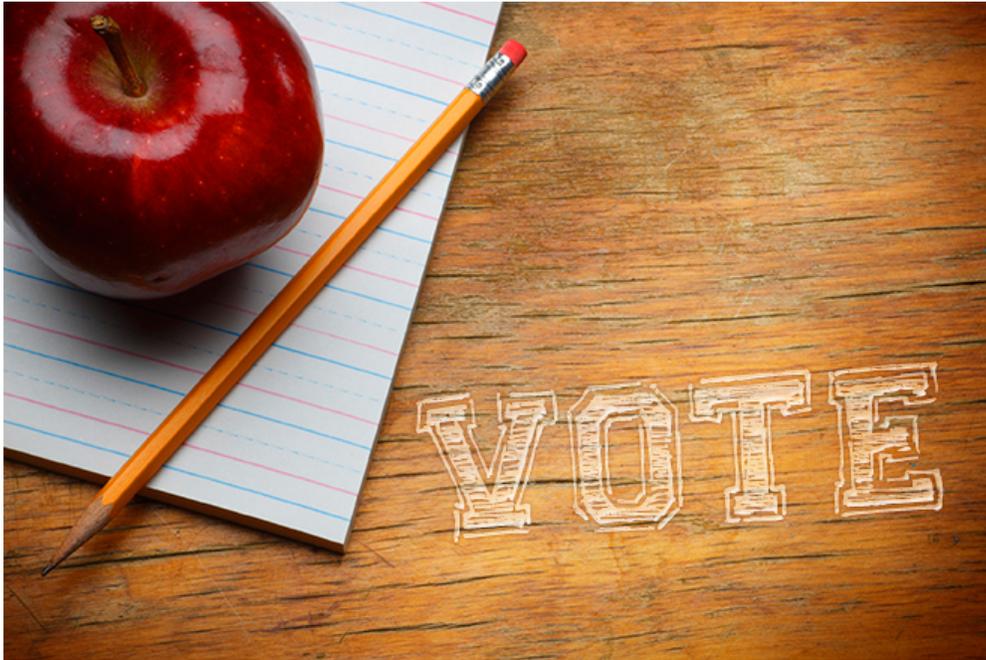


*Lincoln/Roosevelt School PTO invites you to*

# **MEET THE CANDIDATES NIGHT**



**Tuesday, October 12, 2021**

Beginning at 7:00 p.m.

**Lincoln/Roosevelt School Auditorium,**  
34 N. Hillside Avenue, Succasunna, NJ 07876

**Moderator:** Lincoln/Roosevelt School PTO

**Candidates for the Roxbury Board of Education**

**(listed in alphabetical order):**

*(Three, 3-year terms available)*

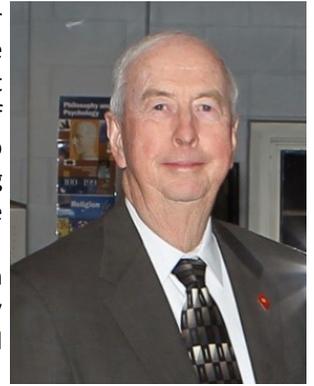
Leo J. Coakley  
Katie Goeke  
Amy L. Overman  
Kathy Purcell  
Brian Staples

***Don't forget to vote on November 2, 2021!***

## **LEO J. COAKLEY**

Leo Coakley is a Roxbury resident since 1979, an Air Force Veteran and retired Civil Engineer. With over 100 hours of training, he is recognized as a “Master Board Member” and “Certified Board Leader” by the NJ School Boards Association. Leo has served on the Roxbury Board of Education since 2013, as President (3 terms) and Vice President, with a continued focus on student achievement and effective use of resources. His two children and five grandchildren have graduated from Roxbury High School, and two grandchildren are current Roxbury students. His community involvement includes being a founding member of the Roxbury Soccer Club, coaching for 10 years, and service to St. Therese Parish and the Wreaths Across American program.

The many positive initiatives implemented during his tenure include: full day kindergarten, restoration of EMS sports programs, recognition of RHS graduates who enlist in military service, security enhancements, curriculum improvements reflecting 21st century needs of our students — all with fiscal management improvements keeping the district within the 2% tax levy cap.



