



EMILY MITCHELL

SELECT BOARD ~ INCUMBENT

Caucus Nominee: Yes

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

I am excited to run for a second term on the Select Board, where I've served since 2019. Prior to that, I was an elected Trustee of the Bedford Free Public Library and served as that board's chair. I'm also an active board member and former president of Bedford Patrons of Music Students, a former warden and the longtime high school youth leader at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and a parent coordinator for the high school and middle school musicals. I'm a Midwest native who moved east for college and never left, and a literary agent by trade. I've been in Bedford for more than 20 years.

My focus as a Select Board member has been on issues of **accessibility** (making information and physical spaces available to all), **livability** (making Bedford a welcoming place to live, work, and play), and **inclusivity** (making sure all residents are represented and heard). My top priority in the short term is moving forward with our new fire station, which is slated to come before Town Meeting at the end of March. We've known since 1991 that our current station is outdated and undersized. It's long past time to give our residents and first responders the facilities they need and deserve to keep us all safe and healthy.

Serving on the Select Board is a responsibility that I take seriously. It's hard work. It's a lot of work. It's meaningful work—and I want to keep doing it. Through my service thus far, I've come to understand the scope and nuance of the issues that come before the Select Board, and the gravity of our responsibility as the executive branch of the Town. This is not a job for the faint of heart: it requires judgment, stamina, and integrity, and a clear understanding of the complexities and tradeoffs involved in every policy we've developed over time to keep our community vibrant and well-run.

I strive to be clear and open about my decisions and the reasons behind them. I value the strong working relationships I have with my fellow Select Board members, the Town Manager, and Town staff: nothing would get done without that foundation of mutual respect and trust, especially when we approach an issue from different perspectives.

Bedford expects its Select Board members to advocate for the best interests of the Town, and to protect all our resources—financial, natural, human, cultural, and historical. I believe I have been that advocate, with a track record of specific accomplishments and public positions on

issues. I look forward to the opportunity to continue my service to the Town as a Select Board member for the next three years.

REPLIES TO THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS QUESTIONS

Q1—Please identify one thing about Town government that, if you could you change and how?

I would improve communication and expectations with residents. The Town offers e-alerts, where people can register for notifications about committees and issues of interest. We use robocalls to alert folks about upcoming storms or other critical news. And the Town website has lots of resources, if you know where to find them.

But they're all part of the sea of information we swim in every day. It can be hard for residents to keep up. We also have folks in town who don't have the same facility with email and online communications, people who speak other languages, and people with disabilities who need to access information in different ways.

Upgrading the Town website has been a goal for years, but it's been hard to prioritize during COVID. It's also time-consuming: we run a very lean operation at Town Hall, and I know from experience, as the webmaster for five separate organizations, that sometimes "just put it on the website" is not as quick or easy as we'd like.

Our form of government requires active participation from citizens. The Town can make it easier for folks to find information they need; then it's up to us to take advantage of it.

Q2—What is your assessment of Bedford's capacity to develop more economically diverse housing particularly in light of new State regulations that will tie future MBTA service to increasing low income housing options?

At nearly 300 years old, Bedford is largely built out. We don't have lots of open parcels left for housing development, so our ability to meet the state's new regulations for MBTA communities will likely lean heavily on redevelopment of existing parcels. I appreciate the Planning Board's recent deliberations around the MBTA guidelines, and the desire, based on our 2019 Housing Study, to create housing that allows seniors to age in place, provides starter homes for young people and families, and supports multigenerational households. I'm aware of some interesting ideas in the pipeline in the Carlisle Road area, as well as the proposed "Friendly 40B" development at the end of South Road. I would also like to see thoughtful community visioning around the Great Road/Shawsheen district, including the Stop & Shop plaza.

Q3—What are one or two sustainability projects that you identify will improve the quality of life for Bedford residents that you will champion and advocate for the Town to implement in the next two years?

Bedford has many opportunities to increase our capacity and use of solar energy, including the proposed microgrid at the Town Center campus and possibilities for solar farms or canopies at the Compost Center and elsewhere. I'd also like to see further development of the Town's solid waste diversion programs, including home, school, and municipal composting to keep more food waste out of landfills. I'm grateful to our DPW staff, especially former recycling manager Ed McGrath and current recycling administrator Elizabeth Antanavica, for their creative efforts to partner with outside groups for mattress, glass, and textile recycling as well. Climate change is an immediate problem and a long-term problem, and we need both immediate and long-term solutions to do our part to minimize its effects in Bedford.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

At this point in the campaign, I hope I have sufficiently hammered home my interests in accessibility, livability, and inclusivity that I need not take up more space repeating myself. These are the things that motivate my public service; these are the things I focus on as I do the work of the Town as a Select Board member. I've listed many examples of specific achievements and future goals in all three arenas on my campaign website.

This has been a challenging campaign season, with few opportunities for voters to hear from all the candidates, in public, at the same time. This is not an excuse; we play the hands we are dealt. But I empathize with voters who, two months after this race began, are still trying to figure out who the candidates are, whether we're qualified for the roles we seek, and what we believe in.

Bedford has standards and expectations for elected offices, and requirements for certain volunteer positions commensurate with their responsibilities. It's not enough to be born here; you have to vote and attend Town Meeting. It's not enough to make a Facebook comment or a private message about Town issues; you have to make clear public statements, and back up those statements with convincing arguments. It's not enough to ask people what they want; you have to use your own judgment and weigh multiple viewpoints to determine the best direction for Bedford.

These are not easy tasks. But Select Board service is not an easy gig—and it shouldn't be. We demand more from our elected officials than just a pleasant personality: we demand discernment, integrity, and competence. Bedford deserves no less.

When I ran for Select Board in 2019, I might have been called an "outsider." Though I'd served as an elected official for three years prior, I haven't lived in Bedford my whole life, and I'm not even from New England. Part of my campaign platform then was to demystify some of the unwritten rules of public service for fellow "outsiders"—and I feel I've helped make progress

there. It's great to see new people stepping forward for first-time volunteer service to our many committees.

Now, as an incumbent, I could be called an "insider." I know how Town government works. I have gone through the budget process, set Town-wide goals, conducted performance reviews, and for the past two years, helped lead Bedford through a global pandemic. I have been part of the sausage making—and I am a better public servant for it. There is no substitute for experience when it comes to elected Town government: not longevity, not personality, not connections.

As a Select Board member, you owe it to your constituents to do your homework, to ask questions, and to respect the dignity of the office you hold. You will not always get your way; you will not always be liked. But if you do your job well, the Town will benefit, and Bedford's legacy of strong representative government will continue.

I believe I have been a good public servant for Bedford as a Select Board member. I ask for your vote on March 12 to continue my work for our Town.

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