

The Pawprint

Political Issue | Fall 2019

Schodack Town Council: 2 seats, 4 candidates

by: Noah Albanese

I asked seven questions to all four candidates running for the Schodack Town Council. Here are their responses. Councilwoman Tracey Rex is running with Mike Martin, and Councilman Mike Kenney is running with Dan Grandinetti. There are two open seats on the Town Council at the moment. Early voting has already begun in New York State, ending on Sunday, November 3.

Election day takes place on Tuesday, November 5th.

Q: Can you give me your basic background ?

Mike Kenney: “I grew up in East Greenbush and graduated from Columbia High School, after which I attended HVCC and obtained an Associates degree. In 1990, my wife and I moved to Schodack where we raised our two daughters, Laura and Megan.”

Dan Grandinetti: “I grew up in Hudson NY and graduated from Hudson High School in 1986. My wife and I moved to Schodack in the 2000’s. We live in the Maple Crest development with our three children, Megan, Michael, and Maya. I hold degrees from Hudson Valley in Criminal Justice, and studied organizational leadership at Marist College. I am a graduate of the Zone 14 Police Academy.”

Mike Martin: “I’ve been a Schodack resident for 22 years. I went to Maple Hill High School, graduating in 2015 and I graduated from St. Bonaventure College in 2019 after studying political science. I have a lot of love for this town, I have a deep family history here, and now I’m just here to help out.”

Tracey Rex: “I was born and raised in Schodack, I graduated from Maple Hill in 1990. I live here now with my two sons, Kyle is sixteen and Brandon is twenty one. I ran for office in 2015 because there was a lack of transparency and representation on the Town Council.”

Q: Why are you running for Town Council ?

Mike Kenney: “Maybe it’s carryover from my job or just who I am, but when I see a problem or issue, I want to work to resolve it. Whether it’s something as simple as helping Kiwanis or other civic groups advertise their events with electronic signs I can provide, or more involved projects like helping install lighting for the East Greenbush Little League, I’ve always been involved with trying to improve my community. I’ve brought that same attitude and desire into my life as a public official. If there’s an issue in Schodack that needs addressing, I want to help be part of finding a solution.”

Dan Grandinetti: “This community has been so welcoming of me and my family. As I continually get more and more involved whether through coaching sports, community or church groups, or my time on the Schodack Central School Board, I keep finding more and more things to love about this town. I see a huge amount of potential here and want to help make this town an even better place to raise a family than it already is.”

Mike Martin: “Well there are a lot of answers to that one. In my opinion, the town has been run by the same family, the same party, one gender for a while and I went to college with the understanding that after I graduated I knew that I wanted to come back and get some change in town. Get more people involved, get more people engaged. People understand that the town government is people’s first exposure to any government.”

Tracey Rex: “I feel like the job’s not finished yet. For example, The Citizen Advisory Committee that is in our codes is non-existent. I plan to revitalize that. I have already initiated the updating of the Ethics Code. The documents have been updated but have not been presented to the public and the Town Board for comment and approval. This needs to be completed. I feel there could be more communication and discussion about all topics. I would like more openness during the board meetings.”

Q: What is a last term accomplishment that you’re proud of?

Mike Kenney: “Fiscal accountability is huge to me. Ensuring that our taxpayers are respected and getting the most from the hard-earned money they pay in taxes is my first and foremost priority. I’ve been part of nine budgets that has held the average tax increase to under 0.5% while simultaneously reducing town debt, earning one of the highest bond ratings in the state, adding to our reserve fund and creating two additional reserve funds to pay for police and highway vehicles/equipment which saves taxpayers making interest payments on those items. We’ve also been able to expand services at the same time, making improvements to our park in the form of a new playground for instance, or

adding additional police personnel to better protect our residents.”

Dan Grandinetti: Running as a freshman

Mike Martin: Running as a freshman

Tracey Rex: “I ran for town council in 2015 because I felt like that was something anyone with interest should be able to do and not just for certain groups of people. I ran to increase transparency, creating ways for people to be engaged in our government, know what is going on. I am proud of my initiative to have meetings online and accessible to the public. I’m proud to have written an informative article in *The Advertiser* every month since elected. I’m proud to have had perfect attendance and show up to work. These are examples of initiatives that should have been in place already.”

