
THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Submitted by Mark Siegenthaler, Caucus Nominee and incumbent candidate for Selectman



Mark Siegenthaler

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TWO BEDFORD CITIZEN QUESTIONS FOR THE SELECTMEN CANDIDATES

Q1 Give an example of a situation in which you played a role in helping people of different opinions or perspective develop a mutually agreeable solution to a problem. This could be an example from work, volunteer commitments or a previous experience in a public role. How was this accomplished? What did you learn?

Examples of this, accomplished by many local officials including me, are often found at Town Meeting. The presentation of a warrant article for adoption involves presentation of information and response to questions and concerns that may well include a different perspective and a contrary opinion from what was proposed.

Many times, an explanation with follow-up details is enough for residents to understand why something is recommended and how it is the best, mutually agreeable solution. Sometimes, speakers disagree with articles as presented and propose alternative or amended articles. In the give and take of debate and discussion that is the core of Town Meeting, it is important that participants remain calm and civil and that the discussions revolve around facts and shared information.

Assisting in accomplishing mutually agreeable solutions is a consistent role for Bedford's local officials. Much depends upon a basic trust that we are all trying to do what's best for each other and respect for the views of everyone who chooses to participate in the decision-making. Mutually agreeable solutions are often the result of communicating clear and complete information in a manner that reinforces these Town-held values of trust and respect.

Q2 Last year the Town faced a particular situation regarding homeless families sheltered at the Bedford Plaza. Various public meetings were held. In the future, how can the Town prepare itself to go forward with respect to unanticipated issues requiring fairly immediate town-wide information sharing?

The Town uses a variety of tools for sharing information in addition to public meetings. The town website, emergency phone messaging (reverse 911), and email distribution lists are some public methods. Private sources such as cable broadcasts, blogs, newspapers and television, and personal websites also provide communication vehicles for sharing information quickly and efficiently.

It is important to distinguish between topics that require fairly immediate, emergency information (storms, school closings, public safety alerts, and public health issues) and general issues of concern or topics for which residents want and need more information to be better informed. While we may want information right away, we are often better served by information that may take longer but is more complete and accurate, addresses multiple aspects of an issue and is provided by fully informed sources.

Volunteer and professional town officials are readily available to residents and will continue to provide information through the best communication vehicles available.

MARK'S CAUCUS STATEMENT

Good evening everyone. Thanks for attending tonight and thank you Cathy for your remarks and my nomination.

Once again, I am here to say it would be my pleasure to serve another term as a Selectman. I'm proud to be associated with our past accomplishments and the effective efforts that have kept our town an attractive and positive place to live and work.

I have served as an elected Town official for over twenty years, and worked professionally in state and local government for more than thirty. This experience has provided me with a broad perspective on what we can and must accomplish as a community in the areas of municipal management, planning and overall community development.

The decisions Selectmen are called upon to make and the direction that you want our Town to take, requires deliberate and experienced thought. Our decisions can't be made because it's the way we've always done things nor because we just want to try anything that is new.

No matter what Town issue we may be wrestling with – budgets, tax rates, staffing levels, or economic development and redevelopment, elder services, housing or responsible energy and transportation options, for example – our decision-making must rely on the best available experience and information.

I believe I have a good track record of:

- listening to your concerns
- considering issues fairly
- balancing our wants and needs against our resources
- representing your interests, and when necessary
- acting on your behalf

I would like to keep offering my skills and experience to address our needs. As long as we keep talking and listening, comparing ideas, and collectively finding the best available solutions - we will continue to be a successful community.

I thank you for your past support, I ask for your vote for my nomination tonight and again on Election Day.

Thank you very much