

LWV



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOTER

★★★ **GUIDE** ★★★

2024

COVERING:
CHARIHO AREA
CHARLESTOWN, RICHMOND, HOPKINTON

VOTER GUIDE IS FUNDED IN PART BY:
THE RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
EDUCATION FUND GRANT

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF RHODE ISLAND



2024 LIST OF CANDIDATES

STATE REPRESENTATIVES - Elect 1/District - 2 year terms

District 36 - New Shoreham, Charlestown, South Kingstown
Tina Spears - D (Incumbent uncontested)

District 38 - Westerly, Charlestown, Hopkinton
Brian Patrick Kennedy - D (Incumbent uncontested)

District 39 - Hopkinton, Richmond, Exeter
Megan L. Cotter - D (Incumbent)
Justin K. Price - R

STATE SENATORS - Elect 1/District - 2 year terms

District 34 - Exeter, Richmond, Hopkinton, Charlestown, West Greenwich
Stephen Moffitt - D
Elaine J. Morgan - R (Incumbent)

District 38 - Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown
Victoria Gu - D (Incumbent)
Westin J. Place - R

TOWN OFFICES

CHARLESTOWN

Town Council - Two Year Term - vote for up to 5

Deborah A. Carney - D Incumbent
Sarah R. Fletcher - D
Angela J. Jalbert - R
Peter M. Keating - D
Craig T. Marr - R
Ruth L. Platner - I
Richard Rippy Serra - R Incumbent
Peter Allan Slom - D incumbent
Steven J. Stokes - R Incumbent
Bonita B. Van Slyke - I

School Committee - Two Year Term - vote for 1

Laura Chapman - R uncontested (no response)

Non Partisan Planning Commission -
vote for up to 2 - 6 year terms

Glenn A. Babcock
Carol Mossa (Incumbent, 2nd Alternate)
Laura Anne Rom
Lisa Marie St. Godard (Incumbent, 1st Alternate)
Sarah St. Laurent (Incumbent)
Colleen Galvin Yaroshenko

HOPKINTON

Town Council - Two Year Term - vote for up to 5

Robert W. Burns - R Incumbent
Sharon Ann Davis - D (Incumbent)
Michael James Geary - R (Incumbent)
Scott Bill Hirst - R Incumbent
Edwin W. James - R
Jasmine Roy - R (no response)

School Committee - Four Year Term - vote for 1

Gregory Avedisian - D
Dianne Tefft - R (no response)

RICHMOND

Town Council - Two Year Term - vote for up to 5

Nell Carpenter - R (no response)
Michael Colasante - R Incumbent (no response)
Jeffrey L. Dinsmore - R (no response)
Daniel E. Madnick - D
Thomas J. Marron - R (no response)
James H. Palmisciano - D
Mark T. Reynolds - D
Roger St. Onge - R (no response)
Mark Trimmer - I Incumbent
Samantha R. Wilcox - D Incumbent

School Committee - Four Year Term - vote for up to 2

Louise D. Dinsmore - R
Clay Johnson - R
Jessica M. Purcell - D Incumbent
Karen J. Reynolds - D Incumbent



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF SOUTH COUNTY

Dear Readers,

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging informed and active participation in government. We never support or oppose a political party or candidate. Our goal has always been to educate voters so that they may make informed choices when they enter the voting booth. By providing a Voter's Guide to your community, we hope that you learn more about the local candidates who are seeking offices and understand their positions more clearly.

Be informed before you vote! Check the RI Secretary of State's Office website to learn more and become familiar with the ballot you will see when voting. Most importantly VOTE!

Thank you to all the citizens who anonymously submitted questions for consideration. Thank you to all the LWVSC volunteers who contributed to this guide. Special thanks to all the candidates who responded in a timely manner with your answers.

This Voter Guide is paid for, in part, by a grant from the Rhode Island League of Women Voters Education Fund, a 501(c)3 entity, established by a generous donation from Susan B. Wilson, a past local LWVSC member.

Warmest regards,

Etta Zasloff

Etta Zasloff
Project Co-Lead
Vice President

Nancy McLean

Nancy McLean
Project Co-Lead
Secretary

RI League of Women Voters, South County Chapter

5 State Ballot Questions

Check your sample ballot for the details at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>

The League of Women Voters does not take a position on this or any ballot question, but provides the following information to help you vote your interests. Find more details about all state and town ballot questions in the 2024 Voter Information Guide (<https://vote.sos.ri.gov/Forms/Elections/Guides/24RefGuideEng.pdf>) that has been mailed to registered voters in Rhode Island and Google for more pros and cons.

1. CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION Shall there be a convention to amend or revise the Rhode Island Constitution?

Some Pros of a Constitutional Covention

- Opportunity to add “good government” provisions like term limits for elected officials and a line item veto for the governor.
- Opportunity for all citizens to run as a delegate to the Constitution Convention and explore participation in the democratic process.

Some Cons of a Constitutional Covention

- Concern for proposed amendments that would result in loss of rights that the constitution now provides like ease of voting.
- Concern that outside special interests and money become involved and exacerbate polarization in RI.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION FACILITIES BOND - \$160,500,000

3. HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY BOND - \$120,000,000

4. GREEN ECONOMY BONDS - \$53,000,000

5. CULTURAL ARTS AND THE ECONOMY GRANT PROGRAM BOND - \$10,000,000

Local Ballot Questions

Town Name: Charlestown, Hopkinton and Richmond all have this question

6. IMPROVEMENTS, FURNISHING, AND EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENTS AT SWITCH ROAD CAMPUS \$15,000,000 BONDS AND NOTES

Town Name: Charlestown - specific questions

Questions 7-17 Amendments to the Town of Charlestown Charter.

Town Name: Hopkinton-specific questions

Questions 7 - 21. Amendments to the Hopkinton Home Rule Charter.

Local Ballot Questions - vary by town

Check your sample ballot for the details at <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/>



Early Voting Period October 16, 2024 - November 4

In the 20 days leading up to Election Day, you can vote in person at your town hall. This is a great option if you are unable to vote at your usual polling place on Election Day, or if you have run out of time to request a mail ballot.

Charlestown Town Hall

4540 South County Trl.,
Council Chambers

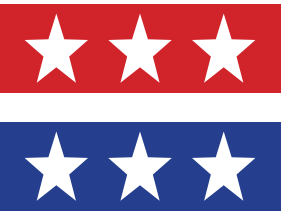
Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. except holidays.

Hopkinton Town Hall

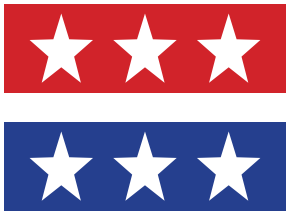
1 Town House Rd, Middle entrance, ramp door
Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. except holidays

Richmond Town Hall

5 Richmond Townhouse Rd., Wyoming, Main Entrance
Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. except holidays



State of Rhode Island General Election Candidates



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



House District 36
Tina Spears
Democrat Incumbent
Unopposed

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

My goal as a State Representative is to serve the needs and priorities of my district and the larger community of Rhode Island.

Island.

My experience as a disability advocate and a parent have prepared me well for the role of a policy maker. I have a can-do attitude and have had a multitude of life-experiences that inform my values and priorities, that I believe largely aligns with my community.

My willingness to work with all people with diverse perspectives allows me to find compromise when the outcome is to the benefit of all. Ultimately, that is what moves the needle on all good policy; compromise and an unwavering commitment to the community you serve. If you are willing to work hard and work together with all stakeholders, anything is achievable. That is success to me.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

Bottle Redemption Bill: Rhode Island is failing terribly at capturing and recycling plastic waste. We are the Ocean State, and each day we do not recycle our plastic, we are polluting our waterways, our soil, and our ocean. This is a top priority for all the Representa-

tives on the House Environment committee and South County Representatives.

Healthcare reforms: While I don't have a specific policy that must be passed, I believe a package of bills that will build on the work that has been done in the general assembly is needed. Policy areas that I believe should be explored are related to; increasing support to physicians and direct care workers, increasing reimbursement rates to compressed areas in the system, creating price transparency, pharmacy benefit manager controls, insurer requirements, etc.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Healthcare costs are driven by three key elements: pharmaceutical prices, professional specialty prices (Ex: radiology, orthopedics), and durable medical equipment/supplies prices. More must be done to control these cost drivers and create transparency in pricing for all services and products in the healthcare

industry.

In addition to the high-level cost drivers, this pressure of higher costs in the above-mentioned categories have driven down the reimbursements to clinical care, direct care, front-line workers etc. As a state, we can do more to target clinical and direct care services for investments and higher reimbursement rates while controlling the cost of the top cost drivers.

Lastly, the healthcare system in our country is a large part of our economy and any adjustments to its ecosystem must be done thoughtfully and many experts at the table working together to improve our system and maintain the needed workforce.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I stand firmly on the side of shoreline access for the public. The shore is the property of all Rhode Islanders and as the sea rises, the access will shift with the tides. Property owners have the right to preserve their

residence and structures, and all people should respect this right. However, there should never be obstruction to the shore by any property owner.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Yes

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

The housing crisis is impacting all people in Rhode Island. The House of Representatives has taken the lead to move toward a streamlined process for building and invested hundreds of millions toward housing. We need to continue these investments. The process is slow and daunting and we will not solve our problem overnight.

Development also comes with concerns for one of the

most densely populated states in the country and the sensitive environmental conditions along the shoreline, so all development must be done thoughtfully in a manner that is resilient and sensitive to the area.

Policy that is not related to development that may be helpful would be to limit non-residents buying up single family homes for Airbnbs or equity firms buying properties for financial gain. I am not opposed to short-term rentals, however, the single family home supply is limited and we may need to explore a moratorium on short-term rental properties and/or limit equity firms from purchasing in our state. Additionally, the platforms that list properties and real estate/rental agencies who are incentivized to drive prices upward may need to be addressed to begin stabilizing the housing market to become more affordable.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director? Only a yes/no response will be printed

No



House D39
Megan Cotter
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

During my second term in office, I want to continue making real, positive changes that directly benefit our community. I've already worked to secure more funds for our schools, ensuring our children have the resources they need to succeed. I collaborated with RIPTA to bring federal funds to our community, providing a van to Wood River Health at no additional cost—a critical resource for those in need of healthcare access. Additionally, I've taken proactive steps to protect and care for our forests, which are vital to our environment and quality of life. My background is deeply rooted in this community. From volunteering with local organizations like RICAN to listening to the concerns of my neighbors, I've always been driven by a commit-

ment to improving our collective well-being. My experience as a state representative has allowed me to build strong relationships and work effectively within the chamber to find common ground and get things done. My focus remains on addressing the issues that matter most to us, with the passion and understanding that comes from being a part of this community.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

The top two priorities that the General Assembly needs to focus on for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders are expanding access to healthcare and implementing laws to cap electric companies' ability to increase rates. First, expanding access to healthcare is critical. Healthcare is a fundamental right, and too many Rhode Islanders still face challenges in affording or accessing the care they need. By enacting legislation that lowers healthcare costs and enhances access, we can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to lead a healthy life. A healthier population strengthens our communities and builds a more resilient state. Second, it's essential to cap electric companies' ability to increase rates. Rhode Island has some of the highest electricity rates in the country, and unexpected spikes in energy bills can place an undue burden on families, particularly those on fixed incomes. By capping rate increases, we can protect consumers from unpredictable financial strain, ensuring that energy remains affordable and accessible to all. Focusing on healthcare and stabilizing energy costs will help create a Rhode Island where everyone can thrive, both now and in the future.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

As a member of the Health and Human Services Committee, I'm focused on addressing the key challenges in Rhode Island's healthcare delivery system, including the shortage of providers, excessive administrative burdens, and low reimbursement rates. To address the provider shortage, we should expand education and training opportunities within the state, supporting our medical and nursing schools and offering incentives for students to train and remain in Rhode Island. Additionally, simplifying the licensure process for out-of-state providers will help bring in much-needed talent to meet our immediate healthcare needs. Reducing administrative burdens is also critical. Providers are currently overwhelmed by paperwork and bureaucratic hurdles, which detract from patient care. By streamlining these processes and investing in modern health IT systems, we can enable providers to spend more time with their patients. I'm proud to be part of the General Assembly that successfully increased Medicaid reimbursement rates within one year, instead of the three years originally proposed by the governor. However, we must go further and work to increase all reimbursement rates across the board. Ensuring fair compensation for providers is essential to maintaining a stable healthcare system and making sure that all Rhode Islanders receive the care they need. These actions will help strengthen our healthcare system, making it more effective and

accessible for everyone in Rhode Island.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I support expanding public access to Rhode Island's shoreline while respecting property owners' rights, inspired by successful models from other states. California and Hawaii have effectively implemented public trust doctrines to balance public access with private property rights. California's Coastal Act, for example, ensures public access by requiring that new developments include provisions for public pathways and access points. Similarly, Hawaii's approach establishes a clear legal framework that protects public access to beaches while respecting private property boundaries. In Rhode Island, we can adopt a similar approach by strengthening our legal frameworks to clearly define public access rights and boundaries between public and private properties. This would provide the legal clarity needed to protect both public access and property rights. We should also focus on establishing designated access points along the shoreline to ensure public enjoyment without encroaching on private property. Working with local communities to identify and develop these access points will help maintain a balance between public use and property rights. Collaboration is key. By engaging property owners, local governments, and environmental groups in developing and implementing access guidelines, we can create solutions that respect all stakeholders' interests. By embracing

these strategies, Rhode Island can enhance shoreline access while safeguarding property owners' rights, ensuring our coastlines remain accessible and preserved for future generations.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Yes, I will support the evolving strategy for implementing the Act on Climate Action. The 2021 Act was a significant step in addressing climate change, and as we move forward, it's crucial to adapt and refine our approach to meet our climate goals effectively. I am committed to fighting against massive clearcutting for solar projects and will advocate for incentives to install solar panels on industrial sites and brown-fields instead. This strategy allows us to harness clean energy while protecting our vital forests and natural landscapes. Protecting our forests and coastline is crucial to this strategy. Our forests play a key role in absorbing carbon dioxide, and our coastline helps buffer against sea-level rise and storm surge. Safeguarding these natural resources not only preserves our environment but also enhances our resilience to climate impacts. They are interconnected, and protecting them will help us build a more sustainable and resilient Rhode Island. I'm also proud of the work I did to make the green bond greener. By advocating for increased green bond funding, we secured \$13 million for critical environmental initiatives: \$5 million for farm preservation, \$5 million for forest management, and \$3 million for open space. This effort has bolstered our commitment to environmental conservation and will support sustainable practices for years to come. With these combined efforts, we can ensure

Rhode Island remains a leader in environmental stewardship and continues to move towards a sustainable future.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

One effective strategy is to focus on converting abandoned and underutilized buildings into mixed-use developments. Transforming these properties can quickly add much-needed housing units while also revitalizing neighborhoods. Mixed-use developments that include residential, commercial, and community spaces not only increase housing availability but also bring economic activity and vitality to areas that may be struggling. To support this approach, we could streamline the application and approval processes for these conversions, providing expedited permits and incentives for developers who undertake these projects. Additionally, offering state funding or tax incentives for the rehabilitation of abandoned buildings can attract investment and make these projects more financially viable. By repurposing existing structures, we can address the housing shortage more rapidly and efficiently while also enhancing community spaces and stimulating local economies.

7. Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes.



House D39
Justin J. Price
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am running to return the strong common-sense voice of District 39 to the Rhode Island House of Representatives. I believe in supporting legislation that ensures our personal freedoms, lowers taxes, and promotes economic development. My voting record reflects a vigorous defense of personal rights and Constitutional liberties, lower tax and pro-economic growth policy, as well as a more simplified, streamlined, and responsive government. As a United States Marine, a fisherman, a carpenter, and a small business owner and entrepreneur, I truly represent you and not special interests.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

After years of experience in the state house, one initiative rises above the rest to me to achieve better and honest Rhode Island government. My top priority will be to advocate for the creation of an inspector general's office. This is the best protection RI citizens can have, considering the current political dynamic.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

I have pledged to do my best in keeping taxes down by opposing unfunded mandates.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

1) Creating an office of Inspector General
2) Making it affordable people to live and raise a family in RI

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low

Richmond has a chance to work with local business leaders to build a 24hr Urgent Care facility to provide auxiliary care to the community that should be supported with proper economic development and tax stabilization strategies. I also support the legislature committee work that is evaluating a medical school at the University of Rhode Island. This possibility would provide world class healthcare research and provider service right in our backyard.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Stop imposing restrictions and mandates on the Doctors and healthcare workers forcing them to leave our state and go elsewhere. This shortage is self-inflicted by our unselected bureaucrats.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I 100% support constitutional rights and that includes shoreline access and protection of private property. The courts must account for legalities of the land as defined in the deed.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

NO, We all care about a healthy environment but we also need to balance legislation that will not harm citizen freedoms and ultimately the economy. Market forces need to drive the Green economy, not government.

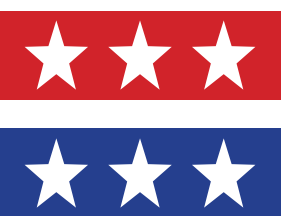
6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortag-

es and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?

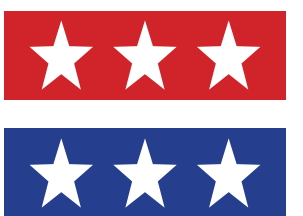
The economic focus has shifted from commercial real estate to residential real estate. The legislative housing committee should focus on solutions that convert the urban and downtown surpluses of office and retail space to residential units and supporting amenities.

7. Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

No



State of Rhode Island General Election Candidates



SENATE



Senate D34
Elaine J. Morgan
Republican Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

As a small business owner, I know the struggles and hurdles RI business go through. I am here to continue giving them the support and assistance needed. My main concern is serving all of my constituents regardless of political affiliation in all areas of State Government. Guiding them with issues concerning DMV, DLT, DBR, DHS, DOH, DOT etc... I am their liaison to these offices.

