

# THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

## 2020 Annual Report

### President's Message

Dear Reader—

Wow, what a year! With you by our side, *The Bedford Citizen* – your *Bedford Citizen* – reached new heights providing the Bedford community with informative, relevant local news.

Thanks to donors, sponsors, and advertisers, the *Citizen*:

- Covered Covid-19 extensively, sharing not only hard news on Annual Town Meeting delays and the reopening of our schools, but also the lighter side of “Bedford being Bedford.” Unicorns, college students, and young drummers, oh my.
- Mailed a 2020 Voters Guide to every Bedford household, providing candidate information in a joint project with the League of Women Voters.\*
- Hired our first part-time community reporter, Mike Rosenberg, who has far exceeded our community reporting expectations.
- Produced our second Bedford Guide. The 2021 Guide shared how Bedford dealt with the pandemic in an extraordinary year.

I remain proud of our news coverage. We ran nearly 1,750 stories, covering everything from preparations for Covid-19 early in the year ... to the quick adjustments the town made to hold a safe Town Election ... to Annual Town Meeting on Sabourin Field ... to the national election in November. And so much more. You'll find more highlights of what your *Citizen* covered last year inside.

All of this was made possible by the dedicated donors, sponsors, and *Bedford Guide* advertisers. Now it's on to 2021. Thanks to the outpouring of support last year, we feel confident enough in our funding sources (donations, sponsors, *Bedford Guide* advertisers) to update our website to handle the growth in articles and the burgeoning use of smartphones to access our content. We'll also take a close look at the future of *The Bedford Citizen* and lay the foundation needed to ensure your *Bedford Citizen* will be around to serve you for years to come.

With gratitude,



Teri Morrow  
President and Publisher

\* Some additional funding provided by Bedford Cultural Council, LWV Lottie E. Sharfman Citizen Education Fund, and Bedford's Friends of the Council on Aging. *The Citizen* is grateful for their support.

# Coverage Highlights

As you reflect on 2020 you would be forgiven for thinking that between Covid-19 and the presidential election, there was no other news. Here at *The Citizen*, our focus is Bedford and we know more was happening than those two big stories. Here is a look back at some of the highlights from last year's coverage.

As takeout became the norm and residents sought to support local restaurants, there was a great deal of interest from our readers in food. The news of the Food Hall opening in Lexington, the arrival of Barrel House Z, and the Town's new take-out portal were all top stories in 2020.

The salute to the BHS class of 2020 was another big story. The graduating class saw their usual traditions turned upside down but the community came together to create new celebrations to mark this important milestone with them.

Town Meeting was delayed and moved to the football field this year. Though the agenda was shorter, and the space brighter, familiar sights like the posting of the colors by the Bedford Minuteman Company kept some of the familiar flow.

All through town, organizations changed how they were doing business. The food pantry was shifted and expanded to meet the increased need during the pandemic, and the Bedford Free Public Library started curbside pickup of books and materials.

Town committees and boards resumed their work through a myriad of remote meetings... so... much.. Zoom. Even the Recreation Department moved some of its classes online.

Finally, there are those unique stories that only happen here. From a wayward pig, to a local drummer, to an inflatable unicorn, there were stories last year that are part of the fabric of Bedford.

Thank you for being a part of *The Bedford Citizen* community and supporting us in our mission to bring the news of Bedford to your virtual doorstep.

We hope you enjoyed the 2020 Bedford Guide, fast becoming a *Citizen* tradition. We cannot be sure what 2021 will bring to Bedford, but you can count on *The Bedford Citizen* to tell you all about it.

