and chairing large-scale educational initiatives. I ask lots of questions, respect each person's expertise, and am ambitious about finding creative solutions.

Advocacy: I have experience advocating for marginalized students and have spearheaded initiatives that have led to policy changes in educational contexts. I will work with parents, students, teachers, and school administration to ensure that inclusivity remains a value that we practice, not just admire.

**Candidate: Alissa Dorfman**

**Background**

**Residence: (town only and for how long)**

Chappaqua, Since 2007

**Occupation:**

Professional Organizer

**Prior Civic and Volunteer Service:**

PTA Chair/Vice Chair of Bell Middle School 2019-2020, 2018-2019; Co-Chair of Bell Theater 2023; Many previous years of service at Roaring Brook including: Co-Chair of Roaring Brook Book Fair; Co-Chair of Roaring Brook Seasons of Giving; Chair of Roaring Brook New Family Outreach

**Question 1: Why do you want to serve on the school board?**

As a mom of 3 kids, I feel compelled to serve on the school board because I care deeply about the future of this district. Every child should benefit from all that our district has to offer and feel emotionally supported and safe while attending our schools. The success of our schools depends on our program growth, our fiscal responsibility, and the social/emotional development of our children.

**Alissa Dorfman, cont.**

**Question 2: What do you think are the main issues facing the Chappaqua Schools**

The 3 most compelling issues facing our district today are the safety of our children, teacher retention and the hiring of excellent new educators, and allowing our district to grow while maintaining our fiscal health.

**Question 3: What about your experiences and skills listed above will make you an effective member of the school or library board?**

I am the only candidate to have sent one child all the way through our schools, while I also remain deeply entrenched in our district because my other 2 children are still students in Greeley and Bell. This allows me a unique "global" perspective and I think it is imperative that the board have a member with this vantage point. I have 16 years of institutional knowledge about our schools having been the Bell PTA Chair and having volunteered in our schools since 2007. I have attended many board meetings over the years and I have a full understanding of the role of a board member. I also have extensive fiscal experience from my previous career in retail financial planning.

**Candidate: Beret Flom**

**Background**

**Residence: (town only and for how long)**

Chappaqua, since 2018

**Occupation:**

I am a lawyer. Currently, my practice focuses on Social Security disability cases. Prior to becoming a disability advocate, I represented fiduciaries, trustees, interested stakeholders, and creditors in national and international bankruptcy/restructuring matters.

**Prior Civic and Volunteer Service:**

For the past year, I have worked with the Chappaqua Elementary Childcare Initiative (CECI) to expand the before- and after-school care programs in our district. I am a persistent and passionate advocate, who consistently showed up to the school board meetings to ensure that all families have access to quality and affordable before- and after-school care. With the help of the other CECI members, the community, and the district, we worked to successfully expand the onsite programs at all CCSD elementary schools for the 2023-24 school year.

**Question 1: Why do you want to serve on the school board?**

I am running for a seat on the board of education because I know the important and vast work done by the board. Chappaqua's public schools have an amazing reputation, which benefits our kids and

**Beret Flom, cont.**

our community. I am also personally invested in the success of CCSD because I have a school-aged child in the district. I want to continue to work together with the students, teachers, community members, and district to further build on Chappaqua's strong reputation and achieve excellence for our students.

If you have any questions, you can reach me at [voteberetflom@gmail.com](mailto:voteberetflom@gmail.com).

**Question 2: What do you think are the main issues facing the Chappaqua Schools?**

As the mother of a kindergartner at Grafflin, I believe the most important goal is to ensure our district makes all of the kids feel welcome and safe, so that the kids can focus on becoming critical thinkers who are successful beyond CCSD.

Many issues impact this goal. For example, the district's security updates and diversity, equity, and inclusion work needs to continue and be improved upon. Additionally, the five-year strategic plan should address: expanding foreign language to the elementary schools; the challenges of only having advanced 8th grade math and science courses and whether test scores support this new model; and the impact of teacher turnover on issues like class size, "belonging," and special education.