I have pledged to do my best in keeping taxes down by opposing unfunded mandates.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

1) Creating an office of Inspector General
2) Making it affordable people to live and raise a family in RI

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low

reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Stop imposing restrictions and mandates on the Doctors and healthcare workers forcing them to leave our state and go elsewhere. This shortage is self-inflicted by our unselected bureaucrats.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I support full public access to the shoreline.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

I cannot commit to voting for something I have not read.

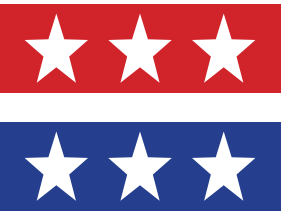
6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do

you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?1 response

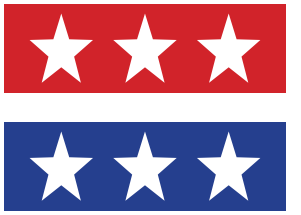
Stop the illegal flood of people into our state and country this is what is creating the shortage.

7. Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

No



State of Rhode Island General Election Candidates



SENATE



Senate D34
Stephen Moffitt
Democrat

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I want to achieve bringing respect and representation back to District 34. District 34 needs to be heard at the State House and not ignored. District 34 covers a large area and consists of 5 different towns. The towns in the district rely on their State Senator to represent their local needs at

the State House. District 34 also needs a serious person for serious results, not a person whose efforts are geared toward divisive social issues and national politics. I look forward to achieving success by telling the story of our district, letting the rest of the state know that we too have needs that must be addressed. I will work with all members of the General Assembly and build relationships that will be beneficial to District 34. My role as a husband and a father of 5 has given me the life experience to understand what it means and what it takes to raise a family and be part of the community, that experience has led me to want to serve my community as a Hopkinton town councilor. I have also served on local volunteer boards, and I am currently the head middle school soccer coach at Charhio.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

Improving the Economy: Addressing issues related to job creation, economic development, and supporting small businesses to boost the state's economy and create more opportunities for residents. Education: Focusing on improving the quality of

education, increasing funding for schools, enhancing educational programs, and ensuring better outcomes for students in Rhode Island. These priorities are crucial for the well-being and progress of the state and its resident

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Rhode Island has the lowest supply of licensed practical nurses, physician assistants, personal care and service workers per 100,000 residents in the country. I would advocate for programs that retain or train healthcare workers right here in Rhode Island. These programs could include tuition free education for those who will commit to working right here in Rhode Island after graduation. We already offer 2 years college for free, so offering 2 more years for those who are willing to commit to staying here in Rhode Island is a path we should explore. We need to offset this shortage of healthcare with different strategies to be able to meet the needs of all Rhode Islanders. Lower Medicaid reimbursement rates are also a reason why the state

has been unable to attract and retain workers in key primary and acute care positions. The General Assembly needs to address the issue of low Medicaid reimbursement rates to retain health care providers, better rates are needed to attract and retain the providers who care for people when they need it most, the anxiety of trying to find a provider when your health takes a turn for the worse can be overwhelming. Rhode Island's Medicaid reimbursement rates have not kept pace with neighboring states and that needs to change. A thriving healthcare sector creates jobs, discoveries and innovation and most importantly takes care of people.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

Shoreline access and property owner rights in Rhode Island are governed by the state's Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) regulations, which strike a balance between public access and private property rights. Rhode Island law grants the public the right to access the state's tidal waters along the shoreline

up to the mean high-water mark for recreational purposes, including fishing, swimming, and boating. This ensures that residents and visitors can enjoy the state's coastal resources. I support these regulations and feel it is important that all Rhode Island residents have access to the coastal resources of our state. With that being said, I believe it is also important for Rhode Islanders exercising these rights to be respectful and responsible as to not trespass or disregard property owners rights as well.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

I will vote to support the evolving strategies for implementation of Act on Climate. The Act on Climate represents a strong commitment to the long-term health of our State, as well as an economic opportunity for our state. After its people, our state's greatest resource is its natural environment. It is up to us to protect it for future generations

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the

process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?*

1. Establish a streamlined on-line application process for state funding.
2. Increase outreach efforts to educate residents about available assistance programs.
3. Collaborate with local organizations to provide support for navigating the funding application process.
4. Allocate additional resources to support affordable housing initiatives.
5. Implement policies to prioritize funding for those most in need.
6. Create partnerships with financial institutions to offer low-interest loans for housing projects.
7. Develop a public awareness campaign to highlight the importance of state funding in addressing the housing crisis in Rhode Island

7. Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes.



Senate District 38
Victoria Gu
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

We have unique challenges in our coastal towns. First, we're a coastal community in the time of climate change. As the former chair of our local Climate Resiliency Commission I helped enroll Charlestown in the state's Municipal Resiliency Program and brought community members together to workshop and prioritize possible solutions. As your State Senator I have worked on bills to make buildings more energy-efficient, which will bring energy costs down for families. I also championed the Act on Coasts bill and want to continue to marshal together the planning and key resources to protect our critical infrastructure and make sure we're prepared before the next Hurricane Sandy hits. Second, we are seeing fewer families here and more out-of-towners who only come during the summer. The cost of everything: housing, food, childcare, and healthcare, is stretching many

families' budgets. I will continue to work hard so that everyone who has roots here can afford to stay here.

My professional background is in software engineering and data analysis. The mindset I learned is to always use data to figure out your next step. We'd often say: "Hey, we think doctors would benefit from this change in the application," and then we'd look at the data before and after the change to see if we actually solved the problem we wanted to solve. That's why I want to bring a fresh, evidence-based point of view to the state legislature and track data over time to monitor success.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

One of my top priorities will be climate resiliency / adaptation. This recent string of severe coastal storms and inland flooding in Dec 2023/Jan 2024 should be a wake-up call to all Rhode Islanders. Our southern shoreline is heavily exposed to hurricanes and we're steadily losing some of it year-over-year to erosion and sea level rise. At the same time, the tourism industry is a huge economic driver in southern RI. I want to see through the implementation of comprehensive planning and cost-estimates required by the Act on Coasts (one of my bills we passed in 2024) and then pass any legislation or budgetary items needed to leverage this planning to secure more federal funding for resiliency, especially regional grants. We have to do more to adapt so that we don't lose the places we love in South County.

Second, we must conduct a rate review of primary care reimbursement rates and other incentive programs so that we are in a better position to attract and recruit primary care physicians and other essential healthcare workers: I have explained this more in my answer to question #3

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

Our healthcare system is at a crucial point where many primary care providers are nearing retirement age, but our hospitals have trouble recruiting the next generation of providers in Rhode Island. This will only lead to greater costs down the road because people's conditions can get more serious and life-threatening while they wait.

In 2024, we passed a number of bills in the Senate to increase access to care (by incentivizing or recruiting more providers), reduce costs for patients, and provide transparency. Five of the bills enabled RI to join interstate licensing compacts so that healthcare providers can more easily practice in multiple states including RI. There are still more licensing compacts that RI could join, like the physician assistant compact. Additionally, we funded a four-year scholarship program for primary-care physicians, nurse practitioners and physician's assistants. Students who receive the scholarships commit to practicing primary care in Rhode Island for at least eight years. This scholarship program was limited to 15 spots, so we need to make sure it works and expand it if it does.

Finally, we need to address the reimbursement rates. Currently, a primary care physician choosing between RI and other states would probably opt for other states because they would earn substantially more. One possible solution is Sen. Sosnowski's bill, which proposes a dual mandate for OHIC (office of the health insurance commissioner), to adjust rates based on both affordability and provider recruitment/retention. Other big-picture solutions

include healthcare-workforce housing and a medical school at URI.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

When I was growing up, I loved going exploring the shoreline and getting sprayed by the waves. I want to make sure we protect and expand public access to the shoreline in RI because our whole community should enjoy it—whether you're swimming, fishing, or making a living or a home here. That's why in 2023, I put much of my weight behind Senate Bill S-417 and we passed it in June 2023. The main thing this bill did was designate the public-private boundary of the shoreline at the seaweed line + 10 feet inland. The shoreline access commission recommended this boundary after extensive study. While the court case is still in process, I believe there is a strong rationale for using the seaweed line because the RI constitution explicitly mentions gathering seaweed under the public's rights and privileges of the shore (Article 1 Section 17).

I have also seen instances where advertisements of oceanfront property are misleading, and that's why I worked to pass my oceanfront property disclosure bill into law. It requires a disclosure form during the sale of an oceanfront house that includes any public rights of way on the property and an explanation of the public-private boundary (seaweed line + 10 feet). This will be an important education tool for people who are coming from out of state to purchase an oceanfront property.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate

Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

Westerly, Charlestown, and South Kingstown are at the front-lines of climate change. Sea level rise, tidal flooding, and severe weather events are affecting our groundwater and infrastructure. Beaches are eroding at least several feet per year. Septic systems are in danger of failing more often. Our coastal ponds are warming, which affects the marine ecosystem. Climate change is here, and we have a limited time window to act.

In order to fulfill the Act on Climate objectives, we need to decarbonize the energy grid, transportation, homes, and industry. RI has already set a goal for 100% renewable energy by 2033. If we become energy-independent (producing our own energy locally), it'll help us avoid the huge price swings with global oil and natural gas prices.

Between 2023-24 I've focused more on buildings and transportation because RI doesn't yet have a robust strategy for these sectors. I passed legislation that requires RI to adopt the 2024 International Energy Conservation Code. This will reduce energy usage and utility bills in new residential and commercial buildings. Going forward, the Building Decarbonization Act will be a key piece of legislation to benchmark emissions in large buildings and reduce them over time.

In transportation, we must build out an effective EV charging network and invest in electric-powered public transportation. Westerly residents reached out to me because they want to bring CT commuter rail to Rhode Island, so I formed a monthly working group and have been actively meeting with other elected officials to seek funding.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortag-

es and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?*

1. South County is a tight knit community, with many generations of families living in the area. More recently, people have come to me concerned that their kids and grandkids will not be able to come back and settle down here when they want to have a family of their own. With a housing crisis decades in the making, it'll take time to climb out of it, but I will continue to advocate for 1) state funding to support nonprofit housing developers working on projects in our area. This has historically been difficult because the cost-per-unit to develop housing is higher and the permitting process is longer compared to northern RI. But now that towns are in the process of updating their affordable housing plans, I will push for projects within each town's affordable housing plan to have access to dedicated funding streams for all stages of the process (site acquisition & preparation, design/architecture, utilities, construction).
- 2) In South County it's also important to preserve existing housing, and that might mean enabling nonprofits/owner cooperatives to compete in the market and purchase a house before it gets sold to a speculative investor.
- 3) Another big push of mine has been to enable more local regulation of short-term rentals, which have been popping up more and more in residential neighborhoods (for example, a moratorium on new short-term rental registrations).

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director? Only a yes/no response will be printed

Yes



Senate District 38
Westin J. Place
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

The job of an elected official is to represent their constituents. Contrary to many who hold public office I am not setting out to achieve specific agendas outside of what the people of my district deem important. I want to be that official that every constituent can contact with

ideas, worries, hopes, and dreams that will actually listen and be able to relate. I believe I am well rounded in experience to be extremely successful. During my early years I worked on charter boats in Galilee, a greenhouse in Narragansett, and a breakfast chef in South Kingstown. I graduated Narragansett High School in 2006 and continued my education part time at CRI while managing a local retail store. In 2012 I left to work in construction. One recession later I got my CDL and now work for myself as a truck driver. I have been an owner/operator since 2014.

Getting married to the love of my life in 2018 taught me compromise and communication. Becoming a Father in 2019 and again in 2021 taught me patience and sacrifice. Living within your means is what my grandmother taught me. I have worked hard to give my children everything I never had growing up in a single parent household. Holding public office was never on my to do list, but I am willing to do what needs to be done so every generation in our state has the opportunity to live, grow, and watch each successive generation do the same.

2. What are the top 2 priorities that the General Assembly needs to pass for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders and why?

The first priority of anyone seeking to be a representative in the General Assembly should be an Independent office of an Inspector General. It has been a running joke for decades on the amount of wasteful spending, pay to play business practices, and unaccountability in our government. I'm all for a good joke but at the expense of the taxpayers of our state that is unacceptable. On top of that I wish to work with other members of the assembly to relieve burdens on our small businesses. Around 86% of jobs in Rhode Island are from small businesses. We all know how cost prohibitive it has become just to live in this state with inflation and the lack of opportunities and as a small business owner I see doors closing, windows being shuttered and opportunities for our youth moving to other states in the union.

3. RI's healthcare delivery system is challenged with a shortage of providers, excessive administrative burden and low reimbursement rates. What are your specific ideas to improve this situation?

My mother is a NP. She recently went through the motions to open up her own clinic. As someone who has dealt with small business administration for almost 20

years I had a hand in helping her fulfill her dream of having her own office. We must understand first and foremost that these clinics and offices are businesses first. Reimbursement rates for Medicaid in our state are amongst the lowest in the north east. With a larger percentage of people now on Medicaid our providers are losing money on every visit. If being a primary care physician doesn't pay the bills the doors won't stay open and the people of Rhode Island will suffer. We also must look for how to improve how medical procedures are covered by insurance. At the moment providers do not determine what medical procedures are required or necessary for your health. Insurance adjusters are the ones responsible. I believe we should have a talk about who you would rather have deciding what is best to treat your well being, your Doctor or your Insurance. The current system is not working for the people of Rhode Island.

4. RI shoreline access is still in dispute with homeowners challenging the current definition of public access. Where do you stand on public access to the shoreline and property owner rights?

I am an avid fisherman. From surfcasting for stripers on the

beaches of Watch Hill to plugging for Bluefish off the rocks of Galilee, I have been using the shore since before I could ride a bike. Rhode Islanders have the Constitutional right to access the shoreline in the state. I have been personally accosted by people who were uninformed or were misinformed and the misinformation has been perpetuated by illegal sign postings. We should also look into property lines that have not changed even with the shore changing due to erosion, etc. The shoreline is public property but you should not be burdened with property taxes or maintenance of public property.

5. The RI General Assembly passed a major Act on Climate Action bill in 2021. Will you vote to support the evolving strategy for implementation?

As a conservationist and an avid outdoorsman I am serious about protecting our environment. However the bill that went through the house and senate does not have the best interests of Rhode Islanders in mind. Clear cutting raw land for solar farms when putting solar awnings over parking lots could cover the same surface area without the destruction of our environment. We need common sense solutions that don't kill marine mammals, hurt our fishing industry, or force

residents to purchase expensive technology that is still evolving. We need to slow down, think, and not be the guinea pig in a world of evolving energy requirements.

6. Recently the General Assembly passed housing bills designed to alleviate shortages and affordability, but the process is slow. What ideas do you have for improving access to state funding to speed the response to our housing crisis?*

1. We live in the smallest state in the union and we have 28 separate housing authorities. Other states have single housing authorities that cover areas larger than our entire state. The burden of administrative costs this brings with it is astronomical. We should consolidate and have the one authority work with each individual town zoning and planning board. I would like the process to be handled on a local level to keep the powers in the hands of the towns, not the state.

7. Yes/No: Do you support replacing the Coastal Resource Management Council with a state-level department run by a cabinet-level director?

Yes



Charlestown General Election Candidates

CHARLESTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Deborah Ann Carney
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I want to maintain the open, transparent, and fair meeting processes adopted by the current Town Council, including detailed minutes, video streams of meetings, and the full right for all Councilors to submit agenda items. My priorities for next term include maintaining our low tax rate; pursuing affordable and workforce housing initiatives, supporting local businesses; advocating for our children by providing portable recreation lights behind Town Hall for football and cheerleading and ensuring the construction of the replacement elementary school playground; and working with

the state to advance efforts to repair the Charlestown breachway's western wall. I have over 22 years of experience in local government, both in elected and appointed positions. Including serving as Charlestown Town Council President from 2002-2006, from 2020-present, and as Vice-President from 2018-2020. I was elected to the Charho School Committee and served from 2008-2012. I have served on the Charho Audit Subcommittee and Charho Finance Committee since 2006 and continue to serve. In 2002 served as the Chair of the Charho Entrance, Expansion and Exit Committee. From 2007 to 2008 served as Chair of the Charter Revision Committee. I currently serve as the liaison to the Coastal Ponds Management Commission, the Affordable Housing Commission, the Charlestown 250th Committee, the Ordinance Review Ad Hoc Committee, the Charter Revision Advisory Committee, and the Economic Improvement Commission. I am a commercial rated pilot, a certified flight instructor and the Vice-President of my family's small power tool and fastener business.