***“Roxbury is a great school district. During my nine years on the board I have supported many advancements and new programs, but it is a never-ending process. As conditions and needs change, opportunities for students must change. I have seen how board actions can help or hinder progress and want to see that Roxbury continues to evolve to meet the needs of our students in a fiscally responsible manner.”***

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

Individual board members have no authority and will accomplish little unless they work together. Each year the district establishes district goals at a public meeting usually held in July, with the goals reviewed and adopted at the September meeting and published on the website. These are the goals that every board member should want to see accomplished by the Superintendent and the district staff.

With that context, Leo believes that one important action of the board is to support the resources necessary to hire and retain qualified educators and staff. To that end, as chairman of the board’s negotiations committee since 2016, he has worked with fellow board members, the administration and our union leaders towards improvement of our employee contracts and salary guides in a financially sustainable manner. The extent of improvements that can be made from one contract to the next is limited, and to be effective and sustainable the process must continue over several negotiation events. If elected, he would like to see that evolution continue so that Roxbury can attract and retain the educators and other staff required to meet the needs of our students in a financially sustainable manner. One obvious recent benefit of progress made in this arena is that Roxbury has not suffered from the lack of qualified bus drivers which has plagued some other districts this year.

Another area in which he would like to see further progress is the meeting of the needs of the non-college bound students as well as the needs of our college bound grads. Roxbury has made significant improvements and progress for both categories of students in recent years, but this is an area that requires continual attention.

### **BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING SCHOOLS IN ROXBURY AND HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS THEM**

First, it is important to remember that the board does not administer the schools. That is the role of the professional educators and staff. The role of board members is to develop policy and establish priorities. Whatever the challenge facing a district, an individual board member must work with fellow board members and the superintendent to establish appropriate policies and priorities, including allocation of resources.

COVID-19 has been the visible challenge since March 2020, but Roxbury was well equipped to weather the storm because of actions taken well ahead of the crisis, not the least of which was being digitally ready for the short notice closure of our schools. Board support of supplying Chromebooks to students and outstanding support of educator professional development over several years helped lead to Roxbury being prepared for the transition. So, meeting the challenge of COVID-19 didn’t start in March 2020 in Roxbury. It started in about 2014 when the district started its move towards digital literacy and provided students with the necessary resources under the 1:1 initiative. There were other programs or activities that contributed to the readiness for the COVID-19 challenge, including digital badging, mindfulness training and advancements in social emotional learning. This is an example of the district “Preparing the children of today for tomorrow.”

While all of this is quite visible, it should not overshadow the ever-present challenge of meeting the needs of each student to help them reach their potential. That is perhaps the most important challenge of the district. One that requires continual assessment, evaluation and evolution.

***“I believe that my active participation on the Roxbury Board of Education, working with fellow board members, the administration and others, has contributed towards Roxbury being the great district that it is today. If selected by the voters of Roxbury, I would be pleased to continue in those efforts to help the district meet the ever-evolving needs of our students.”***

## **KATIE GOEKE**

Katie Goeke has been a Roxbury resident for over 21 years - the longest she has lived in any one place — and the place she considers home. She has twins who grew up in Roxbury, attended Jefferson and Lincoln/Roosevelt elementary schools, Eisenhower Middle School, and who are now seniors in Roxbury High School. She is very involved in the activities they participate in; she has been part of the PTAs, chaperoned class field trips, coached girls' recreation volleyball, and is currently Co-President of the Roxbotics Boosters, and the Fundraising Chair for the Band Parents Association.

In this latter role, she advocated for, established and ran a first-ever yard sale which was a very successful fundraiser for the band program.

By profession, she has worked for Mondelēz (makers of Oreo, Ritz, and Sour Patch Kids) in Consumer Insights/Market Research for 24 years. Her role there is to bring the voice of the consumer to the business: to advocate for consumers by understanding them as people and consumers, and ensuring decisions made in the organization are based on information and facts about what they want and need.



***“I believe a strong school system is key to the strength of the community. Roxbury is my home, and I want our community to flourish and attract new families for continued vitality. With two kids in high school, and as a Roxbury taxpayer, I have a vested interest in the strongest possible education our district can provide. I think it’s important to bring in new perspectives from time-to-time, and as a new member, I will bring my views as a parent and community member to the Board. I am also quite good at listening to stakeholders, asking probative questions to get to underlying issues, and then advocating for appropriate solutions. I do that every day in my profession.”***

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

In the big picture, Katie wants Roxbury schools to be the school district of choice, the place young families want to make their home. While the district has a strong foundation here, she believes there is always room for growth.