The board of education has always been about more than one issue--and I have the experience and skills to analyze the information and be an asset to CCSD.

**Question 3: What about your experiences and skills listed above will make you an effective member of the school or library board?**

After attending the board meetings for the past year and successfully working to expand the childcare programs in our district, I have proven I can use my skills as an advocate to work together with the community and the district to achieve excellence for CCSD. I have shown the district that I am persistent and will always show up to get answers but I also know how to listen.

Finally, as a former bankruptcy attorney, I have experience analyzing financial information and finding creative solutions, even in the toughest situations. I have experience working with people from across a broad range of industries, including non-profit organizations. My knowledge will help me ensure the district is fiscally responsible.

My experience as a listener, an advocate, and a parent in the district will make me an effective board member.

## Chappaqua Library Board of Trustees

Two seat ups for election; one for a 5-year term and one for an unexpired term; volunteer position

*Note: Candidates are presented below in the order in which they will appear on the ballot. The candidates themselves supply their personal information; the League is not responsible for the content or accuracy of the responses.*

### Candidate: George Benack

#### Background

#### Residence: (town only and for how long)

Millwood, 27 Years

#### Occupation:

Retired HS math teacher (Greeley)

#### Prior Civic and Volunteer Service:

I have been a HS math teacher for 36 years. I've served as a trustee for the Teachers Health Benefits Consortium. I have volunteered on countless committees serving the school district, including our very first forays into computer technology 27 years ago.

#### Question 1: Why do you want to serve on the school board?

My family has loved the Chappaqua library since we moved here 27 years ago. It was a key component in our decision to move to this town. The library is an extremely valuable resource staffed by knowledgeable, courteous and overqualified staff who go out of their way to be helpful. I want to assure the library gets the funding it needs in order to continue to serve our community while keeping an eye open to new ideas and technologies to enable us to meet the needs of a vast and diverse community. .

#### Question 2: What do you think are the main issues facing the Chappaqua Schools

Obtaining funding and retaining highly qualified staff in order to expand programs and services to meet the needs of a diverse membership.



**George Benack, cont.**

**Question 3: What about your experiences and skills listed above will make you an effective member of the school or library board?**

I'm a math person (I taught HS math for 36 years, 28 at Greeley), a musician and a lifelong reader with varied interests who works well in groups. I never learned anything by talking, hence I will always seek out and listen to our knowledgeable staff and make myself aware of the needs and concerns of our community. My agenda is to advance the library's ability to meet the needs of its members and to help it acquire and retain the talent to achieve our collective goals.

**Candidate: John Harrison**

**Background**

**Residence: (town only and for how long)**

New Castle - 26 years

**Occupation:**

High school history and economics teacher

**Prior Civic and Volunteer Service:**

Boy Scout of America - Troop 1

**Question 1: Why do you want to serve on the school board?**

After years in education and youth volunteer service, I am eager to find ways to use my talents and capabilities to help strengthen my community - in particular the Chappaqua Library. The Chappaqua Library is a gem that is staffed with exceptional professionals. I would like to contribute to the stewardship of the library by serving as a board member who can maintain the library's strong finances while also supporting new and enriching programming.

**Question 2: What do you think are the main issues facing the Chappaqua Schools?**

The main issues facing the library is to maintain funding so that the library can continue to serve as a key asset for the community. Furthermore, as we emerge into a post-Covid world, the library needs to continue to find ways to strengthen community ties and enhance a sense of connection and belonging among community members. The library is one of the few community resources that can engage every member of the community regardless of age and thus is uniquely situated to help strengthen and deepen a sense of community.

**John Harrison, cont.**

**Question 3: What about your experiences and skills listed above will make you an effective member of the school or library board?**

I have worked in education for more than 30 years, both in public schools and now in an independent day school. Furthermore, I have been active in youth civic programs through my work with scouting. Based on my experience in education and my work with civic organizations, I believe that I have a keen understanding of how important the Chappaqua Library is to the health and vitality of the community. There are few community resources more important than the public library and I believe that my commitment to education and my experience in the community will make me a good steward of this precious community institution.