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

Some of the changes will assist Charlestown in addressing the housing needs of our workforce, seniors, and adult children. Some of these changes may be the difference between being able to care for our elderly parents or helping our kids navigate the rap-

idly rising costs of rents and mortgages. It is important however, to recognize that as a town where all residences are served by wells and individual septic systems, there will be far less opportunity for adding onto existing properties and the impact of the recent legislation, may be minimal. I am hopeful that any impact on our town will be positive for all of us that call Charlestown home.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

My plan is to ensure that our town works with our partners, including our US Senators and Congressmen, our state Senators and Representatives, Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) and US Fish and Wildlife. We all must collaborate with resources, information and funding and I have already been actively working towards these goals. The Charlestown Breachway was heavily damaged due to severe storms during the past year. The beach next to the western wall has eroded by approximately 135 feet. This has destroyed the dunes and caused the breach in the west wall. Because of this, the water continues to flow into Ninigret Pond. If not fixed, this problem will continue to impact our businesses that rely on the health of the pond, including the aquaculture, fishing, tourism, and will also impact property values. At the time of this writing, I, along with appropriate town officials

and staff, am/are actively working with all the stakeholders listed above to accomplish both a short-term repair and a long-term solution to the problem. I understand that the town of Charlestown cannot address these problems alone and I will make every effort to coordinate a solution.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

Ninigret Park consists of two parcels of land totaling 227 acres. One parcel containing 55 acres is owned outright by the Town. The second parcel of 172 acres, while owned by the town, is subject to covenants which require the land to be used "exclusively for public park or public recreation purposes in perpetuity by the Town of Charlestown." As part of the original Agreement with the federal government, the Town agreed to update its planning every 10 years. The last Master Plan was approved by the Town Council in 2008, so the current efforts are overdue and required. I do not have concerns about the master plan because it is not a construction plan; it is simply a "blueprint that outlines potential opportunities for development, growth, or revitalization and will serve as a guide for decision-making and future development" as noted in the draft 2024 Ninigret Park Master Plan. Because it is merely a contractually required guide map to possible future projects, I support adoption of the plan. The current Town Council has not advocated for any specific improvement or any expenditure. Ultimately, Charlestown

voters will determine if funding allocations are approved, either through the town's budget or separate warrant items, during a budget vote.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

Reasonable development in Charlestown is dependent upon the zoning designation of the area. We absolutely must balance the housing needs in town and the capacity of the land vs. the need to carefully expand or restrict land use. As an example, if a landowner owns 10 acres of land and they live in a zone that allows a house to be built on three acres of land, then they should be able to divide their parcel into three lots, without being forced by the Planning Commission to give up any of their land, even if it is for a conservation easement to the town. I think most property owners in Charlestown would find this to be an abuse of power if they were forced to give, not sell, but give a conservation easement to the town. This is not reasonable development. As a town, we must be cognizant of everyone's rights.

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

The biggest long-term threat to Charlestown is insufficient affordable housing for our workforce, young families, our now adult children, and our seniors. According to the RI Housing 2023 Fact Book, in 2022 a homebuyer in Charlestown would have needed an annual income of

\$175,680 to purchase a median priced home. Charlestown home prices have only risen since 2022, and year-round apartments are extremely limited. A vibrant community includes people of all ages and varied occupations. Moreover, Charlestown still relies solely upon able-bodied volunteer firefighters. Our Fire Districts have found it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain sufficient personnel. Volunteer firefighters are typically younger and must live in or in close proximity to the communities they serve. Without adequate housing, the Town is in danger of having an insufficient complement of trained firefighters. Just this year, the Council faced a similar problem with emergency services. The Council recognized a need to formally ensure that the Charlestown Ambulance Rescue Service (CARS), which began as a volunteer organization, would be sufficiently staffed in the coming years to serve the Town's residents, by entering into a contractual arrangement for services. Now, CARS does not need to rely upon uncertain budgetary grants which was endangering the organization's stability. Adequate workforce housing is critical to current and future recruitment and retention for all emergency service personnel.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Sarah R. Fletcher
Democrat

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I have been a small business owner for most of my career, and understand how difficult it is for businesses to thrive. I am also a third generation Charlestown resident, my grandparents built a house here in 1928. Balancing sustainable growth while preserving the character of Charlestown is my top priority. The residents of Charlestown have repeatedly stated that they love Charlestown the way it is. If elected I will first listen to the town's residents before making changes that will impact our community.

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

Adding Additional Dwelling Units makes sense where there

are public sewage facilities. Charlestown depends on individual wells and septic systems to provide water and sewage. What works for larger cities and towns, would be disastrous for Charlestown. I believe we must preserve our resources by protecting open spaces and making sure that any development and additional housing density doesn't overwhelm the land's ability to recover so we don't lose our most precious resource—clean drinking water.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

We can work with URI to tap the amazing marine and coastal erosion expertise we have on hand. The current severe beach erosion that caused the Breachway damage may self correct, (the depth of the beach has to do with the size of underwater berms. URI's Bay Campus has been researching this for years.) but the increase in the severity of storms

will continue to cause damage and create problems. Charlestown also needs to pressure the state to help with the costs of repairing the Charlestown Breachway. We need to look into ways to open and close the breachway in the winter. The Netherlands has developed several solutions that could work for us, but they will all cost money. We also need to plan for, and budget funds to address climate change. Hurricanes, ice storms, microbursts are all going to get worse.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

Ninigret Park is a privilege and a gift that needs to be treasured. The park was given to the town as a buffer for the Ninigret Wildlife Refuge. The refuge and park are the last stop for many of the birds who migrate along the easter flyway. It is also home to two endangered species. Current plans to commercialize the park are not in the best interest of the

wildlife, or the town. Large events are not in keeping with the mandate of the park, or the wishes of the town as specified in the 2021 town survey. I would tear up the proposed master plan which is estimated to cost almost 40 million dollars and come up with a more modest and practical plan that prioritizes wildlife, recreation, dark skies and the wishes of the people of Charlestown. You can't have lighted ball fields and dark skies. You can't have large events that don't negatively impact the wildlife refuge. The current proposal does nothing to leverage our dark skies which, if promoted properly, could be a much more helpful to the businesses we have than large events where people flood in, make a mess, and leave quickly. Using a plan that the voters of Charlestown had previously rejected as a starting point for this iteration was short sighted and a waste of money.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

Development that doesn't damage the environment, and is in keeping with maintaining the character we all love. There are many things that can be done to help businesses in the off-season that will actually improve their viability and the quality of life in town. Development isn't inherently bad. But we should not sell off our future, or our children's future, to outsiders who care nothing for our town.

Development that doesn't damage the environment, and is in keeping with maintaining the character we all love. There are many things that can be done to help businesses in the off-season that will actually improve their viability and the quality of life in town. Development isn't inherently bad. But we should not sell off our future, or our children's future, to outsiders who care nothing for our town.

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

Climate change is the most pressing issue we face. Maintaining the quality of our aquifers is another.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Angela J. Jalbert
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful? *

During my term in office, I would work to preserve the quality of life and sense of community that I have been lucky enough to know here in Charlestown over the past 40 years. I would like to help maintain what so many of us came here for, a great place to live with low taxes. Of the many wonderful things about Charlestown, I would like to help us preserve our beautiful beaches, maintain our clean well water, protect the incredible nature that surrounds us, secure our safe, quiet neighborhoods and conserve our unique, New England village charm. While I have not served in public office before, I have worked in the field of education for all my adult life, as a teacher and administrator. As the Superintendent of Schools for USD#1 in Connecticut, I have a great deal

of experience working with many different people, from all walks of life. I was responsible for managing an education staff of over 200 people, collaborating with teacher unions and working with district and agency staff, as well as local and state officials. I am a mother, lover of nature, homeowner and concerned citizen. I have been a Girl Scout leader and most recently worked with several hard working neighbors to clean up our neighborhood historical cemetery. I have worked on projects large and small, with many people or just a few. Most importantly, I love this town and will work hard to preserve and protect what we have.

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

Expanded housing opportunities could impact Charlestown in many ways. Increased population

density has the potential to compromise existing well water. We would need to thoughtfully consider and respond to an increase in population, not just temporary summertime tourists, but additional year round residents. With a limited number of aquifers that serve Charlestown, there would need to be a well thought out plan as to how we can best protect and maintain our clean well water supply. Along with population increase, we would need to consider health, safety and emergency concerns, as well as increased traffic and road issues.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

As this is such a complex issue, my plan for beach resiliency would be multi-faceted. The community should be well informed and involved with plans, issues or concerns. It is important to connect and collaborate between local, town, state and

federal entities and specialists to guide and help on these issues. We also need to stay aware of any pertinent state and federal grants and resources.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

Parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan that I support are hiking, sustainability, and reduced impact on Fish and Wildlife. Parts that raise concerns for me are the multi-million dollar cost, lighting, large concert area, bandshell and unnecessary costs.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

Reasonable development in Charlestown is responsible development that does not create the need for expensive city water and sewer systems. It should not impact the health, well-being and

safety of its citizens or create a financial burden.

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

The biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown is the loss of clean groundwater. If we lose our clean water, a massive change in infrastructure will follow that will drastically increase taxes and change the character of this town. It will create the need for city water, sewers and a massive, expensive treatment facility. That in turn, will bring about larger and larger buildings and on and on...

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Craig T. Marr
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I would like to work with the Council to preserve Charlestown's character. While we strive to maintain our quaint rural charm we must also provide opportunities for families and small businesses to survive and thrive. This requires us to strike a balance between keeping everything the same and providing managed growth via a vie more affordable housing and a business friendly environment. As a small business owner and the President of Charlestown Chamber of Commerce and the Chair of Charlestown Economic Improvement Commission I believe I have the experience and passion to help.

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

Hopefully it will make it easier to find/create affordable housing. However, we should also be aware of the fact that if we continue to fall below State affordable housing mandates that sooner or later the State will impose their version on us. Better for us to be proactive and find solutions that are right for Charlestown rather than having mandates forced upon us that may be less than desirable.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

First and foremost the Breachway must be fixed. It requires an immediate short term fix to stop the damage to the pond. Then we must support the more permanent plan be proposed to provide protection from future storms to the extent possible. The current situation has a devastating economic impact as well as the impending death of the marine life and the pond itself. There also needs to be a restriction of vehicle traffic near the dunes particularly around the Breachway. Additional measures are not in my purview but I would certainly be open to supporting measures to protect one of our most cherished and important resources.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

I support the vision of the Master Plan. I understand that within that vision there are many ideas or things that could be done. The Plan is just a list of possibilities. The important thing to remember is that many of these ideas and all of the capital expense items would have to be voted on by the residents of Charlestown. Ultimately it will be the residents that have final say.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

Since I believe strongly that without families and businesses there is no town. So to me reasonable development centers around housing affordable for young families and employees of local businesses. Also an attractive environment for small businesses. Big box or chain stores or large

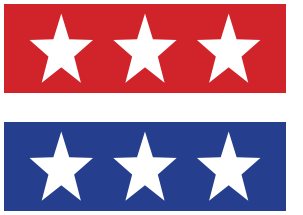
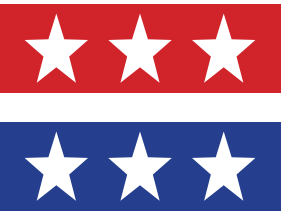
multi unit housing complexes are definitely not reasonable development or desired.

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

To be honest I don't see too many immediate threats on the horizon. If I had to pick one I would say the possibility of State mandated housing superseding our zoning and land use requirements should we not act on our own.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Charlestown General Election Candidates CHARLESTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Peter M Keating
Democrat

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful? *

I want to work to bring the various factions in our town together after a number of years of widening divisions. I want to work with, not fight with, my fellow councilmen and councilwomen to address the desires and concerns of our citizens. That said, it does take two to tango - or tangle. My hope is that I could work with like-minded people, who, regardless of differing opinions, can agree on basic facts, and work together for the good of our town. As a small-town retail business owner for over 25 years, I worked with a very diverse staff, and served on many Boards of Directors (both civic and corporate) and of course served a diverse array of customers. I've always enjoyed working with people with views and backgrounds that differ from mine. I have always taken a budget-based approach to both problem solving, and long-range planning. I also advocate a quantitative approach to management - "If you can't measure it, you really can't effectively manage it."

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

A well-managed increase in our town's housing would be an effective way to address the cost-of-housing crisis facing our country and community. However, with the new state regulations, so much of our local authority and control has been eliminated. We will need to carefully monitor our growth, even as we have much less control over it. I'm all for affordable housing, and the opportunity for future generations to be able to afford to live in the town they have always called home. But affordable housing won't mean much if the costs of dealing with maintaining (obtaining) potable drinking water and responsible sewage management become prohibitive.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

The first thing we must do is accept that climate change is real, and that it's happening NOW. The warming of the seas, and

the resultant storm activity and sea rise are no longer debatable issues. We can neither ignore, nor best, Mother Nature's reaction to our warming planet. We must work to accommodate the changes in our shoreline that will surely come, and we must do so in a forward-thinking way. So, throwing money at rebuilding/replacing what cannot be sustained is not the way to go. Shoreline homeowners will likely have to relocate septic systems, utilities and perhaps even their homes in the coming years. Our town will have to provide and maintain access and municipal services to those homes (and our taxpayers who own them).

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

The 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan seems to me to be out of step with what most of our Charlestown residents want. We want upgrades, of course - like replacing pavement with permeable surfaces. And more walking trails would be, I believe, welcomed by our townspeople. But because our precious park is located directly adjacent to the Ninigret

Wildlife Refuge, and because so many residents enjoy our dark skies, I would not welcome disruptive development of this natural, and recreational jewel. I'm particularly concerned about incremental increases in evening light and noise pollution. These impact the quality of life for area property owners, the nearby wildlife (including migrating birds) and our vaunted dark nighttime skies in Charlestown.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

Reasonable development" is such illusive concept. Any development should provide a demonstrable benefit for our town. And that benefit relates directly to our objectives. If our objectives include maintaining our low tax rate, and our small town character (mine certainly do), then we should move carefully - where we can. And we must closely monitor our growth's impact on our aims. I have not heard any of our residents clamoring for higher taxes, high-rise apartment buildings or more summertime traffic. I would say that for Charlestown, "reasonable development" is "cautious, well-monitored devel-

opment".

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

Climate change and sea rise are real, serious, and upon us. Ignoring or wishing away what is going to happen to Charlestown, - and to most coastal communities over the coming decades, will come at an enormous cost. Our natural resources (and for many the quality of their drinking water) will be challenged by our new climate. A warming, rising ocean - and climate related events, will need to be taken into consideration in many ways by our citizens and our town government. Everything from building codes, and insurance issues, to infrastructure and our tax base will need to be addressed in order to maintain and retain what we so value in our town.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Ruth Platner
Independent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I hope to get Charlestown's government back on track to protect the natural resources that make Charlestown such a unique and wonderful place to live. Satellite maps of the earth at night show Charlestown as a dark spot along the coast amid a sea of lights from New York City to Boston. That is the result of our significant areas of undeveloped land. Some of that land is permanently protected, but how the remaining land is developed will determine if Charlestown will be able to retain its spectacular environmental assets and small-town character. I have been a member of the Charlestown Planning Commission since 1997 and have been involved in many successful projects to protect Charlestown's natural resources since I moved here in 1977. My work in land conservation has led to the preservation of many of Charlestown's parks and open space properties. I have years of experience as a microbiologist in environmental research related to water pollution. Protecting Charlestown's groundwater to protect both clean drinking water and our many surface waters such as the coastal and inland ponds will be of paramount importance

to me as a Town Councilor.

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

Charlestown has allowed Accessory Family Dwelling Units for decades with little impact, but the new legislation will allow these and other new dwellings in areas where there is no environmental capacity to handle them. The town's groundwater resources cannot manage any increased nitrogen from additional dwelling density in areas of town that are designated as "lands developed beyond carrying capacity." These are areas where there is high residential density, where there is little natural open space, levels of nitrogen in drinking water wells are already too high, and contamination of the salt ponds is threatened. The Legislature was offered language that would have reduced these impacts, but they chose to ignore the science.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

Repairing the Charlestown Breachway will be important to slow the continued erosion of the barrier beach and breachway

dredging spoils could be used to replenish the beach, but that is a temporary solution. The natural movement of a barrier dune is to slowly shift inland. Where we impede that with buildings and paved roads, we are increasing erosion. We should take the advice of the current members of the Climate Resiliency Commission, town staff, and scientists at URI, and work on solutions to adapt to climate change.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

The \$39.5 million price tag is a concern. The increased clearing, new parking lots, and roads will accommodate more and bigger events and festivals. These increase traffic and noise in Charlestown, don't necessarily serve the local population, and negatively impact the Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge. Although the Master Plan has many details on infrastructure improvements, it is silent on limits on lighting and noise and impacts on the natural environment.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

Following Charlestown's existing zoning and land use practices would have been reasonable.

Our zoning, before the state legislative changes to increase density, would have resulted in a 50% increase in population if all the available land were to be developed. These numbers would change the character of Charlestown. The Legislature's actions have increased that "build-out" estimate, and the Legislature is probably not finished with their overrides of local zoning. Charlestown's zoning is not arbitrary or exclusionary; it is based on science and Coastal Resource Management Council regulations. Where it deviates from science is where it aligns with preexisting over-development that predates zoning. Our zoning is meant to protect our drinking water aquifers, aquifer recharge areas, and surface waters and wetlands. Our zoning alone cannot achieve that, so grant, private, and municipal funds have been invested in permanently protected open space that will never be developed. Simply building many more houses in Charlestown will not make them affordable. Charlestown is within 3 hours of over 25 million people. This short distance and the acceptance of remote work make it easy for people with high-paying jobs in the surrounding large metropolitan areas to live all or most of the year in Charlestown. In this market, only dwellings that are priced for and occupied by those of moderate affluence will be affordable.

Where density is increased, either by state or municipal action, it needs to be targeted at those of moderate income.

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

Contamination of Charlestown's drinking water would not just reduce our quality of life, but make living in some neighborhoods impossible. The threats to our groundwater come mainly from overdevelopment, climate change, and sea level rise. Climate change is already resulting in increased precipitation in our town. In coastal areas, this, along with rising sea levels, results in higher groundwater levels, which decreases the separation distance between septic systems and the groundwater. This will result in inadequate treatment of wastewater leading to contaminated drinking water. In northern Charlestown, the increased rainfall can result in flooding which may contaminate wells.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Richard Rippy Serra
Republican Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

Continue to provide transparency in the actions of the Town Council. I have participated in public service since I was young. The ability to be a problem solver.

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

The states expansion of ADUs can help provide more affordable housing for the elderly and family members. These units also provide for independent living for the mentally challenged,

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

The town of Charlestown has a Climate Resiliency Commission which is working on identifying

the challenges of a changing climate, how to respond to this situation and to find funding for future projects.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

The new Ninigret Park Master Plan will provide the town with a plan from which it can choose which projects warrant future consideration and with a master plan we can see how different projects will be congruent in a

master plan setting.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

Charlestown future development will be done in 1 acre, 2 acre and 3 acre lots, which has been the status quo for many years. This will allow people to develop their land if they choose and keep the town rural.

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

I see the biggest challenge, to our quality of life, is the untrue stories being circulated on social media, these rumors cause confusion and create discontent among the residents of Charlestown.