As the newcomer, she will first focus on learning and information gathering. While she has a general understanding of how the Board of Education works, and what the role is, she looks forward to immersing herself in the processes and then looking for ways she might optimize them.

Once established, she would like to focus on accountability and transparency, between the administration, the board, parents, and the community. She thinks too many times things happen in a black box, and a simple explanation and rationale can go a long way toward shared understanding and hopefully, better parent engagement.

She would also like to ensure the district is allocating money to those people, things and activities that will bring the best return on that investment. A large portion of the taxpayers’ taxes go toward supporting the schools, and we have a fiduciary responsibility as Board members to act responsibly in return.

### **BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING SCHOOLS IN ROXBURY AND HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS THEM**

Of course, COVID has been a huge challenge for the past 18 months. I am pleased we are back in school in-person, and understand the district is assessing and addressing education and social/emotional COVID impacts. For the next year, I would anticipate that will be a major priority.

Beyond COVID, we need to continue to evolve in anticipation of future job markets for all students. Portrait of a Graduate lays a comprehensive groundwork of the principles important for all our students. We need to be sure we’re delivering on those goals and principles and evaluating progress regularly. This will ensure that the district is developing students who are ready for their personal next challenge, including new challenges or career options we may not yet be aware of.

***“My first priority is my children. I thoroughly enjoy watching them grow, learn and develop into good, smart, capable human beings. My professional focus is being the voice of the consumer and making informed decisions. And I strongly believe in the value of education. Learning is a lifelong skill that starts in our schools. I will bring my involvement and dedication, and my love of information to the Roxbury Board of Education, to advocate for our students, our teachers and our community.”***

## **AMY L. OVERMAN**

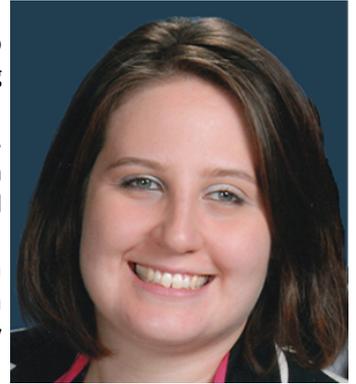
Amy Overman and her husband Brian have resided in Ledgewood since 2012 with their two daughters. Amy has been active in the Roxbury community currently serving on Roxbury's Planning Board, as well as being an active member at Ledgewood Baptist Church.

Amy was drawn to the Roxbury community during her 14-year career in the New Jersey Legislature, with nine years as Chief of Staff to the late Senator Anthony R. Bucco, and one year with Assemblywoman Aura K. Dunn. She resigned in 2021 due to the pandemic and has recently started working at the American Christian School.

Amy's legislature career makes her uniquely suited to serve on Roxbury's school board. She has a keen understanding of state policy as it pertains to public education, and years of experience with governmental budgeting. If elected, Amy will ensure that students have continued access to a quality education while being a fiscal steward of the taxpayers of Roxbury.

Amy's husband grew up in Roxbury and Mt. Arlington, and they are grateful for the opportunity to raise their girls in a community he loved growing up in.

Her husband is a proud graduate of Roxbury High School and her older daughter attended Jefferson Elementary School during the 2020/2021 school year. Her experience with Roxbury schools last year was excellent, from the enrollment process to transportation to instruction. Her daughter excelled academically despite the year being so unique with hybrid schedules, virtual instruction, and shorter days. She recently became employed full-time at the American Christian School, so this year her two daughters attend school there at the Succasunna campus. She does foresee her children returning to the Roxbury Public Schools in the future, especially the high school in particular because of the excellent 9-12 programming. She feels fortunate to live in a town that has excellent public schools, and she would be honored to be on the school board that gives Roxbury residents a well-run academic program.



***"I am running for school board because I want to ensure that every child in our community has access to a quality education while balancing costs to the taxpayer. Roxbury schools have excellent academic programs and extracurricular activities that the current board has greatly improved in our district over the years. I want to ensure that success continues while being a fiscal steward to the taxpayers in Roxbury. I believe that my professional background makes me uniquely suited to serve on the Roxbury School board. I worked for the New Jersey Legislature for fourteen years before retiring at the end of 2020 due to the pandemic. I served as Chief of Staff to the late Senator Anthony Bucco for nearly a decade before his passing, and held the same position for Assemblywoman Aura Dunn for a year. I also currently serve on Roxbury's Planning Board. I have always felt a duty to serve my community, and education and fiscal stewardship are issues passionate to me. My career in the legislature has given me a keen understanding of state policy as it pertains to public education, and years of experience with governmental budgeting."***

