

CANDIDATES FOR THE 2026 RSU 1 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

**Tuesday, November 3, 2026
~at municipal polling locations~**

Melissa Martin, Bath Residence

Tell us a little about yourself and your connection to the district.

I live in Bath and have a nearly two-year-old daughter (so future RSU 1 student). I grew up Downeast but had an early connection to the area when I attended the Upward Bound program at Bowdoin as a high school student. This is the program that supports low-income, first gen students headed to college. The Bowdoin program did then and currently supports a number of Morse students as well so I early on had some close Morse friends. I then went to Boston and NYC for almost a decade for college and law school. I also taught elementary school at a public school and a charter school for four years before law school. I came back to Maine after law school and worked in legal services for seven years representing domestic violence and sexual assault survivors in protection order, divorce, and parental rights cases including exclusively working in the Midcoast after moving to Bath in 2020. I then worked at the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault working to pass laws to support child and adult survivors of sexual violence. One of the pieces of legislation I am most proud of allowed a path for evidence-based child advocacy center interviews from child sexual assault survivors to be used as evidence in criminal trials. This year, I switched to working in higher education.

Why are you running for School Board?

I am running for school board because I care deeply about both students and teachers. Having been a classroom teacher myself I know how challenging it is to manage the variety of needs students have while still making sure students are getting a rigorous education and enjoying school. As a parent of a toddler about to start in the school system, I am deeply committed to making sure our district can meet the needs of all students from Pre-K to senior year. I also hope that I can use my legal background to be helpful in drafting policy, etc.

What do you value most about our schools?

I value so many things about RSU 1 schools. Since my time as an Upward Bound student making friends with Morse students, I have been so impressed by the academic success and public interest mindedness of so many Morse students. Living in Bath, I am so excited to see how strong the alumni network is as well. I also value that RSU has a lot of things that value tradition, strong history, and alumni network, while being willing to be ahead of the curve in many areas.

What do you see as the biggest challenge or opportunity facing the district?

I think there are many challenges from building the new elementary school to increasing costs to a variety of issues related to AI and technology.

What qualities, experience, or perspectives would you bring to the School Board?

I think the four biggest qualities I would bring to the school board are a commitment to the long-term health of our district based on the fact my child will be in it for the next two decades, the ability to work collaboratively and hear and learn from many perspectives, my legal background drafting policies, and my perspective as a parent and former classroom teacher.

Jamie Dorr, Woolwich Residence

Tell us a little about yourself and your connection to the district

I grew up in Phippsburg and attended Phippsburg Elementary School, Bath Junior High (as it was called at the time) and graduated Morse High in 1994 (I'm a fourth-generation Morse High School graduate, and my children are

fifth-generation!) My three oldest sons (all in their mid-20's) have all graduated from Morse. I come from a large family with relatives throughout the RSU 1 towns, including nieces and nephews in nearly every district school. I've lived in Phippsburg or Bath nearly my entire life and recently moved to our forever home in Woolwich, along the Kennebec River.

My two youngest children were recently adopted. My 16-year-old daughter was born profoundly deaf and attends a specialized boarding school in Washington, D.C. My 10-year-old is a fifth grader at Fisher-Mitchell. When we moved to Woolwich this past summer, I considered having her change schools, but after so many transitions in her young life, I felt it was important to preserve the strong bond she has with her school community. I sought school choice so she could stay at Fisher-Mitchell. It would be easier for me to put her on a bus to Woolwich, but I believe staying in Bath is best for her, so I drive her to and from school each day.

I'm the Executive Director and founder of Midcoast Youth Center & Skatepark, where I work with hundreds of young people and families across the district. I've served on the RSU 1 School Board as the Bath Representative for 6 years, including the past two years as Vice Chair, and it was very difficult for me to realize that moving would force me to resign my Bath seat. However, I feel that there is still so much I can offer to the district and would love to serve my new neighbors and community as an effective voice.

Why are you running for School Board?

I'm running because I care deeply about our students and the families and taxpayers who support our schools. Our schools must meet the needs of their learners while using public dollars responsibly. Those responsibilities don't always lead to an easy or obvious answer, especially when so many costs are outside of local control (teacher contracts, health insurance premiums, utilities, etc). They call for a long-term vision and the willingness to take practical action now.