I see the biggest challenge, to our quality of life, is the untrue stories being circulated on social media, these rumors cause confusion and create discontent among the residents of Charlestown.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Peter Allan Slom
Democrat Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I would like to see continued open government in Charlestown and see that the residents of our town have a voice in local government. I would like to see us continue to have sound fiscal policies, a balanced budget and a low tax rated. We need to continue to protect of rural community nature and keep our town character intact. We should continue to work on affordable housing initiatives to allow families and seniors to have an opportunity to live in Charlestown. I would love to see us use Ninigret Park for family and community friendly activities. We also need to remain friendly to small and local businesses. I believe I bring a vast amount of life experience to the Town Council. I have been an active member of the community of Charlestown for the past 26 years. I have served on numerous committees in town, including Parks and Rec Commission, Juvenile Hearing Board, Charho School Building Committee, as well as coaching and organizing numerous youth sports. I am the current board president of the

WARM Center, Washington County's main provider for homeless and emergency shelters from South Kingstown to Westerly. I am past board member and employee at the Galilee Mission, one of Rhode Island's most respected substance use disorder treatment centers. I currently serve on the Rhode Island State Parole Board, making life-changing decisions on inmates at the Department of Corrections. I am also a proud husband and father of two boys who have lived in Charlestown since...

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

I actually believe these new housing opportunities can help the residents of Charlestown. While I do not believe in unrestricted housing growth, I do feel that the recent legislation, especially new ADU laws, will allow residents to build in-law apartments and small additions to their homes. We also need to expand our opportunities to build affordable housing in Charlestown, something that is severely lacking. As president of the board of directors of The WARM Center,

Washington County's main social service agency for helping those who need housing, shelter and meals, I see first-hand the need for increased housing opportunities in Charlestown.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

We need to protect our beautiful shores and coastline. This means we need to assess our strengths and deficiencies when it comes to our beaches, including erosion, rising sea levels, storm surges and high winds. We should also be concerned about beach roads and possible damages to our ponds. We need ensure that our Charlestown Breachway is protected, that the west wall is rebuilt, dredge the channel and allow proper tidal flow into Ninigret Pond. We need improved collaboration between town employees, state and national agencies, local volunteer and committees to come up with viable, cost-effective solutions. Our beach facilities should exceed accepted standards to withstand future storms and hurricanes. We should also improve our infrastructure connecting the roads and bridges to the beaches.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

The Ninigret Park Master Plan was proposed prior to my joining the council in March, 2024. I am concerned about false information being disseminated that the current council supports spending \$30 million on park improvements. I strongly support improved safety measures, more recreational opportunities (both indoor and outdoor), better hiking trails, bike trails, recreational fields and disc golf facilities. I would like to see us continue to host community-friendly events including Rhythm and Roots, Seafood Festival, Food Truck events and local concert and movie nights. We should maintain dark skies and not have any large concert areas. We need to look further into the proposal as there are many very good pieces to it but some that are too costly and not consistent with the mission of the park.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

I believe that we should not al-

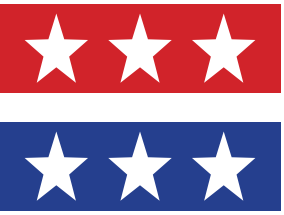
low any type of "big box" stores in our town nor do I like to see chain stores and restaurants here unless there is a good reason for it. I do support local and small business development and would encourage this. As far as residential development, I believe we should allow ADU's within reason and new housing but need to be aware of overexpansion. We really need to work with property owners to help rebuild dilapidated and blighted structures in town.

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

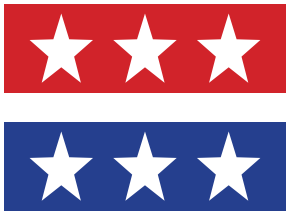
We have a wonderful quality of life here in Charlestown, but I fear that small groups will try to make it their own personal playground, restrict any type of growth, limit all uses in Ninigret Park, limit local business development and discourage young families from moving to Charlestown.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Charlestown General Election Candidates



CHARLESTOWN TOWN COUNCIL



Steven J. Stokes
Republican Incumbent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I want to continue the work the current Council I serve on is doing. In the past two years, we have kept taxes low, increased transparency, tackled various mandates forced upon us by the State, and much more. We have many issues to continue to work through in the future, like protecting our groundwater, addressing and mitigating a changing climate, sea level rise, and keeping development responsible for our rural community.

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

These changes require us to re-evaluate and adjust our strategies for the long-term in Charlestown. While housing like Accessory Dwelling Units is welcome in certain situations and more families are utilizing multi-generational living on the same property, we must always be mindful of the impacts on our groundwater and wastewater. Charlestown relies entirely on wells and septic, which require an area-specific approach when housing is being expanded by the state and ordinances of the municipality are being nullified by new legislation. A cookie-cutter approach is not sustainable for Charlestown, much like other communities. We must continue to work with our state legislators and other partners to create solutions specific to our needs

as a community and protect the homes we have while still understanding the need for housing and its associated challenges.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

Planning for beach resiliency requires a multifaceted approach that addresses immediate needs and long-term sustainability. We must continue our community engagement through our Climate Resiliency Committee to involve local discussions about resiliency. We must develop flexible management strategies that can be adjusted based on changing environmental conditions and scientific advancements, including monitoring and responding to storm impacts in real time. I will continue to support our investment in resilient infrastructure that can withstand storms, such as flood-resistant buildings and improved drainage systems. I will also promote eco-friendly practices, such as protecting local habitats to keep the beach ecosystem healthy. As we are currently doing in Charlestown, I will continue to support through matches and grants, seeking funding from federal, state, and private sources for resiliency projects and partnering with environmental organizations, universities, and other stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise. Finally, I will work to educate the public about the importance of beach resiliency and how they can contribute and provide resources on sustainable practices and the significance of protecting coastal ecosystems. To enhance beach resiliency against future storms and climate impacts we must

combine scientific research, community involvement, and sustainable practices.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

I strongly support initiatives to preserve natural habitats, promote biodiversity, and incorporate sustainable practices in park maintenance, like removing invasive species from the park. I also support enhancements to recreational areas, such as trails, playgrounds, or facilities like pickleball courts. I also think that plans that prioritize accessibility for all individuals, including those with disabilities, can significantly improve community use of the park. I also support small local events in the park, like the recent art festival, food truck, and movie nights. I do not support a 40 million-dollar build-out of the park. I fully believe in protecting our dark skies and work regularly with stakeholders to try and find solutions to their concerns regarding lighting in or around the park. I do not support permanent sports lighting in the park, and it has never been included in any draft of the 2023 master plan that the Council has considered. Most activities and events in the park occur during the day, and the night sky is preserved. I also strive to find solutions to the few events that run into the evening by working to keep any lighting minimal and preferably temporary. The Master Plan, like the master plans for the last twenty years, guides what can be done and what improvement opportunities exist. Still, much like the plans before, some parts are utilized, but most are never implemented, and the

voter always has the final say.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

I believe reasonable development considers the fragile nature of our resources and protects our groundwater while also fitting with Charlestown's character and flavor. As I have attempted in the past, I would like to see our minimum lot sizes for sub-divisions be increased to 1 acre as the current lot size is not what I consider rural in the Charlestown I grew up in. I would like to see more single-family homes on larger lots and in adequately zoned areas. Affordable housing for seniors and young families is also a priority, but it must fit in with our community. Places like Church Woods should be the layout and form of affordable units, and their siting has to be well placed within the town. I would encourage multi-generational living where we can utilize the existing housing to accommodate families and reduce over-development. I would also like to see clear and articulated standards for builders and homeowners alike so they know what is expected of them when building in Charlestown. Lastly, we must look to the future land use map and adjust zoning that align with the needs of Charlestown while protecting what we all hold dear. I grew up in this town, and the last thing I want to do is turn it into an over-developed metropolis.

6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

As a coastal community one of the most significant threats for

us is sea-level rise and climate change. The shoreline is eroding rapidly, causing a threat to the homes along the shore. The areas close to the coast are already experiencing problems with water quality and nitrogen build-up from wastewater. The density in Charlestown south of Rt 1 is not a problem created yesterday; this problem started 40 years ago, but it is today that we must address what solutions can mitigate the issues facing us now and in the future. Additionally, I equally see the censorship of dissenting opinions and the utilization of fear as a political tool as being almost as bad for the quality of life of the residents of Charlestown as any other issue. The current Town Council is accessible, debates ideas on their merit, and genuinely tries to make the best decisions for the residents of Charlestown. Fear and mistruths may win elections, but they only harm the years in between when real problems have to be addressed and can't be kicked down the road. In the not-to-distant past, if you disagreed with the politics, you were written off and ignored. That is no longer the case in Charlestown. This Council hears you; while we may not always agree, we will listen and value your opinion. Our future success as a community will need everyone's participation and ideas. Only together can we keep the quality of life we have all come to treasure.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Bonita B. Van Slyke
Independent

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful? *

I want to work to protect our natural resources, keep taxes low and affordable, prevent the contamination of our groundwater, and maintain our small-town identity—top priorities our residents voiced in the 2021 Community Survey. In addition, I want to provide honest and open government that brings our community together to solve problems and works in the best interests of all our residents. I served on the Charlestown Town Council from 2014 to 2022. During this time, our town experienced good government and financial stability. We brought our citizens together to beat back threats from outside our town; adopted the 20-year Comprehensive Plan in 2021; reduced our tax rate by almost half; strengthened the police department and ambulance service; preserved important open space; protected dark skies state-wide and converted lighting of town facilities to be dark-sky compliant; supported marsh restoration and dredging in our salt ponds; adopted innovative land use regulations that provide for sustainable development; worked to provide affordable housing; and improved

recreational facilities town-wide. I was trained as an economist and have served as an officer and member of the board of directors of the Frosty Drew Observatory and Science Center in Charlestown and as chair of a zoning board and on the board of a land trust. Three generations of my family have known Charlestown, and my father was instrumental in the defeat of the plan to bring a nuclear plant to Charlestown and in the acquisition and development of Ninigret Park.

2. Recent state legislation expands housing opportunities across the state. How do you see these changes impacting Charlestown?

New state legislation enacted in the last two years is intended to solve a most important goal—providing housing that is affordable. However, new state legislation will not make housing affordable for those in Charlestown who need it and will adversely impact our town. Charlestown has allowed accessory dwelling units for families for years, but the new legislation incentivizes rental housing that will not be affordable for year-round residents because the seasonal market in our coastal community will determine rents. Charlestown has added considerable new housing in the last decade, but the new

legislation is a one-size-fits-all approach that nullifies our zoning, which was enacted to protect our aquifers. Charlestown does not have the sewerage infrastructure to support residential development beyond what the land can support, and because our town is no longer able to say where this increased housing density is appropriate, and where it is not, the quality of our groundwater—the sole source of our drinking water and important for the health of our salt and freshwater ponds—will eventually become compromised and the fix extremely expensive for taxpayers.

3. The storms of this past winter have highlighted the need for long term planning for beach resiliency. What is your plan?

The destruction caused by storms this past winter, and the floods in 2010, are indicative of the impacts that a changing climate will have on our community in the future. In the past decade, Charlestown adopted a written Fund Balance Policy that reserves sufficient money to deal with weather-related and other emergencies, budgeted money to dredge our ponds and to plan for climate resiliency, and supported innovative work being done by town staff. I will listen to the science and avoid projects, such as the hardening of infrastructure

along our barrier beach, that will increase beach erosion. I will advocate for retaining sufficient funds in our fund balance to meet emergencies and for increasing the amount budgeted for planning for and mitigating the effects of climate change.

4. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise concerns for you?

I am concerned that the updated master plan presents the same "possibilities" that most said in the town's 2021 Community Survey they do not want. I am concerned that the creation of a very large special activities area, the addition of even more parking, and the construction of new road networks will require commercialization of the park, which residents also said in the Community Survey they do not want, to pay the \$39.5-million price tag. I am concerned that the addition of lighting will jeopardize the mission of the neighboring Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge, and important town asset, and obscure our view of the universe that inspires students to study science. Needed is a vision that enhances our town's unique character and our community's livability, including explicit standards to guide how the park will be used and managed.

5. What would you consider reasonable development in Charlestown?

Reasonable development in Charlestown is development that is responsible, that is, development that is environmentally sustainable over time, that protects our groundwater, and that preserves our rural character and small-town identity so important to our way of life and our tourism economy.

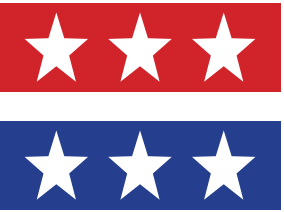
6. What is the biggest threat to quality of life in Charlestown? Please elaborate.

The biggest threat to quality of life is deterioration in the quality of our water. Our groundwater is the sole source of our drinking water and critical to the health of our salt and freshwater ponds. The biggest threat to the quality of our groundwater is development that is allowed to occur in locations where the land cannot support it.

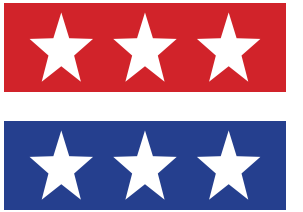
7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.

CHARLESTOWN School Committee - Two Year Term - Elect 1
Laura Chapman - R Uncontested (no response)



Charlestown General Election Candidates



CHARLESTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION

Nonpartisan



Glenn A. Babcock

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I hope to be able to bring a new sense of business, friendly atmosphere to the planning commission.

The life experiences I bring to the commission are from my many years of working at electric boat with different departments and regulatory agencies. This experience will help me to identify those areas where regulations and charter requirements, directly impact business proposals, and residential building opportunities.

2. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise specific concerns for you?

I'm not directly knowledgeable about all of the proposed master plan recommendations, other than the rumored large stadium that people have talked about. I am aware that the Ninigret master plan is only just that, a master plan that needs to be put to the voters for any future construction projects.

3. What are your priorities in planning for the future of Charlestown?

My priorities, for the future would be that the vacant buildings and businesses in Charlestown hopefully could be addressed in a manner that would be beneficial to property owners and the town. I would also hope to be able to facilitate affordable housing Options that would benefit the elderly and young families trying to stay here in Charlestown. Charlestown needs businesses that fills the needs of the com-

munity and provides entry level opportunities for our youth.

4. What is your position on open space in Charlestown? Please explain.

Charlestown has quite a bit of open spaces as it stands now. Some of the issues with open spaces are that they require maintenance by individuals to keep trails open and accessible. Historically this maintenance has been provided by volunteers. In the future, it might be required that open space maintenance become a town funded commission.

5. State and justify your position on affordable housing and residential development in general in Charlestown.

I think affordable housing is necessary in the town due to the rising cost of homeownership

and even rental properties. I realize that clustered housing may present an increase in students, and resources, municipal, police, etc. Residential development in Charlestown should not be discouraged as long as all the provisions have been met concerning our towns building requirements and regulations weighed out by the charter and the Rhode Island waste water requirements.

6. What is your position on owners' rights to develop and use their property? Please explain.

Property owners rights are very important. Everyone deserves the right to do with their property as they see fit assuming all safety and hazardous conditions are identified and dealt with. Overregulation and excessive mandates discourage home ownership in our town.

7. What is your position on commercial development in Charlestown? Please explain.

Charleston needs small businesses in our town to provide our residents with alternatives to big box store retailers. The current business atmosphere has changed dramatically in our town. We were once a flourishing, hotel-motel community with activities for people to pursue without going to the beach. We need businesses that will provide alternate activities to keep our visitors occupied and willing to return year after year, while maintaining the rural aesthetics that appeal to our year-round residents. Most people that come to Charlestown for vacation are willing to spend money to help small businesses here. We need to be a little more reasonable with our restrictions and mandates to facilitate a better business friendly environment.



Be Sure to Vote on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.



Charlestown General Election Candidates



CHARLESTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION



Nonpartisan



Carol Mossa
(Incumbent, 2nd Alternate)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

As a small business owner, I am uniquely qualified to spearhead initiatives that foster reasonable commercial development while limiting sprawl.

2. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise specific concerns for you?

3. What are your priorities in planning for the future of Charlestown?

Charlestown commercial businesses, including mine, are well aware of the challenges

that a coastal resort community undergo once the tourists leave after Labor Day. Developers that purport to attract a year-round community of buyers are woefully uninformed.

4. What is your position on open space in Charlestown? Please explain.

Preserve. Protect. Maintain.

5. State and justify your position on affordable housing and residential development in general in Charlestown.

Charlestown, like other South County cities and towns, must find and support ways to enable and establish affordable housing while protecting our fragile infrastructure. Simply put, as a community dependent on private wells, and septic systems, we must safeguard our natural resources.

6. What is your position on owners' rights to develop and use their property? Please explain.

As an Airbnb, super host, I'm an advocate for property rights. However, I am opposed to those hosts who care only about the income with no regard to our fragile infrastructure.

7. What is your position on commercial development in Charlestown? Please explain.

Please see my answer to question number 3.



Laura Anne Rom

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I want to keep Charlestown a beautiful, safe and affordable place to continue to reside here for our current residents, especially the older generation, and to keep it the attractive town it is now for the next generation to want, and to afford, to bring up their own families here. Currently, I serve on the Charlestown Charter Revision Commission and Chair of the Charlestown Republican Town Committee. I have previously worked in the Building Department in Tiverton and Little Compton as well as a paid scribe for the Planning and Zoning meeting minutes in Little Compton. I served 8 years as an elected member of the Portsmouth School Committee, 2 years as Chair. I have worked on Government Military Contracts for both Raytheon and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center. My most cherished accomplishment is raising 4 children into successful adulthood and being a part of

my 9 grandkid's lives. I have termination. I made it my mission 12 years ago to bring a dog home from Afghanistan that helped save the lives of my youngest son and 29 other soldiers. She is still with me today.

2. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise specific concerns for you?

