



ELIZABETH HACALA

LIBRARY TRUSTEE ~ INCUMBENT

Caucus Nominee: Yes

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

My name is Elizabeth Hacala and I hope to earn your vote for a third term as Library Trustee. Over the past six years, we have completed a strategic plan for the library, added a lively hive of honeybees to the roof, created a meeting space in the reference room, created four additional study spaces, and weathered a global pandemic. The Bedford Free Public Library is strong and vibrant, and with your support, I hope to continue my part in its success.

I served as the Trustee Chair during the first portion of the Covid pandemic, meeting weekly with library staff leadership to help them navigate the myriad choices they needed to make in response. I worked with the rest of the Trustees to support the library staff in both the internal changes needed to safeguard the health of our staff and patrons as well as their work to create whole new services like curbside pickup.

The issues that prompted me to run for Trustee are the same ones that drive me today. The sheer volume of information available online and in print requires trained professionals to help us sift through the noise to find reliable and credible information. Libraries provide access to vital resources for all our residents; from applying for a new job to applying to grad school, the library is often the first place we go. During the pandemic, we updated our WIFI in part to ensure those who could not be inside the building could still access the internet.

In many ways, grew up at the Bedford Free Public Library. It was a place to be greeted by a friendly face as well as a place to find information. Even with all the changes over the years, at its core, it is the same place today. The library is bigger, the card catalogs were replaced by computer terminals, and now you can even check out a book on your cell phone, yet it is still a place to find both information and community.

When my husband and I were looking to relocate to Massachusetts I had three criteria: good schools, a good library, and open town meeting. Here we are. We have now been in back Bedford for over 25 years. Since returning, I shifted from a career in software, to work in non-profits. From 2003 to 2013 I worked with the Massachusetts Library Association. My time with MLA gave me an opportunity to become familiar with the modern challenges of libraries at the state, local and federal levels.

I hope to earn your support on March 12th to serve another term as one of your Library Trustees.

REPLIES TO THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS QUESTIONS

Q1—Will you maintain the anti-censorship policy of our current board? If not, why not?

Yes, as a Trustee I will always take a stand against censorship. It is critical that libraries be a source of diverse viewpoints and information. I still remember clearly being a grade-schooler and my mom, who was a librarian, bringing me to the library to get my first card. She explained there was a blue card that gave you access to all materials and a different color that limited what you could take out. She explained to me that even as a child she thought it was important for me to have whatever I needed without barriers. That childhood memory has informed my view of and defense of libraries ever since. I would oppose any banning or restriction of books as we have seen in Tennessee and other states. Such bans are antithetical to the purpose of libraries and damage our democracy and community.

Q2—Are there changes in current services or new services you would propose to meet the needs of underserved parts of our community?

The library has always strived to serve the entire community and has taken further steps to ensure we serve all of Bedford during the pandemic. Knowing the Internet is critical to much of modern living and the library is a lifeline to it for many, we upgraded the WIFI service and signal in and around the building. It was our hope that even when the building was not open patrons could access the internet nearby and as we reopened, they had better service inside.

In reaction to the Covid pandemic, the library has already instituted new services. We developed and implemented curbside pickup; a service that continues to be popular and expanded ebooks and digital resources. During the pandemic, we suspended most fines to eliminate any financial hardship and brought programming online.

The library staff completely changed the way they work and the physical configuration of the library several times during the pandemic. At this point, I would not emphasize additional new services and instead focus on reinstating pre-Covid ones as quickly as safety and staffing allow as well as spotlighting the services people might not be aware of.

Q3—Bedford's demographics are changing. Our population is aging and we have an increasing number of residents whose primary language is not English. How can the Library reach out to and better serve these residents

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SUMMARY STATEMENT

On January 4, I had the honor of being nominated and selected as a candidate for Library Trustee. Today, as we approach the Town Election, I ask for your vote and support on Saturday, March 12.

Libraries today are more essential than ever. They not only provide books, periodicals, movies, and music to their patrons, they offer something even more critical, information experts. As technology has allowed broader access to information, libraries have become critical gateways to the Internet and electronic databases. The sheer volume of information available often requires trained professionals to help sift through the noise to reliable information. Whether we are adopting a new puppy, welcoming a new baby, buying a house, starting a business, or attempting to understand a new diagnosis, many of our major life journeys begin with a visit to the library and the guidance of a librarian therein.

I began my career in software development and worked as an engineer at Lotus Development, Hewlett-Packard. After leaving software, I worked with the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA), first as their Publications Manager, and then as Executive Manager. During my nearly 10 years with the MLA, I became familiar with library issues at the state and national levels. I have also worked with other non-profit organizations including *The Bedford Citizen (TBC)* and The New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers). I left my staff role on *TBC* last year and joined the board last October. [I have been on a leave of absence from my position on the board of *The Bedford Citizen* since January 4, 2022.]

I am eager to continue serving Bedford and I am asking for your vote in the upcoming town election, which will be held Saturday, March 12 at the John Glen Middle School. With your support, I will work to continue the Bedford Free Public Library's legacy of high quality, friendly, and professional service to the community