
THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Submitted by Gyasi Omari Burks-Abbott, withdrawn candidate for Library Trustee

I am grateful for the support my candidacy for the office of Bedford Library Trustee has received so far; nevertheless, I decided to withdraw my name from consideration in the upcoming election because I discovered that, to quote from Winston Churchill, the process resembled a “riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma,” and I had too much to learn in too short a time.

Having reviewed the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners’ Library Trustee Manual and the Town By-laws, I tried to obtain additional information to support my platform—the minutes of the trustee meetings, the annual report, the library’s working budget, the current composition of the board—and found myself ping-ponged between the library and the town clerk’s office. After three weeks, I succeeded in getting up-to-date minutes and the latest annual report but hit a stone wall when it came to gaining insight as to who currently serves on the board and where they can be reached. Other than being elected officials and public servants, what skill sets do they bring, what fundraising do they oversee, and what, if any, plans or programs do they envision for the library going forward? Contrary to the public role of library advocate and community liaison outlined by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Bedford’s Library Trustees keep a low profile.

Perhaps, the incident that highlighted for me just how much I did not know about the political process in Bedford proved to be the candidate lottery. Responding to an invitation from the town clerk, I went to the town hall to participate in a drawing to determine the order in which my name would appear on the ballot. As it turned out my presence had no bearing on where my name would appear. If the candidate was not there to draw a number, the town clerk simply drew one herself. And, like me, the only other candidate at the lottery that day was neither an incumbent nor a caucus nominee.