## Readership At A Glance

	2020	2019
Stories Posted	1,747	1,205
Email Subscribers	1,961	1,690
Facebook Followers	2,501	2,260
Twitter Followers	1,567	1,370
Story Views	909,672	541,000



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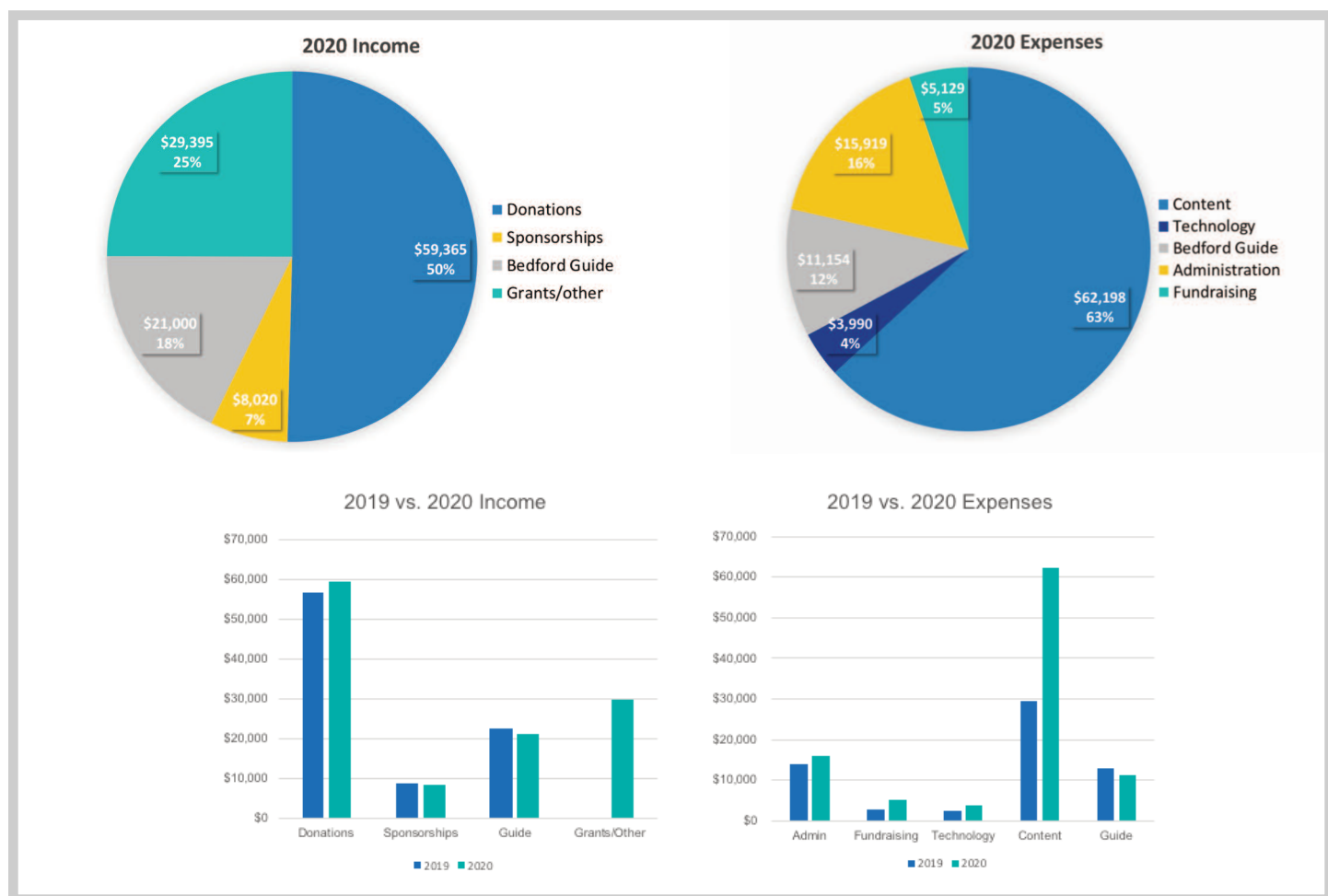
# Financial Highlights

This was a year of changes for many people, and *The Bedford Citizen* was no different. As soon as the pandemic hit we knew our job just got a lot bigger and a lot more central to people’s day to day lives. Were we up for the task? Would the community support us in the midst of Covid-19? The answer to both was a resounding “Yes!”

We started by hiring an interim Community Reporter who helped us cover news and events around the community through the spring and early summer. In August Mike Rosenberg came on as our permanent Community Reporter and we haven’t looked back since. This increase in staffing is the primary change in our expenses this year. Since reporting is the core of our mission and commitment to you, further investment in that area is aligned with our long-term success.