The use of Ninigret Park has really divided the town. The updated to the Master Plan is a requirement, it was not done for major changes, and it's only a plan. I want to see the park a place where all residents can enjoy all activities, the park does not exist for a select group of vocal resident that have an agenda. There is no reason why Frosty Drew Observatory, migrating birds and wildlife and town youth sports cannot co-exist throughout this gorgeous park. I do not want to see huge commercial venues, but the future of the park, and any town expenditure for improvements to the park would require voter approval and currently has many restrictions by several government agencies for moving

forward with any growth.

3. What are your priorities in planning for the future of Charlestown?

My priority would be the delicate balance between the future growth of Charlestown with the rural town that attracted so many of us to move here. It's a tough balance, we are fortunate that our tax rate has continued to be one of the lowest in the State due to the homes build on our many miles of coastline. At this point, we do not need to attract huge commercial business to offset the affordable tax rate, but that can always change in the future. Following the law should be a priority for all elected officials, regardless of personal agendas. and the overreach of the current Planning Board has been concerning.

4. What is your position on open space in Charlestown? Please explain.

I am absolutely opposed to the requirement that all landowners are required to give a % of their land to the town for open space.

Presently, Charlestown has approximately 5 volunteers that are trying to maintain the thousands of acres that are currently open space. Unless there is a plan in place for routine maintenance of this land, I do not agree with adding additional land that requires maintenance.. Fallen trees, maintaining trails, etc. has been an issue with no solution in sight.

5. State and justify your position on affordable housing and residential development in general in Charlestown.

Affordable Housing is a complicated issue and I have not seen very much movement on this issue. The affordable Housing formula in Charlestown makes owning a home still very expensive and out of reach for many people, especially the elderly. Due to the rural location of Charlestown, lack of available public transportation and resources, all makes the balance even more difficult. I would like to see more over 55 development, as the majority of our residents are in this category and they should not be forced out for lack of affordable housing on fixed incomes. Available land is

not an issue in Charlestown, however, water, especially south of Rt 1, is a huge issue for the very near future, as well as Waste Water management.

7. What is your position on commercial development in Charlestown? Please explain.

The conflict with commercial vs rural is real and complicated. Most people move to Charlestown because of it's natural resources, open space and recreational facilities such as gorgeous Ninigret Park, however, the maintenance and upkeep of these natural resources is not inexpensive. Most towns rely on commercial development for tax relief, but due to our small population and so much waterfront property and smaller commercial properties, Charlestown has been able to balance the needs of our residents with the rural surroundings and recreational facilities while keeping the distinction of one of the towns with the most open space and the lowest tax rates in the State. I would hate to see big commercial development in Charlestown.



Lisa Marie St. Godard
(Incumbent, 1st Alternate)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I plan to respect and value the wishes and opinions of the residents of Charlestown.

2. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise specific concerns for you?

Ninigret park is beautiful and I think there are a lot of things it can be used for. My concerns are the nature be taken care of, animals are taken care of and the residents around the area are respected. And trash and residual things left behind.

3. What are your priorities in planning for the future of Charlestown?

My plans are to progress and grow as the town needs and the needs of the residents.

4. What is your position on open space in Charlestown? Please explain.

I think open space is great and is needed to be preserved.

5. State and justify your position on affordable housing and residential development in general in Charlestown.

Charlestown does need affordable housing and rental development which I think there are areas that can be repurposed/rezoned to help with that.

6. What is your position on owners' rights to develop and use their property?

A home owner should have as many rights as possible while

being respectful to neighbors and nature.

7. What is your position on commercial development in Charlestown? Please explain.

I think there is plenty of room for commercial space but again in certain areas. And possibly repurpose existing buildings. Be respectful of people and the surrounding areas.



Sarah E. St. Laurent
(Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

Six years experience on the Planning Commission have given me the knowledge and skills needed to meet the challenges of increase growth within Charlestown while protecting our groundwater, preserving our environment and character of Charlestown.

2. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise specific concerns for you?

3. What are your priorities in planning for the future of Charlestown?

2023 Master Plan is a very large endeavor and I support the plan's proposed reduction of invasive species, the increase of native plantings, the reduction of pavement, and maintaining dark skies to protect the functioning of the Frosty Drew Observatory. My concern with this plan is the potential tax burden that this project may put on the Charlestown residents.

4. What is your position on open space in Charlestown? Please explain.

My priority is in planning is guiding growth within town in a way that preserves our small town's rural character, protects our farmlands, open spaces and forests, and ensures sufficient clean water for all our residents.

5. State and justify your position on affordable housing and residential development in general in Charlestown.

Open space is a valuable resource that can be used for the protection of our environment and the preservation of wildlife habitat and should be preserved.

6. What is your position on owners' rights to develop and use their property? Please explain.

Charlestown has a need for housing for our working families. Low and Moderate housing is mandated by State legislation. One way it can be provided is through conservation development. The new ADU legislation could help to contribute to achieving more affordable housing if the house income meets the requirements.

7. What is your position on commercial development in Charlestown? Please explain.

Property owners have a right to develop and use their property as they want as long it will not have an adverse effect on their neighbors or community and is in compliance with zoning.

7. What is your position on commercial development in Charlestown? Please explain.

Charlestown has limited commercial zones. The design standards that the town is currently developing could protect the character of our villages and the scenic highway where the majority of commercial lots exist.



Colleen M. Galvin Yaroshenko

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I am hoping that my experience in design will help me as I support the planning commission and the town council when reviewing development plans and considering proposals.

2. What parts of the 2023 Ninigret Park Master Plan do you strongly support or that raise specific concerns for you?

ments to the senior center and the Frosty Drew center.

3. What are your priorities in planning for the future of Charlestown?

To help support the thoughtful growth and development of Charlestown while protecting the town's character and natural resources.

4. What is your position on open space in Charlestown? Please explain.

I support open space in Charlestown. Open spaces are an integral part of keeping the character of our town and ensures

access to wooded spaces for residents to enjoy. Open spaces also provide viable space for our wildlife and natural resources which will be crucial as our town grows and development continues. This is especially significant for the new multi house developments being considered in the future.

5. State and justify your position on affordable housing and residential development in general in Charlestown.

I appreciate the need for affordable options and would love to see a plan from the council that includes recommendations for the infrastructure needed to support affordable housing such as

accessibility to transportation and community support programs.

6. What is your position on owners' rights to develop and use their property? Please explain.

When we bought our land, we knew that there were restrictions applied, including the lines of no disturbance where we could not build. We didn't mind the regulations because we moved to Charlestown for its rural beauty (and low taxes). We absolutely fell in love with the landscape here and knew that we needed to be a part of helping preserve that beauty. I feel that owners should be able to develop, but should do

so considerably. Having guidelines and regulations ensures that everyone can develop responsibly. I know that this is an area, that we as residents, can work together to find the solutions, compromise and best practices that are in the best interest of everyone.

7. What is your position on commercial development in Charlestown? Please explain.

I support commercial growth that enhances the town, does not exacerbate the town's resources and keeps in with the character and look of the area the business is being built.



Be Sure to Vote on Tuesday, November 5, 2024.



Hopkinton General Election Candidates HOPKINTON TOWN COUNCIL



Robert W. Burns
Republican (Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?*

Keep moving projects forward and adding business to hopkinton to keep taxes at bay.

2. What could be done by the Town Council to bring the community together and encourage more civic participation in

government?

Be more business friendly. Hold more community events.

3. Hopkinton has a history of kicking the can down the road when it comes to capital improvements, which often proves more costly in the long run. How would you approach the need for capital improvements?

Be more business friendly

more open minded to different types of businesses.

4. Developing commercially zoned property at Exit 1 has been repeatedly vetoed by previous Town Councils with the help of the Town Commissions and Boards. What do you think about development there?

I approve exit 1 development if appropriate for the town.

5. Many residents are concerned that taxes keep rising in Hopkinton. What ideas do you have to address this concern?

Business development

6. What do you think is the biggest threat to quality of life in Hopkinton?

Taxes

7. Do you support the \$15M

school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

No



Sharon Ann Davis
Democrat (Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

Our town has a plan to consolidate its various departments into one building by renovating/expanding the town hall. This will provide more efficient services to our residents. Although the town has been saving money for several years to do the consolidation, we may have to also borrow a small amount via going out for a bond to cover any increase in the cost of materials. I will use my financial expertise, marketing skills, MBA degree, and six years on the job experience as a Hopkinton Town Councilor to inform our residents regarding the costs and benefits of this plan. In the past, I have listened to the residents and have found this is the best way for me and the rest of the Council to focus on and do what they want, to the benefit of all.

2. What could be done by

the Town Council to bring the community together and encourage more civic participation in government?

Civic participation in government is stimulated by empowering the citizens who come forward. The council needs to recruit residents to study various problems and recommend solutions. The council should then act on those solutions. Such actions will increase civic participation in government. Currently, the Town Council can complete the renovation of the Community Center at Crandall Field with state and federal grant money. This will benefit our residents by providing additional work, education, and health services at no cost to them. The residents will then be encouraged to take advantage of the services and feel part of an active community. The Town Council can also prioritize the formation of a local commission to have residents participate in the 250th semiquincentennial celebration of the American Revolution in 2026. By working together, it will

give residents and students a greater understanding of local history and give our community a sense of unity.

3. Hopkinton has a history of kicking the can down the road when it comes to capital improvements, which often proves more costly in the long run. How would you approach the need for capital improvements?

Based on my experience as a town councilor, I would continue prioritizing capital improvements over a multi-year plan and consider going out for bonds when necessary to pay for the most urgent improvements. We should also continue to apply for government grants to help pay for the capital improvements.

4. Developing commercially zoned property at Exit 1 has been repeatedly vetoed by previous Town Councils with the help of the Town Commissions and Boards. What do you think about development there?

I think Exit 1 is the perfect place for commercial businesses to locate. Development will require the commitment of our residents. We should also encourage our new economic development commission to negotiate with potential businesses who are willing to contribute to creating needed water and other infrastructure items as part of the cost of doing business at Exit 1. The Town Council should also investigate government grants for infrastructure for Hopkinton.

5. Many residents are concerned that taxes keep rising in Hopkinton. What ideas do you have to address this concern?

After spending six years on the Town Council, I know that the town portion of the Hopkinton budget (20%) is very lean and there are very few ways to reduce costs. On the other hand, the Chariho School District's portion of the Hopkinton budget (80%) can be contained by presenting budget cut recommendations

to the School Committee. I have presented budget cut recommendations to Chariho every year to minimize the effect of the school district's budget on Hopkinton's taxes and I will continue to do so.

6. What do you think is the biggest threat to quality of life in Hopkinton?

Hopkinton is a bedroom residential community with very little commercial property. Hopkinton also lacks the infrastructure required to expand the amount of commercial property and attract businesses. Therefore, the biggest threat to the quality of life is the need to increase commercial tax revenues.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Michael Geary
Republican (Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?*

Bringing business to our town. Possibly a grocery store. I have sat as Vice President and President of the Westerly Lions/ Active member in VFW post 8955 Westerly.

2. What could be done by the Town Council to bring the community together and encourage

more civic participation in government?

We all could do a little better on getting the words out. Social Media is great. But not everyone as access to it. Maybe a basic letter one a quarter for our folks.

3. Hopkinton has a history of kicking the can down the road when it comes to capital improvements, which often proves more costly in the long run. How would you approach the need

for capital improvements?

The last 2 terms .The TC has addressed some of these issues. Be it getting Grants or Federal money. We have made some progress this year.

4. Developing commercially zoned property at Exit 1 has been repeatedly vetoed by previous Town Councils with the help of the Town Commissions and Boards. What do you think about development there?

100% in favor of it.. This year we got the EDC (economic development committee) back up and running after a 16-year absence

5. Many residents are concerned that taxes keep rising in Hopkinton. What ideas do you have to address this concern?

Bring business to town

6. What do you think is the biggest threat to quality of life in

Hopkinton?

taxes

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Scott Bill Hirst
Republican (Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I want to keep the town moving along and addressing things that should be addressed. A community center and better town government offices are important. Improved recruitment for town boards and commissions and collaboration with the school district, the state, and federal government and organizations. I am seeking my tenth term and I have a life interest in politics. I have a command of town history, educated in political science. Those in the public interested to discuss this with me should contact me at (401) 459-8242.

2. What could be done by the Town Council to bring the community together and encourage more civic participation in government?

The town council needs to encourage more volunteerism for town boards and commissions. They can work with the public more and identify and collaborate more with community groups. The town council needs to be more transparent. Even if information is posted on the town website is not enough. Identifying talent and showing interest that all citizens matter and realize all perspectives need to be heard and presented. Council members need to explain more in the public press.

3. Hopkinton has a history of kicking the can down the road when it comes to capital improvements, which often proves more costly in the long run. How would you approach the need for capital improvements?

Bonding seems to be the best option maybe not in all cases but most. The town hall expansion has been gradually through town budget votes. I take exception to

the comment "kicking the can down the road". Because we are in a regional school district we are greatly influenced by school expenses around eighty percent of our local taxes. Working with other towns is a potential solution in some situations. I ask readers to contact me with their ideas at 4HopkintonRI@gmail.com or (401) 378-0914.

4. Developing commercially zoned property at Exit 1 has been repeatedly vetoed by previous Town Councils with the help of the Town Commissions and Boards. What do you think about development there?

Both exits off I-95 and other areas in town I favor reconsidering present zoning. However economic development will not significantly lower property taxes. Mainly it should be looked for employment possibilities and community access for goods and services. We are in a in a regional school district with two other

towns which the coastal town has a phenomenal tax base and very low tax rate. We will never level that with present potential circumstances.

5. Many residents are concerned that taxes keep rising in Hopkinton. What ideas do you have to address this concern?

The continued reliance on property taxes to fund public education is the problem. Remember around eighty percent of property taxes goes to education. That needs to be seriously addressed. That is "kicking the can down the road" not addressing school funding. We need in conjunction with the Chariho School Committee reach out to government entities and organizations like teacher unions, school committee association, and the league of cities and towns and using legislative and possible legal action to advance this matter.

6. What do you think is the biggest threat to quality of life in

Hopkinton?

The biggest threat to the quality of life is getting it under control by internal and external forces. We need more citizen engagement in town for one thing. Various volunteer positions are vacant. The town needs help! On the school bond I selected yes but I may vote no. I had to make a choice for the survey. Apathy as well as people focused on their everyday lives is a problem with quality of life. Chariho consumes a phenomenal amount of our financial resources which impacts virtually everything we do. Leaders need to lead and speak as well as think but listen also.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes



Edwin W. James
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

To bring a better tax base to the town some residents are struggling to stay in homes they have lived in for decades. I'm a former town moderator and current planning board member. I've been a mechanic/shop foreman for 35 years, overseeing day to day operations managing parts ,supplies and keeping shop overhead costs to a minimum.

2. What could be done by the Town Council to bring the community together and encourage more civic participation in government?

To be more engaged with the residents to better inform them of what's going on in town. Possible a community center or seasonal events held at Crandall field.

3. Hopkinton has a history of kicking the can down the road when it comes to capital improvements, which often proves more costly in the long run. How

would you approach the need for capital improvements?

You have to start at the root of the problem as to who has been kicking the can on capital improvements. If you're not part of the solution you're part of the problem.

4. Developing commercially zoned property at Exit 1 has been repeatedly vetoed by previous Town Councils with the help of the Town Commissions and Boards. What do you think about development there?

It needs to happen, Hopkinton needs the tax revenue to help with the rising cost of education, DPW and law enforcement.

5. Many residents are concerned that taxes keep rising in Hopkinton. What ideas do you have to address this concern?

Be business friendly, we can still keep the rural charm while allowing companies to set up shop in Hopkinton. The Hopkinton business park is one of the largest tax generators for the town and most people don't even know it's

their.

6. What do you think is the biggest threat to quality of life in Hopkinton?

The rising cost of taxes with no tax base to support it.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

No.

Jasmine Roy - R (no response)



Hopkinton General Election Candidates



HOPKINTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Gregory Avedisian
Democrat

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

The most urgent and pressing needs facing the CHARIHO School District are the district's aging facilities. The newest elementary school was built in 1965. While the need is urgent, we owe it to the taxpayers to put forward a capital improvement plan that is fiscally responsible both in the short and long term. With the failure of the bond to replace all of CHARIHO'S elementary schools, the district will be forced to continue to implement the Band-Aid approach. A longer-term capital improvement plan must be developed for all the district facilities, including the high school and the middle school.

I have been a resident of CHARIHO for over 25 years. During that time I have served as a volunteer soccer coach, a Scouting of America leader, and a member of the Charlestown Elementary School Improvement team. I served on the CHARIHO School Committee while resident of Charlestown and an additional three terms on the Charlestown Town Council. While holding elected office Charlestown completed construction of its Police station and beach facilities and the school district completed its high school renovation. Most recently, I served as Chairperson of the CHARIHO Building Committee, bringing my nearly 30 years of experience in the construction industry as a business owner and project manager to support responsible fiscal decision-making. My career and community experience position me to help Hopkinton and CHARIHO develop a fiscally responsible capital improvement plan that will serve the needs of the district now and in the future.

2. How do you propose paying for the needed improvements

to our elementary schools, now that the opportunity has passed to receive 81% State reimbursement for new school construction?

The district's maintenance and capital improvement budget is baked into the annual budget as are the budget line items for administration, curriculum, and teacher salaries. The formula and mechanism for funding capital improvements is the same. School districts in the state either pay for them from the maintenance or capital improvement line items in the budget or they go to bond or some combination of both. I believe the building plan for the 3 new elementary schools for which CHARIHO would have qualified for an 81% reimbursement was over the long term the best and most affordable options and I believe that it did not pass because the voters did not have all the information needed to make an informed decision. The school committee had to rush to get the bond on the ballot in order to qualify for the 81% state reimbursement and did not have enough time to provide the voters with all the information to make an informed decision. A situation made worse by those who were opposed to any additional spending and scared voters with inaccurate information. I think we already have the foundations of a good building plan that can be revised and re-presented to the voters. We don't have to rush to get it on the ballot and we will still qualify for 61% reimbursement. The method of paying is the same. What we need to do is take the time to inform the taxpayers and let them make an informed decision.