Q: What is your agenda if you’re elected ?

Mike Kenney: “I’d work to continue the policies that we have implemented that is helping to ease the tax burden on our residents while also encouraging new smart growth and development in our town. As we continue to strengthen our fiscal footing, we’re able to explore additional services we could potentially offer our residents without an increase in taxes. I’d also want to explore the possibility of visiting our schools and discussing the functions of town government with students so they can better understand what it is we do and how their local government works.”

Dan Grandinetti: “Schodack has so much to offer and I want to protect those special qualities. We’re a close knit, value-laden, hardworking community with awesome families and selfless volunteers. One of the largest burdens our town faces though is the ever-increasing costs of public services, and finding ways to tackle that and increase our tax base while preserving our overall quality of life. Promoting smart commercial growth, working with small businesses, expanding water/sewer infrastructure to new areas, supporting our local farmers, and encouraging sound housing policies that open up opportunities for new families to move here while not interrupting our community fabric will be my main focus to help alleviate the financial burden on our residents.”

Mike Martin: “The town of Schodack has not updated a lot of laws in the last couple of years. We had an ethics reform bill that Tracey Rex started a couple of years ago, it got shut down, and it wasn’t furthered. My big thing about that is, if I’m elected to serve my town then I should be held to a higher standard of ethics than all my constituents that I serve, and the law hasn’t been updated

since 1970. So there is no accountability for things I do online. I say that's the first thing I want to do. Beyond that, I want to get more people engaged. I've talked to a lot of kids in high school and college who aren't really sure if they want to make Schodack their home because there isn't a lot going on in Schodack. I want to get those people engaged to figure out how we can make a Castleton for the next generation."

Tracey Rex: "Creating a Citizen Advisory Committee is really important to me. I also started the initiative of updating our ethics laws that haven't been updated since before I was born. The zoning needs to be updated and presented to the public. We need to complete these initiatives to keep the town moving forward."

Q: Do you have any plans to revitalise Castleton ?

Mike Kenney: "Schodack has a number of distinct communities in it. The Nassau lake area, East Schodack, Schodack Landing, Castleton, etc. While they each present their own unique issues and considerations, ultimately the goal is for all of them to prosper and thrive. I feel that's best achieved by making Schodack an affordable place to live/do business. If we do our job at the town level to hold the line on taxes and promote the entire town for growth potential, Castleton is sure to benefit as a result. We have had a good working relationship with the Village board in the past and would hope to continue that in order to aid them however we can."

Dan Grandinetti: "The village holds a special place to so many in town and I'm excited to see the level of enthusiasm groups (I am a financial contributor) like the Main Street Association are bringing to raising awareness and promoting all it has to offer. As a member of the Town Board I would look to work hand in hand with the Village Board on ways we could help in developing the village while also exploring potential shared services that could save residents and businesses within the village money. I'd also look to draw on the close relationships I've formed with State and County officials like Assemblyman Jake Ashby or County Legislator Chuck Peter in regards to forming strategies to attract business interests to the village, especially into the old Fort Orange Paper site."

Mike Martin: "I actually run a non-profit in the village, I just started it, it's called Tree City U.S.A. It's supported by the Arbor A foundation which promotes environmental growth, puts more trees and shrubs, and increases property value. By doing that we're promoting the village government to get more grants in. Whereas the town of Schodack, because they've been stagnant there has been a challenge to the status quo they're lacking. There are so many things the town can do to help people our age to grow. They can offer things like internships and they're not doing that. I know I can connect with those people. As the only candidate who actually lives in the village, I believe that if I

get on the town board I can be a voice for the village."

Tracey Rex: "The village as you know is governed by the Village Board and they have jurisdiction over their village on the majority of things. The Town Board has its own role. I would like to see regular meetings between the Town Board and the Village Board, and find improvements and good government initiatives that we can work together on."