*The Bedford Citizen* is a member of the Local Independent Online News (LION) and Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), both professional news associations for local non-profit news organizations. Through INN we once again participated in the NewsMatch donation-matching drive. Thanks to board member Gene Kalb’s excellent work connecting with local businesses for *The Bedford Guide*, he was able to secure two major donations from our business community. We also secured a donation from a generous local individual. Those funds were used to set our match goal of \$27,500 for our end of year drive which we surpassed with the generous support of our donors. As the NewsMatch program grows in popularity, those monies are more challenging to get, so the additional homegrown support came at just the right time.

The Journalism Fund continues to attract monthly, sustaining donors who help keep us going between fund drives. Their ongoing support is a critical part of the picture to keep us funded year round. We are gratified to know so many in the Bedford community find value worth supporting in *The Bedford Citizen*.



# 2020 Special Coverage

National stories had an unprecedented local impact this year. We brought you the local effects of Covid-19 with a variety of stories about the local response to the pandemic, protests and counter-protests, not to mention election coverage for this year.

In January 2020 *The Citizen* posted its first article on a novel coronavirus, a message from the Board of Health about travel precautions. A few weeks later, in March of 2020 the world took a radical shift. A virus that we were still learning the name of, was slowly moving across the globe shutting down travel and gatherings across Asia and Europe. Then it was upon our shores, not in the one or two here and there we had heard about in news reports rather, a significant number right here in Massachusetts.

Over a couple of days we went from being advised to keep 6 feet apart in town meetings, to having our town essentially shut down.

At that point, conversations around coronavirus were happening everywhere and without much guidance to support our state and local leaders who had to make rules on the fly leaving our readers with questions. Lots of them.

In response to the emerging pandemic *The Bedford Citizen* did what we could to inform our readers. We started with:

- Posting every Town update on Covid-19
- Sharing ways to stay socially distant, but still be a member of the Bedford community
- Sharing the lighter news that makes social distancing a bit more bearable
- Providing you with news from trustworthy, local sources

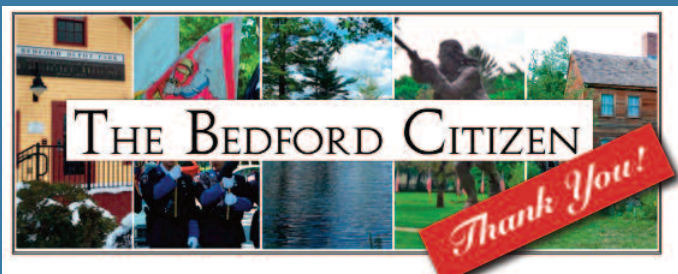
Each person on our team devoted extra time to *The Citizen* during this crisis. We are fortunate to have volunteers and writers who rose to the challenge of this gargantuan effort. As the year and pandemic wore on, we were worried, just like you. Worried about ourselves, our children, our parents, our friends and neighbors. And worried about the impact of re-opening our community too soon ... or too late.

Just like you, we were wondering what the summer and fall would bring. And wondering how long we could keep our families, friends, and neighbors safe. As a community we were mourning the loss of loved ones and time with friends. And mourning the lost opportunities for celebrations, gatherings, and ceremonies that usually mark this time of year. And yet, in such a difficult year we still found much to celebrate. We celebrated acts of kindness and support throughout our community. And celebrated all who came together to get us through challenges like these.

Right from the very beginning of this pandemic, we have been there with you. As we emerge into a post-vaccination world and figure out what normal looks like now, we will still be there for you. While we still don't fully know how the future will unfold, *The Citizen* – your *Citizen* – will be there for you, and we will get through this together. We will vet, compile, and produce work that helps you navigate this evolving situation. Because that's what we do.

## Our Vision

*"The Bedford Citizen is recognized by our community as the primary source of independent news and information for the people who live and work in Bedford."*



# Thank You to our 2020 Donors

Thank you to our generous donors who provide half of all the funds that keep *The Bedford Citizen* running. You are the bedrock that supports all we do to bring local, non-profit news about Bedford to all our readers. We could not do it without your support. Thank you.

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