3. When it comes to developing K-12 curriculum, what do you think is the most critical consideration?

When developing a K-12 curriculum, the single most

critical consideration should be inclusion. We have an obligation to create not only the physical space to educate the children of our community, but also the emotional and psychological support system that will allow each child to feel safe as they learn who they are and find their place in our community. Requirements should develop as the child grows, and course content should build upon the foundations set over earlier years. As the world changes, I think the curriculum should not only prepare children to test well; it should also help provide them with the skills and tools required for their success in that changing world. I would love to see curriculum that includes academic subjects, as well as practical life-skills like personal finance.

4. How do you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and books that are available in our classrooms and school libraries?

Communication and transparency are the key to balancing educators' and parents' perspectives on DEI content in the materials and books made available to students. Educators must be committed to providing learning materials, books, and a balanced, age-appropriate curriculum for all students. This includes critical subjects related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Educators' decisions related to curriculum content should remain objective and not personal. Parents' decisions are completely personal and subjective. Once educators have developed the curriculum, the appropriateness of the content of these topics is an assessment all parents must have the opportunity to make for their own children. However, one family's choice should not restrict another family's decision on what best serves their child. The only way to

achieve that balance is by maintaining transparency through communication. Content needs to be clearly communicated with families and they need to have the ability to opt out of or into certain content. Similarly, the decision to restrict access to books is a family's personal decision and should not impact others' access to such material.

5. What benefits should Char-iho provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract the best to teach our precious children?

The most obvious answer would be salary parity but given that teacher salaries are probably the biggest percentage of the district's budget it may not be one that the taxpayers can afford. Salary is just one piece of the pie. To really make CHARIHO a school district that will attract and keep the best teachers and staff I think it will be necessary to think outside of the box and to consider the total culture of our schools. As part of the total compensation package, we can consider longevity bonuses to encourage teachers to stay once hired. We can consider offsetting health insurance premiums with increases in salary. I think that when we negotiate compensation and benefits in good faith it demonstrates the positive culture of being a part of the CHARIHO community.

It will take more than just offering the highest pay and the most expensive benefit packages. Providing sufficient support staff, from teaching assistants, sociologists, mental health professionals and custodial/ facility staff all factor into making the district a place that will attract educators who will to stay. We may not be able to afford to have the teachers of CHARIHO the highest paid in the state, but we owe it to the children of CHARIHO to provide them with the best schools and teachers that we can afford. I think that the school committee owes it to the taxpayers and the

children to consider some outside the box ideas as they can be an affordable difference maker.

6. When it comes to budgeting for the Char-iho School District, what priorities will influence you?

In 50 years the CHARIHO Regional School district has gone from an underperforming school system — with such an inadequate high school facility that the students had to endure double sessions — to a district ranked in the top 10 statewide with a high performing high school. The district currently has aging schools that need to be replaced or substantially renovated. The budgeting priority for me will be to fund capital improvements while not sacrificing the gains we have made in providing a high quality education for the children of CHARIHO. While I believe having a quality school system makes us a better community, I also realize that it is not accomplished in a vacuum. I believe that the Hopkinton community benefits by having schools ranked among the best in the state. I believe that to invest in anything that would jeopardize that high quality for our students would be irresponsible. The other half to this story is the impact it has on our property taxes. I recognize that for longtime residents in particular this cost is becoming harder to bear. The district has an obligation to the taxpayers, so my priority will also be to strive for better school buildings while maintaining the same level of academic excellence with a vigilant eye on affordability.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.

Dianne Tefft - R (no response)

MAIL-IN VOTING



UPDATES

1. You must apply for a mail in ballot by **October 15, 2024, at 4PM**, either at your Town Hall or online at <https://mailballot.sos.ri.gov/>. Your signature must match your voter registration signature. You may opt in to automatically track your ballot as it goes through the counting process.

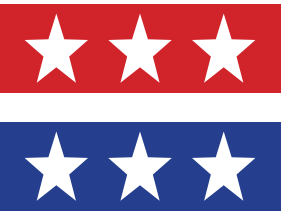
2. When you receive your ballot, mark it and complete the Voter's Mail Ballot Certificate as directed. **The signature on your Mail Ballot Certificate envelope will be compared to the signature on your mail ballot application.**

3. Return sealed ballot to the Board of Elections in your town by 8:00 PM on election day. Allow at least 7 days by mail or deliver the ballot to a dropbox in your town or the RI Board of Elections, 2000 Plainfield Pike, Suite A, Cranston, RI 02921.

IF YOU TRY TO VOTE AT YOUR POLLING PLACE ON ELECTION DAY AND YOU HAVE REQUESTED A MAIL-IN BALLOT, YOUR VOTE WILL BE CHALLENGED - THIS PROVISION IS ASSURANCE THAT NO ONE VOTES TWICE.

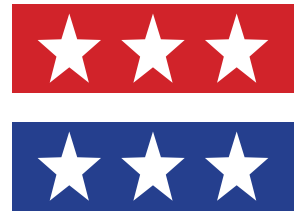
Rhode Island voters who are unable, or prefer not going to the polls on Election Day can vote by mail, but you need to act now!

Deadline to apply for your mail-in ballot is **October 15, 2024**. Good news! This year you can apply online or by paper at your Town Hall.



Richmond General Election Candidates

RICHMOND TOWN COUNCIL



Daniel Madnick
Democrat

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?*

My first goal in office is to create a collaborative environment through transparency, integrity, and trust. I believe that local government works efficiently and effectively when elected officials are cooperative and proactive. Next, I will work to repair the relationship between the Council and town staff for a cohesive town government. This creates efficiency and reduces waste. As a 5-year member of the Planning Board and current Vice Chair, I have first-hand knowledge of how vital this is and how it will benefit citizens. As a supervisor of employees with various skills and backgrounds, I strive to improve morale, value the expertise, and recognize the hard work of those under me to improve the organization. As a Councilor, it will be imperative to facilitate town improvement and development, with a focus on the re-development of Wyoming. This has been a goal since I joined the Planning Board. Development cannot be forced but can be helped along by guiding developers through the process in line with the Comprehensive Community Plan. Growth, with proper planning, is good for everyone. Development and keeping the rural character of Richmond do not have to be mutually exclusive. As a Town Councilor, I can help facilitate development in concert with Richmond's rural character to the benefit of all Richmond's residents. In summary, my goals are to create an efficient and effective local government to facilitate development while cultivating a positive work environment for town employees within the boundaries of our ordinances, charter, and community plans.

2. A major complaint in Richmond is the high tax burden. What ideas do you have to address this complaint?

To reduce the tax burden on Richmond residents, I will take a three-pronged approach. First, I plan to engage with our state government to secure additional funding for our Regional School district. 80% of our property tax revenue is allocated to Chariho,

therefore increased funding will have a direct impact on this amount. This will require working with our elected Senator and Representative. In fact, Representative Cotter introduced a bill to increase state aid from 4% to 6%. Second, I will prioritize planned development to increase the town tax base. Programs such as the redevelopment of Wyoming, improving Richmond Commons, and the adaptive reuse of Charbert Mill will add considerable commercial, residential, and recreational amenities to the town, along with an increase in commercial tax revenue. Once a stable and constructive Town Council is formed, development will follow, and the tax base will grow. Third, I plan to pursue discussion and consideration of the following ideas to promote fiscal responsibility in the following ways:

- Compost collection to reduce landfill use and transfer station expenses
- Homestead tax relief for 20+ year residents
- The return of unused non-preserved Federal and State land to Richmond
- One tax district for Chariho, similar to the fire districts. This will require school committee engagement and Chariho act modification
- Auction and reduction of unused assets by the town
- A continuous improvement initiative in which town staff are requested to determine areas to increase efficiency to decrease costs

3. What should or could the Town Council do about the empty storefronts and unkempt properties on Rt.138 in Wyoming?

The Wyoming area needs considerable attention and as a Town Councilor, I will be proactive in spearheading the re-development of this area. I facilitated the first step by collaborating on the revision of the Aquifer Protection Overlay District (APOD) Ordinance. This allows for more development opportunities while protecting one of our most important resources, our water. This eliminated a complicating factor because Wyoming, the town's primary Growth Center, sits on top of a Federally-designated sole

source aquifer. Previously, the APOD ordinance restricted any development over the aquifer that included the use of hazardous materials. The ordinance revision was adopted by a slim 3-2 vote, and those dissenting members have done little to promote the development opportunities now available with its passage. Besides the APOD, investment will be more forthcoming if traffic flow is improved through Wyoming. This will require effort by the Town Council, Planning Department, and Town Administration along with engagement of RIDOT, utility companies, and current property owners and businesses in Wyoming, but is not impossible. Additionally, the Economic Development Commission and Affordable Housing Committee must be engaged to expand the scope of re-development for Wyoming. This multi-pronged approach will incentivize commercial development, reduce the residential tax burden, and ensure our natural resources are protected. As the Vice Chair of the Planning Board, I have the experience and perspective on how to work constructively towards improving our town while maintaining the most important aspect of Richmond, its rural character.

4. What ideas do you have for improving life in Richmond?

Richmond needs a proactive approach to governance and assisting residents. With this, concerns such as the relatively high property taxes and lack of public services such as water/sewer/trash pick-up can be addressed. As Town Councilor, I will also work to address the lack of sufficient urgent care facilities in the center of Richmond. Currently, residents drive 20 minutes or more to seek urgent healthcare needs. Some of the ideas listed in my responses, while complex, will help improve amenities to residents and are worth the town's consideration. I am guided by the tenet that effective leadership requires leading by example and understanding that everyone has something to offer, along with a self-awareness to know what you don't know and seek the advice of subject matter experts. It is also imperative to create an environment in which residents have direct input to policy and growth. Additionally, Town Council members should

be more proactive in championing certain issues, running them to ground, and presenting their work to the Council and town at each meeting as a perpetual agenda item. It's time that council members take initiative beyond attending meetings and simply voting on agenda items. There is plenty of work to do behind the scenes that can be disseminated to the public on a continual basis. By doing this, Councilors will be held accountable to themselves and the public and residents will know their elected officials are working for them.

5. What is your opinion on the value of offering a free public education to our children?

To state the obvious, public education is not "free," it is paid through resident's property taxes. This is an investment for the benefit of the community so that each child can be provided the same level of education regardless of demographic, financial situation, or disability and be productive in the future. Fortunately, Chariho is one of the best schools in the state while being 3 out of 4 in terms of regional school costs. I believe that every child deserves fair and equitable education and currently, our public-school system provides that without discrimination. Understandably, there is concern over our public school system and the influence that the Federal and State government has in our classrooms. While battles over curriculum occur at government levels outside our community, our school faculty continue to focus on learning. Test scores continue to improve despite budget increases below inflation rates that limit beneficial educational programs. Hiring highly qualified educators through competitive wages and benefits, while recognizing the efforts of current staff is imperative to maintain quality. This affects my family directly, as my son will start attending RES this fall. Like my family, the Chariho school district is one of the primary reasons that many people make Richmond their home. If the public school system is undermined, it will impact Richmond long-term, and a recovery will take years. There are candidates running for election that seek to undermine the school, which will reverberate for years to come. Please consider your School

Committee votes carefully.

6. Many citizens are concerned that the Richmond Town Council conduct is frequently contentious. What do you see as the major cause of such vitriol and how would you manage it?

Dysfunction, disrespect, and lack of constructive input during debates regarding policy decisions on the Town Council has been constant since I moved to Richmond in 2016. The primary factor is elected officials acting for self-interests, arrogance, or the motive of consolidating power. This prevents the Council from fulfilling their maximum potential and working productively. The Town Council needs to work with the respective boards and commissions to move our town forward, make decisions in the best interest of the town, and implement the Comprehensive Community Plan. Electing Town Council members that have the best interest of Richmond as their objective is crucial. Change has to come first and foremost from the voter. It is essential to elect officials that have the best interests of Richmond at heart. It simply cannot be about reducing the tax rate by any means possible. Also, it takes electing officials that believe in compromise. When elected, I will encourage the Town Council members to read the book "Crucial Conversations". This will assist members in learning how to have respectful and constructive dialogue that involves sensitive topics and differing opinions. It is important that the Council have disagreements and reach a compromise while valuing the varied perspectives of each other. This will streamline decision making in the best interest of Richmond. Again, I believe that effective leadership requires leading by example, and I will behave with integrity to set the tone on the Council; however, I will call out poor behavior.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



James H. Palmisciano
Democrat

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?*

During my term in office, I intend to be part of a council who will work together collaboratively for the benefit of all Richmond residents. Having the right team in place will enable us to achieve great things over the next two years. I would like to see increased business investment and development in our designated development zones to bring additional tax revenue to the town. In doing so, we will see the replacement of blighted or neglected storefronts with new locations. Let's work with our State and Federal elected officials to seek additional support for local small businesses to expand and grow. I want to rebrand Richmond as a destination, not simply as an exit. I have over 20 years' experience working for a Fortune 500 global corporation, partnering with senior executives across the globe daily to seek their collaboration and commitment for the initiatives I am driving. I would bring this experience to Richmond in my role as a council person, working to position Richmond in the best light to attract investment. I have previously served on the Richmond Economic Development Commission, as well as served as council vice president from 2020 - 2022. I know how to work with a diverse team of individuals, leading them to a common goal and ensuring we gain consensus and commitment. This is what Richmond needs now more than ever.

2. A major complaint in Richmond is the high tax burden. What ideas do you have to address this complaint?

We all love Richmond for its natural beauty and rural character. I acknowledge that the money invested in Chariho from Rich-

mond's budget is a large piece, but it is just that - an investment. To offset this line item, we need more commercial activity to increase collected revenues, not slash the school budget of a high-performing school system. We need to look at innovative solutions to stimulate economic growth and alleviate our tax challenges. We can do more to encourage the development of diverse economic sectors such as agribusiness, eco-tourism, light industry, and outdoor recreation. We could have the opportunity to partner with the University of Rhode Island on many of these initiatives. These potential new revenue streams will also bring job opportunities. All of this to reduce the reliance on property taxes. I believe we could also be working with our State and Federal partners to establish business incubators in Richmond to support local entrepreneurs and small businesses and attract external investment. We have a town center in disrepair. We need business development and infrastructure upgrades (sidewalks, streetlamps, better curb cuts) to bring people into our business district to spend time and money. I want people to be proud to stroll through the Wyoming district. These ideas can only come to fruition by electing public servants willing to innovate, experiment and move forward.

3. What should or could the Town Council do about the empty storefronts and unkempt properties on Rt.138 in Wyoming?

My answers bleed into one another, but from the questions one can tell these are critical issues for our town. To attract business to our town, we need to have a business infrastructure climate within which a commercial business owner would want to invest. Who wants to start their new small business next to an abandoned storefront or in the vicinity of a

pothole filled parking lot? The town council can help to create the climate to drive business investment and a town center revival. This will have a cascade effect on business throughout our Wyoming development zone. Let's engage with property and business owners in the right way - with trust, transparency and with a strategic vision for our town. There are State and Federal resources available to help us - we just need the right people who are willing to work together.

4. What ideas do you have for improving life in Richmond?

There are many ideas that I have for improving the overall quality of life in Richmond. One of the first would be to work with the town administrator and council to see the completion of the community space designated at #4 Richmond Townhouse Road. This multi-use space with pavilion and activity courts has been partially funded by grants, and I would want to secure additional grant funding to see it come to fruition in my first year. Parks and other such locations to gather have been a continued request from residents who want recreational sites to promote social interaction and physical activity. A second idea would be tied to the economic investment in Richmond referenced in my other answers. Many residents have expressed disdain for their grocery options in town, and the associated cost. Competition brings better prices for the consumer and forces a higher level of quality and service. I would like to see a viable physical location be made available for a large grocery chain to have a presence in Richmond. The town council cannot make a business come to Richmond, but there are roles they can play in creating the business climate that is not present today. This will take hard work, negotiation, and partnership, all of which I am ready to get started on. I have other ideas on civic engagement,

infrastructure, and local cultural programs, but I have promised to keep my response under the 250 words limit.

5. What is your opinion on the value of offering a free public education to our children?

In a recent Facebook post from my campaign page (Jim Palmisciano for Richmond Town Council), I referred to a quote from Benjamin Franklin which reads "an investment in knowledge pays the best interest." As a parent of two CHARIHO students (7th grade & 12th), I could not be more pleased with the quality of the education that is afforded to them and all students in the district. Having travelled around the world in my professional career, I have seen first-hand the value that many countries place on education. To stay competitive in this global economy, we need to tap into the potential of every next generation student. In fact, I see high quality public education as a matter of national security. We as a country need to ensure that our future leaders, scientists, inventors, and entrepreneurs are not missed. We also need to ensure the optimal learning environment for our children, which is not 35+ student class sizes, limited resources, outdated technology, and level funded budgets. I would like to see more State and Federal aid allocated to public education and decrease the conundrum of funding education vs. high taxes. It is a great opportunity to have our voices heard with both District 39 State Representative Megan Cotter sitting on the Rhode Island House Education Committee, and Senator Jack Reed is a majority member of the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies subcommittee in Washington, D.C. Let's see that investment come to fruition for all our students!

6. Many citizens are con-

cerned that the Richmond Town Council conduct is frequently contentious. What do you see as the major cause of such vitriol and how would you manage it?

