

The Bedford Republican Committee Voters Guide 2024

Voters:

Following is information and some recommendations regarding the Town/School District Ballot voting on March 12 and the Town Budgetary Deliberative Session on March 13. As always, use your judgment based on your own research and what you know about the issues.

Bedford Republican Committee

March 2024

Article / Amendment	Summary	BRC Recommendation
	Town	
Article 1. Town Council	3 Seats, 3 Year Terms each. Two (2) of the Candidates we support: Phil Greazzo and Rebecca Soule.	Phil Greazzo and Rebecca Soule
Town Moderator	1 Seat, 2 Year Term. Henry Veilleux	Unopposed
Library Trustee	1 Seat, 3 Year Term. Two (2) candidates: Lauren Messina. Lee Joyce	Lauren Messina
Trustee of the Trust Funds	1 Seat, 3 Year Term. Ken Peterson	Unopposed
Supervisor of the Checklist	1 Seat, 6 Year Term. Hugh Donovan	Unopposed
Article 2	<p><u>CHARTER REVISION PROPOSED BY THE CHARTER COMMISSION</u> "Shall the municipality approve the Charter revision recommended by the Charter Commission?" (Requires a 3/5 ballot vote approval to pass)</p> <p><i>Summary in accordance with RSA 49-B:6,1: Bedford currently operates as a Town Council with a Budgetary Town Meeting form of government where the Council serves as the legislative body for all matters except the budget. The budget is currently acted on by the voters at an in-person session known as Budgetary Town Meeting that is typically held in the evening the day after elections in March. The Charter revision proposes to eliminate the Budgetary Town Meeting and have the budget acted on by the voters on Election Day on the Official Ballot. The Town Council would conduct at least one public hearing on the budget and a Deliberative Session would be held prior to the budget being placed on the Official Ballot. The proposed budget process would be similar to that currently completed for action on the School District budget.</i></p> <p>THE TOWN COUNCIL DOES NOT RECOMMEND PASSAGE OF THIS ARTICLE."</p> <p>BRC note: The total combined operating budget including the Schools and the Town is \$130 million. 70% of those costs are for the Schools and 30% are for the Town. The school district proposed operating budget increase is 3.6% over last year. In comparison, the town proposed operating budget increase is only 2.2% over last year. For the town, there are meetings/hearings held in advance to help build the budget. The final Budgetary Town Meeting process allows for attendees to see the entire budget and then speak, make motions and vote to make specific line-item changes (e.g. line item vetoes). Residents essentially have the last review</p>	Vote Conscience.

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	and can make changes before a final vote. These are well attended meetings, compared to the most recent Schools Deliberative Session. Changing the process for the Town could result in less scrutiny and even in incrementally higher taxes. An active and involved citizenry at School and Budgetary Meetings makes a positive difference. (The Budgetary Town Meeting is March 13, 2024.)	
Article 3. Zoning Amendments		
Amendment 1	As per the Town: [This amendment is intended to set the minimum lot size requirement for detached accessory apartments in the Residential & Agricultural District to be 1.5 acres, by removing the reference to the Table of Dimensional Requirements, which requires a soils based lot sizing calculation be provided. The calculation is done when land is subdivided and is not needed for the permitting associated with the accessory apartment.]	Vote YES.
Amendment 2	As per the Town: [This amendment incorporates administrative changes to bring the Town's ordinance into compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program and also incorporates recommended best practices for floodplain regulation. The changes include updates to the purpose statements, definitions and terminology throughout the ordinance. The amendment also includes new requirements for the construction of driveways in floodplains and allows for the construction of an accessory structure of 500 sq. ft. or less (such as garages, sheds and playhouses), provided certain criteria are met. The complete text of the amendment is on file for public viewing at the Planning Department and on the Town's Website.]	Vote YES.
Amendment 3	<p>"Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment 3 as proposed by petition of Matthew McLaughlin and others, as follows: To amend the Town of Bedford Code, Chapter 275, Zoning Article II, Section 275-8, Location of Districts and the Zoning map for the western boundary of the Historic District from the "the easterly edge of the power line right of way" to" The centerline of Wallace Road." This would remove 18 properties from the historic district from 266 Wallace Road, including Briar Road, to 324 Wallace Road. Only 4 built prior to 1955."</p> <p>BRC note: The citizen petitioners have a valid proposal. Promoting and supporting exterior features and characteristics of existing older historic homes is important. However, regarding this specific area: 1) the homes in this area west of Wallace Road are zoned RA and single family, 2) the vast majority (14) of the homes were built after 1955 and are not historic, and 3) this petition moves the boundary line back to its original location, which was the centerline of Wallace Road. These "newer home" homeowners should not be treated differently than other Bedford homeowners.</p>	Vote YES.
Article 4.	ISSUANCE OF LONG TERM DEBT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF SOUTH RIVER ROAD POLICE AND FIRE COMPLEX AND RENOVATIONS AT THE SAFETY COMPLEX AND TOWN OFFICE BUILDING.	Vote Conscience.