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

Amy's priority goal is that each student who attends Roxbury schools feel that there's a program that fits their individual needs and faculty that can help them meet their goals, including non-traditional ones. She also feels strongly that students need to be in a warm and welcoming environment where everyone respects each other. She feels that the Roxbury School district largely accomplishes this goal but she wants to find further areas of improvement. Another goal of hers is to ensure fiscal responsibility accompanies the goal outlined above. She is a big believer that public school districts, and government bodies in general, can provide superior programs and services to students but be run efficiently as possible for taxpayers of the community. She will look for ways that the district can potentially provide further cost savings while not compromising the quality of our programs and schools.

### **BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING SCHOOLS IN ROXBURY AND HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS THEM**

The most pressing issue in our school district is navigating out of the COVID pandemic, as conditions and directives allow. We should always be working toward giving students and staff a normal school day without the need for precautions or masks. I was so impressed during the 2020/2021 school year with how the administration and school board handled COVID, from being technologically equipped for hybrid or virtual learning, while expanding and not contracting in-person activities while some neighboring districts struggled getting out of the virtual environment. Beyond COVID, I feel that students as a whole need to feel there are a variety of options as it pertains to their post-secondary education. I want to help continue to build on addressing those needs in Roxbury while maintaining exceptional academics for those looking to attend post-secondary colleges and universities for a higher degree.

***"As a collaborative person who always places what is best for my community above myself, I will work hard to ensure that the interests and concerns of all students and their families are taken into account when making decisions. If elected to the Board of Education, I look forward to working with other members of the board and the administration to implement the district goals set for the upcoming year."***

## **KATHY PURCELL**

Kathy Purcell has resided in Succasunna for 28 years. She is a retired Emergency Room/Trauma Center nurse. Her husband of 35 years, Fiore, is a retired Newark Police Lieutenant and currently works for the Dover Police. Kathy's four adult children attended the Roxbury School System and later completed college and post-graduate programs. Kathy's family has devoted much of their time to volunteering with Saint Therese Church, the Roxbury Community, and other organizations outside of the township. Most recently, Kathy used her nursing expertise as a volunteer at the Atlantic Health System Vaccination Mega Site in Rockaway.



Kathy is seeking a second term to the Roxbury Board of Education. During her first term, she has demonstrated that she has the dedication that it takes to be a successful board member, a willingness to learn new things, and an eagerness to achieve successful results.

Kathy looks forward to continuing to serve Roxbury during this difficult and unprecedented period of time to assure the safety, health, and well-being of the students and staff.

***“I have been on the board, serving my first term for the past three years of a three-year commitment and I cannot believe how fast time goes. I am also now looking forward to continuing in this role for the next three years. I think Roxbury has certainly come a long way since my children attended school and the changes are certainly for the better. I did not feel they were properly prepared to easily transition to college and were limited in the choices available with a limited curriculum at that time. No longer is the single main focus in preparing students for college, but now offering new programs focusing on offering new courses to introduce them to new pathways and other career choices for their own individual successes. I would love to continue supporting this concept and follow the success of these programs. I also would like to continue to help guide and support our district during these most unprecedented times and hopefully see an end to this in the very near future.”***

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

Kathy's goals and objectives if elected would be to continue to learn how to be an effective board member and continue to attend meetings and conferences albeit most of them are still virtual. She wants to continue to attend these meetings to be a certified board member each year.

She is proud of this district and what they have accomplished but it takes teamwork, dedication and out support to keep these programs soluble and be able to continue to afford the students the best opportunities to be successful in attaining their goals for future success. She needs to continue to learn so she can be aware of her limitations but also be a voice on the board assuring that the district's interest remains in the best interest of the community it serves and bearing in mind the fiscal responsibility that comes with maintaining and strengthening the districts decisions. Our board is a group of 10 elected individuals, and she is proud to say although we have our own opinions and after open discussion our goal typically is in the same direction and that is doing what is best for our district.

### **BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING SCHOOLS IN ROXBURY AND HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS THEM**

The biggest challenge right now is the fallout from COVID-19. I cannot ever remember this much pain, fear, stress, anger and confusion in my lifetime. It has been a difficult time affecting almost every single aspect of people's lives and although there have been some positive changes it has not yet returned the peace of mind people lost and deserve to have back.

