

THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Jeffrey M. Cohen – Candidate for Planning Board

Incumbent & Caucus Nominee



Events:

No events scheduled at this time

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Candidate Questions

The Bedford Citizen has posed the following questions to Candidate Cohen; his answers will appear on Monday, March 2

- What is the biggest challenge facing the Planning Board?
- What would you change about the site plan review process and the authority of the town for enforcement of orders of conditions that result from most site plan reviews?

Candidate Statement

Three years ago I mentioned issues that prompted my initial interest to serve on the Planning Board, primarily focusing on economic revitalization; lessening the residential tax burden by bringing businesses back to Bedford; revitalizing the industrial districts in Town; and updating the Zoning Bylaws to affect those changes. The Comprehensive Plan re-write was just beginning so I saw that as an opportunity to play a role in affecting changes that could make a difference.

After joining the board, I was encouraged to see action being taken on ideas expressed in Comprehensive Plan workshops even before the plan was completed. The hiring of Alyssa Sandoval as the Town's Economic Development Coordinator is an example of one such action. This proactive behavior strengthened my belief that changes could be made to help improve the business climate in Bedford and that the Planning Board had a role in facilitating them.

The Comprehensive Plan isn't sitting on a shelf collecting dust. Zoning Bylaw amendments were approved at Special Town meeting last November in response to actions noted in the plan, and much more work is in progress to bring other amendments to Special Town Meeting in the Fall and in the years to come.

Economic revitalization is still important to me, but economic development isn't the only issue I wish to address on the PB over the next three years.

Getting around town can be challenging at times. My wife, Laurie and I love to walk, but there are places we'd like to go that we can't get to because the route isn't safe. Town Meeting approved funding for Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans, which are currently in the works. Improving connectivity around town for pedestrians and cyclists and providing safer routes to our schools for students are important priorities for me.

I'd like to see the Board revisit the Depot Area Mixed Use Overlay District to develop a clearer vision of what mixed use should look like in the depot area. We need to balance what's acceptable to the neighborhood with what's economically viable for property owners. I believe that through extensive public outreach, collectively, we're up to the challenge.

The Comprehensive Plan defines the next ten years as the Era of Redevelopment. Residential redevelopment will involve sub-dividing large parcels. I believe it's important to encourage housing that will meet the needs of underserved demographic groups and market sectors. The Board will be discussing establishing cottage-form housing in appropriate locations; smaller homes on smaller lots while preserving open space on the site to create a village form and aesthetic. This type of housing can potentially provide empty-nester or retirement housing or be adapted to provide housing for younger households. The RFP the Town is preparing for the Coast Guard housing site on Pine Hill Road with input from the Planning Board and others will encourage a cottage-type physical form of housing, and I am very excited to see the Town's vision take form.

I'm interested to learn more about your' planning and development concerns, so please feel free to contact me and share your thoughts.

Lastly, I respectfully ask for your vote at Town Election on March 14 to support me in my bid to continue to serve Bedford residents as a Planning Board member.

Thank you