Former US Secretary of State Colin Powell once said "...never lose sight of the need to reach out and talk to other people who don't share your view. Listen to them and see if you can find a way to compromise." In my opinion this is a lost art which is in desperate need today across our political landscape. The elected council is a group of five individuals, not just one. If you enter that chamber assuming that your idea is the best and only you can determine the direction of the town, then you are indeed doomed to failure and will ensure gridlock. This problem plagues the current Richmond town council and drives many of those "memorable moments". I know this from experience having been the VP of the Richmond town council from 2020 - 2022. Our council suffered from similar divisions, and I often championed the role as the voice of compromise. This enabled us to get work done, which is why the people elect you to that office. In addition to my prior elected experience, I serve as one of the co-chairs for the Rhode Island Braver Angels Alliance. Braver Angels' emphasis is on bridging the political divide to find shared values and work towards collaborative solutions. I believe the combination of my experiences will serve the town well in ensuring de-escalate or avoid the contentious nature of past councils.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



SCAN TO JOIN LWV

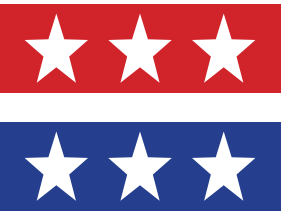


NOVEMBER 5, 2024
POLLS ARE OPEN 7AM - 8PM

Find your polling place at <http://vote.sos.ri.gov/>

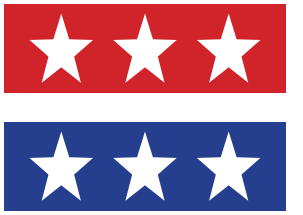


SCAN FOR VOTER SERVICES



Richmond General Election Candidates

RICHMOND TOWN COUNCIL



Mark T. Reynolds
Democrat

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?*

I have lived in Richmond for almost 23 years. I am an attorney and small business owner. I have served on the boards of the Arcadia YMCA, Chariho Youth Soccer and Troop 1 Richmond. I am currently the Chair of the Board of Tax Assessment Review and I served on the Charter Review Commission in 2021-2022. As Town Moderator I have presided at Richmond and Chariho financial/budget meetings. I will ensure that the Town Charter and Comprehensive Community Plan are followed. I will strive to make the council a collaborative group that works together for the good of the town. I will insist upon ethical behavior and transparent decision making. I will look for ways to encourage revitalization of properties along Main St in Wyoming and to assist the private development planned in Shannock. Richmond needs to better publicize its proximity to many outdoor recreational opportunities. That will bring people to Richmond who will patronize local businesses. I will identify ways to increase the amount of housing that is affordable for young residents who are just beginning independent living, and for older residents who are retired and looking to downsize. I will work to protect historic, rural/forested, and agriculture areas from intensive development and commercial solar installations. I will support Chariho's effort to improve educational facilities and programs for our students. Achieving these goals will encourage commercial development and help keep taxes stable and lessen the burden on residential taxpayers while maintaining Richmond's rural character.

2. A major complaint in Richmond is the high tax burden. What ideas do you have to address this complaint?

address this complaint?

We need to find ways to encourage commercial development to broaden our tax base and lessen the burden on residential taxpayers. Richmond must publicize the advantages to locating a business here. These include proximity to I-95, public water, and a commercial tax rate that is not higher than the residential rate. Richmond also can capitalize on its proximity to the outdoor recreational opportunities offered by our rivers, farms and hiking trails. Richmond is a prime area for eco-tourism businesses. Not only will this bring new businesses to town but increased tourism will also benefit existing businesses. Richmond benefits directly from meals and hotel taxes collected by town businesses. There is a private development project in Shannock that involves remediating contaminated soils in the former mill and revitalizing the property for commercial, residential and community use. The Town should continue to communicate with the developer to learn what can be done to assist the project. Finally the town needs to make sure all property owners are paying their fair share of taxes. As Chair of the Tax Assessment Board of Review, I have rejected efforts by The Preserve and its residents to reduce their tax assessments below fair market value. All residential and commercial property is assessed at fair market value, and property at The Preserve should be no different. I also spoke out against some members of the town council seeking a state law that would have allowed them to make a special tax deal with only The Preserve residents.

3. What should or could the Town Council do about the empty storefronts and unkempt properties on Rt.138 in Wyoming?

These properties are privately owned so the town cannot force

action, unless there is a public health/safety issue. Nevertheless the town can create an environment that encourages development and revitalization. Commercial property owners want to maximize the potential of their property by making it attractive and having spaces fully occupied. Developers are more likely to invest in a town with a government that is stable and ethical. Business owners may be reluctant to move forward with planned development when they see elected town leaders violating the town's charter, supporting cronism and wanting to give special deals to certain property owners. There are current members of the Town Council that have engaged in this type of behavior and I believe this has slowed revitalization in Wyoming. During discussion of the recently enacted aquifer protection ordinance, a town council member tried to get commercial property owners to take a side in the debate. Developers don't want to take sides, but they do seek stability in regulations. This instills confidence that a multi-year development plan can be executed. Members of the current council have tried to undermine policies once enacted and challenged the re-appointment of longstanding members of volunteer boards. This atmosphere of uncertainty makes developers hesitant to move forward with their plans. Therefore it is vitally important to have a Town Council that is committed to ethical behavior and transparent decision making, and create an even playing field for all without special deals. This will lay the groundwork for Wyoming's revitalization.

4. What ideas do you have for improving life in Richmond?

I will work to maintain a high quality of life for residents of our town. This includes finding ways to increase the amount of housing that is affordable so that residents can continue to live in

Richmond rather than moving to other towns. I will work to protect historic, rural/forested, and agriculture areas from intensive development and commercial solar installations. I will ensure that the town follows through on the plan for outdoor recreational facilities across from Town Hall (4 Richmond Townhouse). I would like to see expanded recreational and community programs for our residents and hopefully this new area will provide a community gathering space to make that possible. The town should continue to investigate options for indoor community spaces that are larger and more easily accessible than the current senior/community rooms over the police station. The Town must continue work to re-pave roads that have become deteriorated. I would also try to find ways/funding to upgrade infrastructure in Richmond to lessen the impacts of severe weather events.

5. What is your opinion on the value of offering a free public education to our children?

One of the most important things that a town does is educate its children. All children should have access to an excellent public education at no cost. For Richmond residents that education is provided by Chariho and supported by property taxes. Therefore it is important that Richmond tax dollars remain in Chariho to support our public schools. Tax dollars should not be diverted to schools other than Chariho. If families choose to send their children to other schools, then they should bear that expense. As a member of the Town Council I will treat Chariho as a valued partner. I will also oppose efforts to diminish the level of education that Chariho provides to students from Richmond. I support Chariho's effort to modernize its facilities and replace our aging elementary schools.

6. Many citizens are concerned that the Richmond Town Council conduct is frequently contentious. What do you see as the major cause of such vitriol and how would you manage it?

rural town and not necessary.

5. What is your opinion on the value of offering a free public education to our children?

If our educational system sticks to the basics, and runs its budget as tight as the town does, there is a long-term future for free public education in our town.

6. Many citizens are concerned that the Richmond Town Council conduct is frequently contentious. What do you see as the major cause of such vitriol and how would you manage it?

You have two individuals

cerned that the Richmond Town Council conduct is frequently contentious. What do you see as the major cause of such vitriol and how would you manage it?

One reason for the conflict is that some new council members came into office with an agenda of disruption. This started with the refusal to re-appoint a long standing valued member of the planning board and was closely followed by the rejection of the recommended candidate for electrical inspector in order to hire a political ally. The political ally was later terminated by the town for performance issues. This culminated when councilors ignored the will of the people and violated the Town Charter by refusing to appoint Jess Purcell to a school committee seat that became vacant. This caused an uproar in our community and set the stage for a contentious council term. When people are unwilling to listen to others and consider opposing viewpoints, disagreements are bound to result. It is also important to respect the decisions of the Town Council once they are made. With the current council even after decisions have been made, those in the minority have attempted to undermine or undo those decisions at future meetings, such as the Wellness Director and municipal court. I will urge Councilors to compromise on issues to reach decisions and then move forward to other issues. People need to be heard and decision making should be transparent. I will strive to make the council a collaborative group that works together for the good of the town.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Mark H. Trimmer
Independent (Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?*

I have already served three terms. I would like to maintain a civil and balanced dialogue among us council so that we can do the work that people elected us to do.

2. A major complaint in Richmond is the high tax burden. What ideas do you have to address this complaint?

It's all about spending. We must be modest in our spending as we are a modest rural town.

The biggest increases in our taxes come from the school budget. We must use smaller bonds to repair the buildings. We have rather than overwhelming bonds to build new buildings. The towns municipal budget is very very conservative.

3. What should or could the Town Council do about the empty storefronts and unkempt properties on Rt.138 in Wyoming?

Unfortunately, you cannot force a property owner to rent his property or to renovate his property. Capstone properties, the current owner of CHARIHO Plaza, Has been engaged and made

some proposals to renovate the property, but nothing has born fruit. Loose public comments by some counselors, have jeopardized these renovations.

4. What ideas do you have for improving life in Richmond?

I supported the creation of a human services Director position. This position was paid by American recovery act funds. I also support the recent creation of a municipal court system. Using the municipal court system, we will be able to improve the conditions within the town directly rather than relying on external legal means. I am opposed to any further solar development. Solar development is an eyesore in a

rural town and not necessary.

5. What is your opinion on the value of offering a free public education to our children?

If our educational system sticks to the basics, and runs its budget as tight as the town does, there is a long-term future for free public education in our town.

6. Many citizens are concerned that the Richmond Town Council conduct is frequently contentious. What do you see as the major cause of such vitriol and how would you manage it?

You have two individuals

running for the Richmond town Council who have a long history of contentious behavior. They have engaged in questionable, ethical conduct, Been involved with lawsuits with the town and are always seemingly trying to push forward a controversial and antagonistic and agenda. The best bet would be not to elect those two individuals.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Samantha R. Wilcox
Democrat (Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?*

My top four priorities while on council are to encourage sustainable growth, keep Richmond rural, ensure our tax dollars are invested wisely and increase civic engagement. My most recent experience has been the past 22 months on Council. Despite the drama and distractions, council majority moved several initiatives forward to help with all four of these goals. Prior to being on council, I was a member of two non-partisan town committees; the Conservation Commission and Dog Park Committee. I helped with multiple Town events and clean ups and assisted with writing the grant for the relocation of the dog park! The official park opened in November of 2023 and is no longer on an old landfill. It is by the trailhead of the Richmond Heritage Trail - a much more scenic, clean and practical location for residents and their animal companions. I continue to stay up-to-date with all committees and commissions on their projects. Prior to public service, I volunteered with many of the sports and activities my children were involved with. I enjoyed helping out with my son's teams, and when my daughter became a girl scout, I became a co-troop leader. I work as a litigation Paralegal. My favorite part of this career is listening to people and solving problems. My work has a wide variety of situations and sets of facts which prepares me to think quickly. I access many resources to achieve the goals of our firm and clients.

2. A major complaint in

Richmond is the high tax burden. What ideas do you have to address this complaint?

As a current Town Councilor, I have been taking steps to bring in additional commercial revenue to relieve our tax burden. I supported the Aquifer Protection Overlay District which added 23 new commercial use codes while protecting our water supply. In 2023 the town planner suggested we use our capital improvement funds to conduct an evaluation of the infrastructure capacity and creation of a vision for the growth of Wyoming. After the municipal budget failed that year, I supported the use of ARPA funds to complete the same. In June 2023, I advocated to protect Richmond residents from inequitable tax rates. Our Town Council voted to send a resolution to the state legislators that would have enabled the town council to enter tax stabilizations agreements with specific residential property owners within the Preserve. We were advised in a public meeting that the owners could not afford the taxes on their 3rd or 4th vacation homes and this request was to help them. I was the only vote against this. Should this have been allowed, the revenue lost by decreasing their taxes would have increased the tax rate for the rest of us. We need to invest in our town and create ordinances or guides for other investors to see the vision for Richmond. Unfortunately, the subject of Question 6 within this questionnaire has directly impacted positive progress. Investors are watching and need stability and consistency to build confidence in our town.

3. What should or could the Town Council do about the empty storefronts and unkempt

properties on Rt.138 in Wyoming?

The small business grant I championed in May of 2023 started with the idea of using a grant to help new stores get off their feet and fill vacancies. After feedback from the Economic Development Commission, we adjusted this opportunity to include existing businesses. We gave nine small businesses \$5,000 each. I believe it's important to support the existing businesses we have so they do not become empty storefronts. Unfortunately, there have been many Town Council meetings where contention played a negative role in progress. On July 18, 2024, Councilor Colasante stated in a public meeting that property owners of Chariho Plaza and the Preserve had no idea of the APOD updates. This was simply untrue and proven during the same public hearing when a representative from Capstone confirmed they were aware and they want the town to make the decision based on what it wants for development in town and they will then make their plans accordingly. The Preserve and their attorney were present at the planning board meetings. It is unnecessary and unproductive to undermine the hard work of our town planner and other town staff, especially under false pretenses. If the "unkempt" properties are violating our ordinances, this could be resolved through a municipal court. A town council is responsible for creating ordinances and local laws. We need recourse in order to hold those who break them accountable.

4. What ideas do you have for improving life in Richmond?

Our community has made it clear that they are in support of a

new senior/community center as the current location is not handicapped accessible and cannot support a wide variety of events. There are many reasons why this is taking time, however, a council open to the creation of one is necessary in order to plan the same. We also need more housing options. There are not many "starter homes" or options for downsizing for seniors. Residents who are looking to move out of their parent's homes or stay in the community as they age are sometimes unable to remain in Richmond. I moved to Richmond for its outdoor recreation. Preserving our open space is a priority of mine. I aim to keep Richmond Rural so we can continue to enjoy the stars and wildlife.

5. What is your opinion on the value of offering a free public education to our children?

Investing in education is a direct investment in our future economy and community. Free public education is essential to ensure all children and young adults have the same opportunities to be successful. We are responsible for developing the foundation for our future professionals. We all benefit from high-quality public education that is accessible to add students.

6. Many citizens are concerned that the Richmond Town Council conduct is frequently contentious. What do you see as the major cause of such vitriol and how would you manage it?

As the only Democrat on a Republican controlled council, I didn't know them well prior to being sworn in. Regardless of their past drama with each other,

they all started on a fresh slate with me. President Trimmer, Vice-President Nassaney and I have not always seen eye-to-eye. However, we remained open to communicating, we compromised, collaborated and prioritized the town in all decision-making. We developed a cordial working relationship and a mutual respect that will last a long time. Councilor Sheehan and I have also always been kind to each other. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served our community alongside them. Being an elected official is not always easy. We deal with a lot of situations in which not everyone agrees or sometimes the solution isn't perfect. I've maintained civil and respectful behavior during disagreements while being a necessary voice against unethical, distracting or disruptive behavior. Throughout my term, we witnessed my colleagues violate the Charter, hire business partners, hold secret meetings as elected officials in a "tri-town collaboration", advocate for Town Councilors to have the right to speak at public forum, and advocate for tax breaks for vacation homes. These are not priorities of mine, and they are actions that hurt the Town. My focus will remain on sustainable growth, protecting our environment, ensuring our tax dollars are invested wisely and increasing civic engagement. We need a council that is focused on all of Richmond and open to compromise.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.

- Nell Carpenter - R (no response)
- Michael Colasante - R Incumbent (no response)
- Jeffrey L. Dinsmore - R (no response)
- Thomas J. Marron - R (no response)
- Roger St. Onge - R (no response)



Richmond General Election Candidates



RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Louise D. Dinsmore
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

My primary motivation in running for School Committee is to elevate Chariho to be THE BEST school district in RI setting the standard for academic excellence. Moreover, we should be the recognized statewide leader in Career & Technical education, marketing Chariho Tech as such. With our exceptional educators leading the way, the level of academic excellence I envision can only be realized when strong partnerships are fostered and cultivated among all stakeholders - teachers, students, parents, staff, administrators and taxpayers. Clay Johnson and I are running as a team. We envision a district where each constituency comes together to invest in this goal, recognizing that we all play a consequential role in achieving a level of excellence that we've never realized before. This vision of academic excellence is the leading pillar of the Dinsmore/Johnson platform of "All 'A's' for Chariho". Our other "A's" are affordability, accountability and academic transparency. We CAN have great schools, AND sustainable budgets. As a 30-year fundraising professional, my work has transformed communities around RI. Where projects seemed insurmountable, the partnerships I forged with clients and donors led to successful capital campaigns for the building expansion at Wood River Health, renovation of Jonnycake Center for Hope, and a \$27 million renovation for Providence Public Library. I co-founded the Gabrielle Dinsmore Heart & Hope Fund, raising \$1.4 million to financially support children with congenital heart defects. As a Chariho Rotary Club Board member, I find joy in philanthropic efforts to fund student scholarships and local non-profits.

2. How do you propose paying for the needed improvements to our elementary schools, now that the opportunity has passed to receive 81% State reimbursement for new school construction?

It's misleading to imply that Chariho was guaranteed an 81% reimbursement. Had this megabond passed, it would have created a trifecta of insurmountable debt payments on top of

annual school and town budget increases. This scenario would have been financially catastrophic for Richmond & Hopkinton taxpayers on fixed incomes and families barely making ends meet. Many districts implemented their capital improvement plans over multi-year periods. Chariho decided to rush this plan in under 90 days. The Necessity for Building Subcommittee and Superintendent moved this forward without meaningful community consensus-building. Each bond presentation made by the Superintendent offered financials which often changed. The district eventually submitted the application on the very last day it was due. Chariho had years to develop a thoughtful, responsible plan, years to make their case, years to forge relationships with voters, not just the voters who have children in the district. Instead, Chariho's plan was rushed and unrealistic in thinking 3 schools could be completed in 5 years. The voters ultimately concluded that the scenarios hardly "cost the same".

The district should identify a prioritized list of elementary school improvements and utilize the \$2.3 million annually, included in the existing budget, required by RIDE, to address each priority one at a time. We should invest in marketing the Chariho Tech success story to attract more in and out-of-district students as a revenue stream. Attracting 20 more out-of-district students could realize up to \$400,000 in tuition revenue, reducing the local tax burden by same amount.