I think our administration has worked tirelessly and as effectively as they possibly can. I also believe the most effective way I can be of assistance is to support them when I believe they are working in the best interest of the district and most importantly affording the students the best education that they can possibly attain and prevent as much damage as we can. The needs of our students social and emotional well-being have to be a priority and I feel that is also the ultimate goal of the staff. Our staff, parents and administration play a very pivotal role in accomplishing this and we must take into consideration their feelings and emotions are also very important. It is not my place as a board member to help them run the school but I am there to help and support them to run the district as smoothly as possible and I believe supporting their needs is an effective way to accomplish this.

***“I believe I have worked very hard learning about being a board member. I have been a very dedicated member and I attend the meetings I am expected to attend. I participate and share my opinions openly whether I voice a favorable opinion or not, but we continue to listen to each other and make our decisions in support of the district. Being on the board is a very humbling and serious commitment of time, but I have enjoyed the experience and would love to continue being a part of Roxbury Board of Education. I am grateful for having had this experience.”***

## **BRIAN STAPLES**

Brian Staples has lived in Roxbury for the past four years with his wife of 12 years and their two children, Bradley (9 years old) and Abigail (8 years old). He graduated from Parsippany Hills High School and then went on to graduate with a Bachelors Degree in History with a focus in secondary education from William Paterson University.

From there, he got my first teaching job at Wallington High School, teaching 8th grade Social Studies and Advanced Placement United States History. While at Wallington he coached multiple sports and was the advisor for various clubs. He was the Varsity Girls' Basketball and Varsity Softball Head Coach while also coaching football in the fall. Throughout his time there he also coached boys' basketball and baseball and was the advisor for the Academic Decathlon. Also, while at Wallington he earned his Masters in Educational Leadership from Montclair State University where he was fortunate enough to graduate with honors. After nine years at Wallington his career path changed when he got the job as K-3 Principal at Third Street School in Belvidere, while also serving as the district's Assistant Athletic Director. Two years later he was promoted to full Athletic Director at Belvidere High School, while also keeping his position as Elementary Principal. Three years ago, his career path was altered once more when he accepted a job as the PreK through 8th Grade Principal, where he is currently employed.

He and his family have lived in Roxbury for the past four years while his children attend Kennedy Elementary School. In his short time here, he has coached recreation soccer, baseball, and softball and is currently coaching Club soccer with World Class Roxbury and travel softball with the Roxbury Rebels.



*"The reason I have decided to run for BOE is because I think the school district has done a great job educating our children and preparing them for the future and I want to be a part of that. While I like the direction the district is going I also feel like there are some areas where improvements are necessary. With 15 years of experience working in education, within all facets of the K-12 programs (including athletics), I feel my experience will offer a lot to the current BOE. Being an administrator in a small town has given me the opportunity to work closely with my school's BOE, which includes having input in the budget process and how district funds are spent. Although I have never been a Board member, I have experience working closely with the decisions they make and have seen the role Board Members play in creating a successful district."*

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

Brian's goals as a Board Member are to support the administration, teachers, and other staff of the Roxbury School District to continue to give our students the best education possible. Our first priority is to provide an exceptional educational experience, while also being committed to safety and making sure our students become lifelong learners. While the students will always be first, he will also be mindful of the taxpayers, carefully reading over the budget and making sure their money is well spent.

### **BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING SCHOOLS IN ROXBURY AND HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS THEM**

Currently I feel the biggest challenge Roxbury is facing is rebounding from the COVID-related school experience. COVID has taken a toll on our kids with more than just academics. Our students have faced social, emotional, and economic hardships because of the last year and a half and as a Board Member I will continue to support all decisions made that benefit all aspects of our students. I am also a very "hands on" person, which means as a Board Member I plan to be very involved in the community. This includes attending as many K-12 school events as possible and making sure my face and voice are known throughout the greater community.

*"If elected I will always support our students, staff and community in our pursuit of excellence while balancing our ethical, financial and social responsibilities to provide the best experience for all stakeholders."*

**Thank you for coming!**

**DON'T FORGET TO**



**Tuesday, November 2, 2021**

***Sponsored by the Lincoln/Roosevelt PTO***

*President: Jennifer Pennisi*

*Vice President: Lauren Matullo*

*Treasurer: Allison Potocki*

*Secretary: Susan Sterikoff*