Q: Do you have any thoughts on the Amazon warehouse being built in Schodack?

Mike Kenney: "This is a common misconception some have had but an understandable one. The Town of Schodack is served by four different school districts, with East Greenbush Central Schools and Schodack Central Schools covering the vast majority of town. So, while yes, the Amazon project is being built in the EGCSO side of town, it's still in the Town of Schodack and will help offset taxes for all town residents, in addition to any residents of the EGCSO. Schodack Central residents, while not directly now, should see benefits down the road as more growth comes to Route 9 as a result of the expansion of infrastructure this project is creating. That growth will fall largely in the SCSD and will provide some much needed tax relief for that district. For these reasons as well as many others, I'm supportive of the project."

Dan Grandinetti: "As a School Board member, I look at the Amazon project as an important piece in bringing some much-needed commercial tax base growth to the Schodack Central District, even though it isn't being built there. While many residents of the Town will see benefits both to the Town of Schodack and East Greenbush Central School district tax bases, for those of us in the Schodack Central side of Town, the expansion of sewer/water/gas infrastructure along Route 9 should hopefully spur some additional development that will then take place in our school district. This town is blessed to be home to several amazing districts and the expansion and development of our commercial tax base along our commercial corridors is important to all of them. With each development project, our "continuous" goal should be to mitigate any issues/concerns that may take away from the fabric of our community before, during, and after the project is completed."

Mike Martin: "The Amazon warehouse is a really tricky thing. They bought the land legally, it's what the land was owned for, and from a town board perspective there's nothing much we could do. There is a neighborhood group called Birchwood Associates and they are fighting adamantly against it and I fully understand why; it's upending their whole way of life. My stance on it is, Amazon bought the land legally, they're allowed to be there, but when I think of development in Schodack, I rather think of mom and dad shops, small businesses, growing along Route 9 like that, not a million square foot warehouse. However, I'm glad that something is going on in Route 9 because it can grow

the water and sewer down through Route 9 which can really encourage businesses to come. It's really a catch 22. Amazon has promised they're going to put walls and trees up, between their warehouse and the neighborhoods, and I'm going to hold them to that if I get on the town board. If you're serving a community you're not serving the big businesses, you're serving the people."

Tracey Rex: "I am unable to discuss the Amazon project as it is still in litigation."

Q: Do you have a message for the people of Schodack ?

Mike Kenney: "It's been an honor to serve the residents of Schodack over the course of my tenure as a Town Board member. The trust and support of the voters has afforded me the ability to work with some amazing people over the years on addressing the challenges our town faces and for that I'm thankful. This town has come a long way and I feel like we're really on the cusp of some great things. With the continued support of the voters, I look forward to hopefully continuing my role in achieving this town's full potential. Thank you."

Dan Grandinetti: "If I am fortunate enough to be successful on Election Day, I view it as a 4-year contract with the 13,000 residents of Schodack. I commit to them that I would conduct myself with transparency, honesty, and integrity. I will draw on my strength to stand alone if need be while always seeking to utilize my ability to work with others. I commit/promise to remain accessible, approachable, responsive, and accountable to ALL the residents of Schodack."

Mike Martin: "If I was an 18 year old still in high school I would have been so thrilled to have somebody my age running for town board. I want to work with you guys so bad because I know I'm a couple years older, but I'm just like you guys. I want a Schodack where I can go out and get dinner or go out and have fun, and I don't need to go to East Greenbush or Kinderhook. And it's a really awesome thing because I want to work with you guys. I feel like the current board as it is doesn't want to work with you guys because they don't think that our voices carry a lot of weight. Of course a lot of young people don't vote, which is really unfortunate. I really want to change that. I want to be open and transparent. I think the young people of Schodack should be so excited about this campaign because we can get one of our own on there."

Tracey Rex: "We are all thrilled to live in such a great community. I love it -- that's why I stayed, that's why I live here with my family. I have worked hard for you over my first term on the board and would be honored to have the opportunity to continue implementing good government initiatives and serving this community."