During my time on the RSU 1 School Board, I've helped advance initiatives to address issues teachers and staff had been raising. I've also supported difficult, sometimes unpopular decisions when I believed they were fiscally sound and in the best interest of the broader community. I'm not running to win approval in the moment. I'm running to listen, weigh the tradeoffs, and do what I believe is right for students and the community.

What do you value most about our schools?

I value the strength of the leadership and relationships across RSU 1—from the district team to the leaders and staff in each school. Each school community is special, with its own character and personality shaped by the students, families, educators, and staff who are part of it. That's what makes each school come alive.

At the same time, there's a shared commitment across the district to working together for students. In my experience, that combination of strong leadership, distinct school communities, and collaboration is special and sets RSU 1 apart.

What do you see as the biggest challenge or opportunity facing the district?

One of the biggest challenges is the growing pressure on local property taxpayers. People are feeling those increases, and we need to take that seriously. At the same time, costs for teacher contracts, health insurance, utilities, and materials continue to rise. The Board must ensure students have the instruction, support, and resources they need to learn and make academic progress, while recognizing that families have limits and many costs are outside the district's control.

This past spring, I opposed adding a position at full-time because I believed it would place an unnecessary additional burden on taxpayers. I worked hard to keep the cost down because, in my judgment, the need for the position was not great enough to justify the added expense. Some people disagreed with me, but board members have a responsibility to weigh the fiscal case and make the decision they believe is right.

We should keep examining the areas we can influence: whether programs are meeting their goals, how we purchase and share resources, and where operational changes could save money without undermining student learning. We may not be able to control every cost, but we can be disciplined, transparent, and thoughtful about the choices we make.

What qualities, experience, or perspectives would you bring to the School Board?

I would bring six years of school board experience, including the past two years as vice chair, a parent's perspective, and a proven record of community leadership. Ten years ago, I saw a need in our community and founded Midcoast Youth Center to address it. Since then, I've worked to build it into a thriving youth development organization that serves district

students and neighboring district students when they are not in school. I've also helped advance school board initiatives I believe in and am willing to take a clear position when I believe a proposal is not fiscally responsible.

My perspective is shaped by working with community partners, businesses, residents, families, and people without children in the schools. Through MYC, I've built relationships with organizations across Maine. Those connections can help the district identify partnerships, resources, and potential funding opportunities for students and schools.

I also want to be transparent that my leadership of MYC could raise questions about a potential conflict of interest. I take that seriously. If a matter before the Board involved MYC or created an actual or perceived conflict, I would disclose it and follow district policy about participating (or not) in the discussion or vote. MYC is mission-driven nonprofit work, and I have no ownership stake in it or personal financial interest in directing district decisions toward the organization. Everything we do is for students and families in our communities.

I don't see board service as a popularity contest. I see it as a responsibility to listen broadly, ask hard questions, and make the most effective decision I can.

Jennifer Ritch-Smith, Woolwich Residence

Tell us a little about yourself and your connection to the district.

I worked in School Union 47 and RSU 1 for a total of 7 years. I have been on the RSU 1 school board for 13 years. I have lived in Woolwich for 25 years. I have served in the Maine Legislature and have been appointed to Woolwich town committees. I am very grateful to see my former students grow to be valuable members of our communities and watch them start families that will be the future students of our school system.

Why are you running for School Board?

I am running again for the RSU 1 school board to continue to support our students, staff, and administration as we continue to grow and find solutions to meet our community needs.

What do you value most about our schools?

Our students, our staff, and the community that is so generous in their support. Working in the classroom taught me the value of being a lifelong learner. I love when our students both venture beyond our community for their next chapter and also when they return and see how incredibly fortunate we all are to call this place home.

What do you see as the biggest challenge or opportunity facing the district?

I think one of the biggest challenges is to honor the original intent of the combined school system to both be cost efficient and to honor the different school and community needs. Over the past 13 years I have seen an ever-increasing cost placed on funding the local portion of our annual school budget. Our administration and board have worked hard to balance the needs of students and costs beyond our control but still the increasing property tax from the school budget is a growing unaffordable housing cost.

What qualities, experience, or perspectives would you bring to the School Board?

My experience includes first hand teaching experience, over a decade of school board experience, legislative experience, and a recent growing knowledge base of how to use Maine Care reimbursements revenue to help replace local funding for school services.