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“Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty six million five hundred thousand dollars (\$36,500,000) for the purpose of financing the costs of engineering, designing and constructing a police station and fire substation with associated building and site improvements and related furniture, fixtures, fit up and equipment at 300 South River Road and to complete renovations at the Safety Complex at 55 Constitution Drive and Town Office Building at 24 North Amherst Road; to authorize the issuance of not more than thirty five million five hundred thousand dollars (\$35,500,000) of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33); with one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to come from the Facilities Design/ Build Capital Reserve Fund; to authorize the Town Council to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; to authorize the Town Council to apply for, obtain and accept federal, state or other aid, if any, which may be available for this project; and to authorize the Town Council to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto? Bond payments would begin approximately one year after issuance. (3/5 ballot vote required for approval.)

From the Town, Explanation: *If approved, this funding will be used to construct an approximately 44,000 square foot police station and fire substation at 300 South River Road and to renovate the existing Safety Complex and Town Office Building, including but not limited to, engineering, design, construction, and fit up. The Town is requesting the authority to bond up to \$35,500,000. In the event that completion of this project is less than the requested amount, it is the Town’s intent to issue only what is necessary. Any remaining funds from this authorization will be brought back to the voters to rescind ensuring that they cannot be used for any other purpose.*

The existing Safety Complex was built in 1994 when the Town’s population was 12,500 which has now grown by 90% to 23,704. Police and Fire staffing has grown from 49 to 95 in the same time frame to address the nearly 400% increase in calls for service. Continued operation from Safety Complex compromises the mission of the Fire and Police Departments as well as the safety and security of the public, our employees, and critical infrastructure and public safety assets. Moving the Police Department from the current Safety Complex allows for expansion of the Fire Department, allows for co-location of the Planning Department, Building Division and Public Works. It also creates more usable space in the Town Office Building. The project has no tax impact in 2024, an estimated tax rate impact of \$0.10 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2025, and an estimated tax rate impact \$0.49 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2026 which reduces by an estimated \$0.01 per \$1,000 of assessed value each year until the bond is paid off in 2044.

THE TOWN COUNCIL RECOMMENDS PASSAGE OF THIS ARTICLE.”

BRC note: The current Complex was built 20 years ago, the Town has almost doubled in size and police and fire staffing needs have accordingly almost doubled. Service calls have increased 4 times since 1994. We fully support our police and fire departments. At the same time, we are concerned about costs.

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	School District	
Article 1. School Board	School Board, 2 seats, 3-year terms. There are three (3) candidates. We appreciate Sheila MacDonald's support for strong academics, accountability and open communications with students and families.	Sheila MacDonald
Article 2.	<p>[Operating budget.] Shall the School District vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling Ninety Million, One Hundred Thirteen-Thousand, Two Hundred Seventeen Dollars (\$90,113,217)?</p> <p>(Should this Article 02 be defeated, the operating budget shall be Eighty-Nine Million, Seven Hundred Seven Thousand, Four Hundred Seventy-Eight Dollars (\$89,707,478) which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the school district or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.)</p> <p>(The School Board recommends a "yes" vote upon this question.) (Majority ballot vote required.)</p> <p>Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.87 per assessed \$1,000 if article passes. Estimated tax rate impact is \$0.81 per assessed \$1,000 if article does not pass.</p> <p>BRC note: Student enrollment has been declining since 2016 (4,534). Further declines are projected into 2026 (3,924).</p>	Vote NO on the proposed higher Operating Budget.

Budgetary Town Meeting for action on the Town Budget will be held Wednesday, March 13, 2024, Bedford High School Theater, 47 Nashua Road, at 7 PM.

See the Town Website for the *Town of Bedford Town Meeting Warrant Articles and Municipal Budget Summary*.