To Voters in the 2020 Election

by: Tari Civerolo



Most of the Class of 2020 will be eligible to vote in the upcoming presidential election. Because of this, it's crucial to be informed about issues central to American politics today. Though it may seem overwhelming, there are a few steps anyone can take to stay knowledgeable about the election, and the people and issues surrounding it.

First and foremost: read the news! This one might be obvious, but still important. The news changes every day, so continually staying informed is a good idea. It's also smart to receive news from multiple sources. And you don't even have to read a physical newspaper. There are lots of different ways to learn about current events and politics. Listening to the news on the radio or listening to political podcasts are easy ways to learn about the news, even while driving. Or, you can sign up for daily political newsletters to get it sent to your email.

Second, research the presidential candidates. Learn about their positions on issues you care about. (And learn about their positions on issues you don't care as much about). Check out who's endorsed by people you respect or organizations you support. Watch the debates. Compare the candidates to each other. Think about what you want to see in a president, and decide who fits that best.

Third, register to vote. In New York, if you will be 18 before Election Day, you can pre-register to vote as a 17-year-old—just make sure you will be 18 before the end of the calendar year during which you register. You can register to vote in person at the County Board of Elections (ours is in Troy), or complete the forms online and mail them. If you are 18, there are no restrictions on registering to vote.

After you've done your research on the candidates, and are registered to vote, there's only one thing left to do: VOTE! If you will be in Rensselaer County on Election Day, you can vote at a polling location in the area. If you are registered to vote here, but you will be away (i.e. for college), you can vote using an absentee ballot. To request an absentee ballot, you need to fill out an application and mail it or deliver it in person to the County Board of Elections. You will then receive a ballot to fill out with your vote.

Good luck, and happy voting!

News from the CPL

Hello! I'm Joelle Adler, the youth services librarian at Castleton Public Library. Each month, check the CPL Teen Newsletter to see what's going on at the library. Here is November's newsletter. We have a monthly "Teen Time" activity for students in grades 6-12, which always includes snacks. I hope you will be able to come to some activities or stop by the library anytime to say hi!

The Pawprint

Castleton Public Library Teen Newsletter
November 2019

Programs and Events

Recycled Art: Magazine Collages
Tuesday, Nov. 5, 3:00-6:00 PM
Use colors and images from magazines to make your own unique collage!

Open Mic Night
Friday, Nov. 8, 6:00-8:00 PM
Musicians and spoken word poets - come share your talents at Open Mic Night! All ages welcome to perform and to watch.

Teen Time: Bad Art Night
Thursday, Nov. 14, 4:00-6:00 PM
Unleash your creativity to design the worst piece of art you can using our variety of supplies- you may even win a small prize! Enjoy snacks while creating your bad art.

Perler Bead Crafts
Friday, Nov. 15, 12:00-6:00 PM
Come make something awesome out of perler beads!

Cool Science: Marshmallow Catapults
Tuesday, Nov. 19, 4:00 PM-6:00 PM
Make catapults and experiment with the laws of physics using marshmallows!

No More Late Fines!

There are no more late fines on items you check out from Castleton Public Library! Just make sure to return items when you can.

Have any overdue items on your card right now? Return them at CPL and there will be no late fees!

JUST BRING IT BACK!

NO MORE LATE FINES

New Teen Books @ CPL

THANHHA LAI
FRANKLY LOVE
KINGDOM OF SOULS
SHATTER CITY
RICK RIORDAN
THE APOLLO
THE GRACE YEAR
LAST PICK
MARIE LU
REBEL

Castleton Public Library
85 S. Main Street, Castleton, NY 12033
Phone: 518-732-0879
www.castletonpubliclibrary.org

Library Hours:
Monday-Wednesday-12:00-8:00 PM
Thursday-Friday-10:00 AM-6:00 PM
Saturday-10:00 AM-4:00 PM



518-732-7701
1216 Maple Hill Road, Castleton, New York, 12033
www.schodack.k12.ny.us