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# THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

*Submitted by Rachel Field, Caucus Nominee and incumbent candidate for Library Trustee*



*Rachel Field*

*Rachel invites voters to contact her via email*

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## **TWO BEDFORD CITIZEN QUESTIONS FOR LIBRARY TRUSTEE 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?

*I'm an anthropologist and documentary filmmaker, but I've also received training, and am certified, as a mediator. I have used those skills in numerous instances: from helping a nonprofit reach a consensus around priorities and budget allocations, to helping academic advisors on a major PBS series successfully resolve disputes over language. Perhaps most importantly, I worked (as part of a team) with traditional birthing attendants ("granny midwives") in rural Central America, successfully encouraging them to adopt a small measure - though one that ran contrary to their traditional practice - that contributed to the reduction of neonatal mortality. This was accomplished by staying in the community, respectfully listening to the concerns of the midwives, understanding their reasons for certain practices, emphasizing our shared concerns, and sharing with them ways in which we believed we could support them in achieving their objectives.*

*These instances all have elements in common, and what I have learned can be summarized as follows:*

*It is important to:*

- *have respect for those with whom you are working*
- *have humility: yours are not the only cogent, nor necessarily the best, ideas*
- *be an engaged and attentive listener*
- *clarify and prioritize the principal needs/objectives of all parties involved*
- *ensure that all voices get heard*
- *consider what a win-win solution might look like, and strategize as to how best to achieve it*
- *be flexible; understand the importance of compromise*
- *if stuck, seek more information, or further details: this will often clarify issues*
- *take the long perspective: goals are not reached, changes are not brought about, outcomes are not realized all at one fell swoop.*

**Q2:** Technology is driving rapid changes in library services. The Bedford Library has already adopted many new ways of meeting users' needs, greatly expanding the "traditional" library role. How do you envision the Library moving forward in the next five years, to balance patrons' growing demands against the town's budget constraints?

Indeed, the role libraries play in the community has changed remarkably over recent decades. In response to evolving needs, the Bedford Library has expanded services and programs, and incorporated numerous new technologies: switching media holdings to digital formats, and expanding our collections of eBooks, eAudiobooks and eDatabases. We've also updated our procedures – for example offering the options of on-line renewal and self-checkout.

The technological advances we've implemented, though they may initially be capital-intensive, have been fiscally prudent and beneficial: allowing the library to accomplish certain tasks more efficiently, thereby freeing up resources to be applied in other necessary areas. Nonetheless, they have brought, in turn, new and labor-intensive demands on our staff: to research and select new materials, machines or systems; to learn how they function; and to provide training – in both group and one-on-one "Book a Librarian" sessions – so that our patrons may take advantage of library resources over the diverse and ever-updating assortment apps and devices they use – from iPads to Kindles, Nooks, Nexuses, Galaxies and a plethora of smartphones.

No one can foresee what the future may bring – whether in terms of economic and demographic challenges or new technological offerings. But if past is prologue, I do know this: over the next five years, in our swiftly evolving social, cultural, economic and technological environment, the successful balancing of patrons' needs with Bedford's fiscal realities will continue to depend, as it has done, upon the fervent commitment of an

outstanding group of library administrators, staff, volunteers, and *Friends of the Bedford Free Public Library*, as well as upon all of us who serve as Trustees, to continually take the pulse of our community, to anticipate and assess growing and changing needs, and to make informed, judicious, and ethical choices.

### **RACHEL'S CAUCUS STATEMENT**

It is an honour to be here today. As I have undoubtedly mentioned in this venue before, I grew up in a home surrounded by books, floor to ceiling. Little wonder, then, that my very first job, with newly minted working papers in hand at the age of 14, was at my local public library. So I have to say that contributing to the ongoing work and mission of our library has always felt like a calling, and a returning to my roots.

I've lived in Bedford since 1998, and know well - as both a resident at large, and as a Library Trustee - what an extraordinary community resource our library is: we offer a fabulous collection, an engaged and knowledgeable staff, and top-notch administration. I'm proud to say that both in its staffing and breadth of collection our library is head and shoulders above many – if not most - of the libraries in neighboring towns. *In fact, in our demographic category, we consistently rank #2 in the Commonwealth for the number of materials we circulate to the public!*

Additionally, the programs and services we offer to the community are just outstanding; they range from from engaging children's programs to film screenings and discussions, tax preparation help, teen events, art shows, free scanning and printing, training in new technologies and one-on-one research assistance through our "book a librarian" program.

I am wholeheartedly committed to my mission as a Trustee – to help safeguard the Library's resources and funding, to support its adherence to principles of intellectual freedom, and to help maintain the welcoming and attentive ambience it offers to all who enter its doors.

As an anthropologist, I bring a special interest in seeing that the Library reflects the interests, and responds to the needs, of our increasingly diverse community.

I believe I bring energy and creativity to the board, and have my sights set on several future initiatives to make the Library even better : continuing to improve our exterior landscaping, upgrading our media holdings, and creatively improving the utilization of our third floor, among others.

It has truly been a privilege and a delight to serve on the Library Board since 2008. I hope you will actively support my candidacy to continue to serve as a Trustee, and vote for me on election day.