3. When it comes to developing K-12 curriculum, what do you think is the most critical consideration?

Broadly, considerations in developing K-12 curriculum are that it be student-centered, support the learning abilities of each student (differentiation), include content that is age appropriate, free from political bias, reinforces civics, love of country and empathetic learning. Specifically, a rigorous focus on reading, writing and math at the elementary level will lead to a strong foundation in these core subjects at the secondary level. Because "reading is fundamental", it's my belief that reading unlocks success in the other core subjects of math and writing. In speaking with educators for input led me to the "Science of Reading" as being

the most specific critical consideration in developing a K-12 curriculum. The "Science of Reading" is a collection of research developed on how children best learn to read encompassing five pillars of reading-phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Also, New England Association of Schools and Colleges Standards for Accreditation encourages districts to develop a "Vision for the Graduate". NEASC website states "Schools are preparing graduates for a future that requires them to not only have content knowledge, but also the transferable skills and dispositions necessary for success in a diverse and rapidly changing world. For students to think critically, work collaboratively, and learn deeply, these important attributes must be defined clearly by schools, and systems must be put in place to authentically assess and give feedback to students on their progress toward proficiency." I strongly support Chariho following research-based evidence and best practices to develop their "Vision for the Graduate".

4. How do you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and books that are available in our classrooms and school libraries?

In my opinion, the national public education apparatus has injected a misguided culture of highlighting our differences versus celebrating our similarities. Parents everywhere have opted to withdraw their children from public schools choosing homeschooling and private school alternatives. Chariho, too, has realized a student exodus as parents continue to lose confidence in public education.

Academic Transparency is an "A" in our "All 'A's' for Chariho" platform. As an elected official, I will advocate for full transparency of all books, materials and lesson plans. I believe parents and taxpayers should be able to review materials to ensure they are age-appropriate and non-divisive, as parents are the ultimate arbiter of what's age-appropriate for their children.

A few years ago, I thoroughly examined the Richmond Elementary incoming 4th grade summer reading list, a list that, in my opinion, included books that were inappropriate for my son's age at

the time. One book "suitable" for a 9-year-old, planted the seeds for gender fluidity. Other books promoted race shaming. We are all individuals part of the broader Chariho community. Instead of highlighting our differences, I believe we should reinforce the golden rule of treating others as we would like to be treated -with kindness and respect. There is no place for making others feel less valued, less important or less worthy when you treat someone with kindness and respect. This important quote is what we should live by and what our schools should promote-"Be the reason someone feels welcomed, seen, heard, valued, loved and supported."

5. What benefits should Chariho provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract the best to teach our precious children?

We are so fortunate to have the best educators and hardest working staff. I witnessed that firsthand when my son attended Richmond Elementary. In every grade, his teachers/staff went above and beyond to ensure that he was happy, thriving, safe and successful. In order to attract and retain the best staff, wages, benefits and professional development must be competitive with surrounding cities and towns. We must negotiate contracts that are fair and attractive to the staff while balancing what is fair and equitable to local taxpayers. Eighty percent of the Chariho budget is comprised of wages and benefits. As part of our academic excellence platform, I would propose our educators be rewarded for reaching stretch academic performance goals. For latest RICAS scores in English/Language Arts, 66.5% of Richmond Elementary students are meeting or exceeding expectations, surpassing pre-pandemic numbers. However, 67% of our 8th graders aren't meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations in math and 62% of our 8th graders aren't meeting grade-level expectations in reading. After our performance scores are released annually, we must do better than saying "we will increase our scores." I would like to build in specific metrics-based academic performance goals that are in line with budget resources and staffing levels, where we identify a specific goal, i.e. "we will increase our scores by XX points by the end of the school year." I am in favor of financial

incentives being awarded to educators and staff who contribute to exceeding academic expectations, provided it's fair and equitable.

6. When it comes to budgeting for the Chariho School District, what priorities will influence you?

First, budgets should reflect ensuring student safety. Budgets should also be prioritized to support staff, curriculum and programs that build successful, high-performing students and programs that encourage students to reach their highest individual potential. This is part of the Dinsmore/Johnson platform priority of academic excellence. (View our platform www.Dinsmore-Johnson.com). I share the point of view that budget decisions should revolve around outcomes and student performance. The impact on student learning and achievement should be a key driver of funding. Programs that meet current community needs, like the exceptional career and technical programs offered at Chariho Tech, should be expanded and supported. We should be investing in, promoting and marketing Chariho Tech as the best Career & Tech program in RI. Programs that are not impacting student performance should be scaled back. We need a thoughtful mind-set shift during the school budget process away from "What can we cut?" to "What programs can we support that are revenue drivers and impact student performance?" It is important for the Administration to identify a prioritized maintenance list for elementary buildings, and fund those projects one by one from the \$2.3 million earmarked annually for such. We should be proactively communicating with local Town Council officials early in our budgeting process to discuss whether Town budgets will be concurrently increasing so we are all evaluating the larger question of "What can the taxpayer realistically afford this year?" We must be mindful of the financial impact of contract and budget increases because Taxpayers Matter too!

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Clay Johnson
Republican

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

My primary motivation for running is to return Chariho to the people of the district. What do I mean by that? I believe that all stakeholders should have the opportunity to be involved in district decisions: parents, students, teachers, administration, elected officials, and taxpayers. There has been an effort to exclude stakeholders without children at Chariho, while still expecting those same people to fund the district and have limited say in the curriculum, performance, or strategic direction of the schools. A community school functions best when it has involvement and buy-in from the whole community. Louise Dinsmore and I are running as a team. We believe, with everybody involved, we will ensure that performance improves, budgets are affordable, and bullying is exposed and addressed. With the current \$70 million dollar budget, Chariho can be the premiere school district in the state. With curriculum available for everybody to see, we will ensure that we will be teaching skills to be successful in life while avoiding divisive ideological teachings. A rigorous reading, writing, and math curriculum will teach critical and transferable skills. My background includes a BS in electrical engineering and an MBA. My wife and I have run a very popular and successful preschool for 18 years, so I have experience serving families as customers in a school. I have served on the board of four local organizations helping them become more relevant and impactful in the community. I seek to be your voice on the Chariho school committee.

2. How do you propose paying for the needed improvements to our elementary schools, now that the opportunity has passed to receive 81% State reimbursement for new school construction?

reimbursement for new school construction?

Because of our regional status there continues to be opportunities for significant reimbursement. Most towns considering a \$150 million dollar bond discussed it over years. The Chariho administration rushed this bond through on the last day the "newer and fewer" state reimbursements were considered. Together, we can provide better use of taxpayers money, your money, by planning, discussing, and vetting targeted improvements instead of reflexively pursuing any funding available. As an example, the flooding at Richmond Elementary school was one of the key justifications for the \$150 million bond; now that the larger bond has failed, the district is proposing a \$15 million bond that only addresses upgrades to the main campus. The flooding priorities in May should still be priorities today. As a district, we need to be thoughtful with YOUR money; your elected officials should be able to justify the money they spend. When special interests groups are spending significant amounts to convince us that bonding is a good idea, it probably isn't. The currently proposed bond is an important tool in maintaining our school system. The district needs to be transparent, specific, and accountable to the taxpayers when asking to borrow money. If the current bond proposal successfully passes, the installment payments should be paid out of the existing \$70 million budget. This approach will demonstrate the district's commitment to long-term affordability.

3. When it comes to developing K-12 curriculum, what do you think is the most critical consideration?

Curriculum should be designed to meet the needs of students; it should provide opportunities for learning based on a students current abilities, and through this scaffolding allow

students to stretch to reach the next learning milestone. Learning should be relevant to the students without being burdened with political bias or age inappropriate content. Great teachers are creative, engaging, and motivating. Our curriculum must leave space for great teachers to think "outside-of-the-box" and craft lesson plans that resonate with the students in their classes. Curriculum in an American school system should reflect American values. These values include community, tolerance, individualism, equality of opportunity, and a strong work ethic. We will teach skills that will help students get jobs and become good citizens. Successful law-abiding citizens will give back to their communities and enrich us all.

4. How do you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and books that are available in our classrooms and school libraries?

The Dinsmore/Johnson platform of "All 'A's' for Chariho" reflects our priorities. Our "A's" are academic excellence, affordability, accountability and academic transparency. You can learn more at www.Dinsmore-Johnson.com Long before the political class injected politics in the schools, the United States of America viewed itself as a melting pot, where diverse peoples could inhabit a community with shared values. Professional educators and librarians should not be able to override the standards set by the community. So, it is critical that there is enough transparency that families can meaningfully participate and provide considered feedback. America's success is rooted in the idea that hard work delivers results. Merit is valued, and rewards flow from performance - as an individual and as part of a team. Books and teachings must be age appropriate. Equality is a deeply held American value where we provide the same opportunities to all.

When bureaucrats seek to correct perceived unfairness, it comes with the danger of being abused for political agendas. Our K-12 schools must teach children how to think, not what to think. Our school system must focus on making our children successful by teaching life skills.

5. What benefits should Chariho provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract the best to teach our precious children?

In order to attract and retain talent, Chariho must provide a competitive wage and benefit structure. Faculty are more likely to stay and perform well when they feel fairly compensated. It is also important to create a culture that reinforces the mission of Chariho, the education of our community's children. This culture must include respect, kindness, and patience. We are trusting our teachers with our greatest treasure - our children. Teachers are important role models and leaders for the community, and the way they are treated, and the way they treat others, will be seen and modeled by students. Teachers who feel supported and valued are more likely to stay and thrive. A positive, respectful environment encourages both teachers and students to excel.

In addition, there should be an ongoing focus on innovation. Fostering innovation keeps teaching fresh and engaging. It also helps address diverse student needs. Finding ways to free up time to enable help for the students that are struggling or craft challenges for the gifted students will both benefit students and encourage teachers. A thoughtful and intentional approach that combines fair compensation, a supportive culture, and innovative practices will attract and retain talented educators.

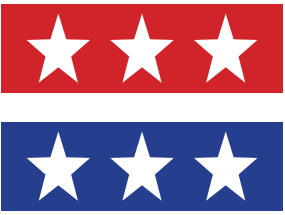
6. When it comes to budgeting for the Chariho School District, what priorities will influence you?

The primary mission of the

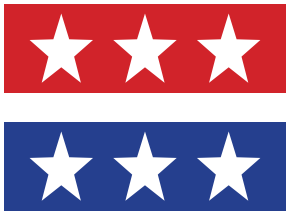
school district is to provide a safe and welcoming environment where our community's youth can learn the skills they need to be successful in life. This includes building academic knowledge and also building student confidence during this key time in life. Budgets should reflect these values. It is also essential, for a healthy community, that the funding mechanisms are affordable. Since school budgets are primarily supported by property taxes, there needs to be an ongoing discussion on affordability. The school district must take into consideration the impact on our community's residents, especially the most vulnerable. Property taxes should be fair, and any changes to property taxes should be predictable so residents can make choices on their own family budgets. School budgeting should be planned and discussed publicly as part of a multi-year plan. Being forthright and transparent in the budgeting process will increase support for the final budget. Budgeting decisions should be grounded in outcomes, particularly student performance. Programs that perform well should be expanded. Programs that are not impacting student performance should be scaled back. The impact on student learning and achievement should be a key driver of funding. It is also important for your elected officials to commit funding to maintaining the buildings we have, so that massive borrowing is not necessary. In summary, Louise Dinsmore and I believe that a well-balanced approach to budgeting will consider safety, affordability, transparency, and student outcomes. It will take all of us to get this done.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Richmond General Election Candidates



RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE



Jessica M. Purcell
Democrat (Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

I serve on the School Committee to strengthen our schools in service of our students and community. I am a proud parent of Chariho students, and an active volunteer in our schools and town. I operate my own graphic design company where I manage all aspects of the business, and collaborate with clients. Some may know that I ran in the 2022 election but lost by 28 votes. When a vacancy opened two months later, I was informed that the Town Charter dictates "... the Town Council shall appoint the unelected candidate who received the greatest number of votes for that office in the most recent general or special election." Sadly, some councilors violated the Charter and installed a candidate of their choosing. My only option was legal recourse. The Rhode Island Supreme Court ruled in my favor and set an important precedent — elected officials in Richmond have a duty to follow the Charter and serve all residents, not their own interests. I was appointed in July 2023 after a six-month delay. That experience gave me the opportunity to step up in the face of adversity and stand up for what's right. I have many specific goals, some of which include developing a policy for a student representative and liaison position, discussing the possibility of phone-free school days, and ensuring safe schools for students and staff through collaboration with local police and fire departments. I advocate to prioritize students, value teachers and staff, collaborate with the community, and protect public education.

2. How do you propose paying for the needed improvements to our elementary schools, now that the opportunity has passed to receive 81% State reimbursement for new school construction?

The School Committee currently has a running agenda item to discuss this at each meeting. I invite the public to join so we can all participate in this ongoing discussion. We were recently informed that RIDE will once again be evaluating the conditions of all public school buildings. This kind of statewide assessment was previously completed in 2017, and will be an important step in the process of addressing capital improvement needs at the elementary schools. One of my biggest concerns, and one of the reasons I supported the bond for new school construction is that our preschool program is in need of new physical space. Preschool is currently housed within Hope Valley Elementary, which is being decommissioned. While we have lost the opportunity for a 20% increase of state aid above our base rate, Chariho is still eligible to receive our base rate of 61% state aid. This "housing aid" has helped Chariho fund capital improvements at our schools, including the most recent construction of the alternative learning academy. It will be part of future projects, and Chariho could receive a 4% bonus if any projects are considered renovations. At the moment, we will follow the process to meet legal requirements and to engage the community about making capital improvements at the elementary schools. As multiple bonds approach the end of their terms, it's important that we continue to invest in our facilities, especially those where our youngest children learn

3. When it comes to developing K-12 curriculum, what do you think is the most critical consideration?

Chariho has many considerations to balance when developing, evaluating, revising, and implementing high-quality curriculum that aligns with state and national standards. The curricula at Chariho are evaluated and revised on a continual basis and involves input and participation from a Subject Area Task Force, the District Curriculum Planning Council, the Superintendent,

and the School Committee. In addition to staff and elected officials, community members and students are part of this process. The District must also ensure that teachers and support professionals receive continuing Professional Development as needed so they can meet any revised curriculum and standards. The most critical consideration is that the curriculum be student-centered, engaging each learner with relevant information that they can apply in multiple ways, offering opportunities for critical thinking, hands-on learning, personalization and differentiation, and self-evaluation. Curriculum should be developmentally appropriate and prepare students to achieve excellence through vertical alignment of concepts as they progress in their education.

4. How do you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and books that are available in our classrooms and school libraries?

I balance the expertise of professional educators and parents in the same way I'd approach any working relationship, which is through open and honest communication. Parents should always feel free to express their concerns about their children's education, or exposure to materials that may be available in the school library or classroom. The best way to do that is to have a direct conversation between parent and educator. We can evaluate books with a balanced approach by incorporating the perspectives of all parties involved. Public schools provide access to education for all children, which requires educators, staff, and support professionals to meet a diverse set of needs. Public schools have a long history of making continual progress to meet the needs of all students. For instance, the federal-level Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires schools to provide individualized education plans for students as needed to

help ensure equitable access to education. I want all Chariho students to know that they belong in our schools, and that they have the support they need to learn at an appropriate level that encourages their growth and success. I believe it's important to foster a school culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion because this reinforces that all children have a fundamental right to an education.

5. What benefits should Chariho provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract the best to teach our precious children?

Teachers and staff need to feel that they are part of a team that is led by strong, responsive, and resourceful leaders that listen to them. They should feel that they are supported by the community that entrusts them to do such an important job. Teachers deserve respect for their expertise that has been achieved through professional experience along with continual education and training. I want everyone working in our schools to feel safe and appreciated. The more support we give to the employees of Chariho, the more support they can give to our kids on a daily basis. Chariho is currently able to offer competitive salaries and benefits to teachers but we have more difficulty filling vacancies for clerks and custodians, who have lower wages. Hourly employees and education support professionals are crucial to the operation of our schools, and I think we should consider how we can improve the base rate of pay to attract applicants. If you'd ever like to learn more about the dedicated people that work within our schools, I encourage you to check out the FYI packet of School Committee agenda materials. This is where you can read through applications of incoming staff along with retirement letters that give solid examples of how fortunate we are in Chariho. We have incredible educators, staff, and coaches who find great joy and fulfillment by devoting their careers and time to our kids.

6. When it comes to budgeting for the Chariho School District, what priorities will influence you?

My main goal is to engage, inform, and empower community members to participate in the budget process. Because Chariho residents vote on the school budget, we have a unique opportunity to participate in a meaningful way every year. Every budget season brings an expectation of strategic cuts that strike a balance between student impact and taxpayer investment. I advocate for a fiscally responsible budget that balances the needs of all stakeholders. The Chariho administration is very aware that taxpayers have concerns, and are constantly making efforts to keep costs under control. However, a majority of our budget is slated to meet legal and contractual obligations, and to pay staff salaries and benefits. Chariho cannot be the only partner working overtime to offset the tax burden. We need our Town Councils to make positive contributions as well. The problem is not our successful school system, but rather, the struggle to attract sustainable business development that will provide homeowners with services and offset their property taxes. Many cities and towns with higher populations and business infrastructure impose a higher tax rate for commercial business but all three of our towns have a flat rate. As a member of the Budget Subcommittee we made several improvements to improve the budget process, which included adding budget transfers and budget updates to each meeting agenda. We will continue to have conversations with state elected officials to discuss some financial issues and challenges that can be improved at the state level.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



Karen J. Reynolds
Democrat (Incumbent)

1. What do you want to achieve during your term in office and what civic, community and life experience do you bring to be successful?

While in office, I will create fiscally responsible budgets that support teaching and learning. I will encourage and approve grant applications that supplement the budget while creating unique learning opportunities. I will advocate for continued mental health supports and resources at all of our schools. I support and encourage professional development for teachers and learning opportunities for students to put an end to bullying. I will push for vape detectors in all high and middle school bathrooms. I will continue to advocate for curriculum and teaching practices that will improve the educational opportunities of students. Since being appointed to the Chariho School Committee by the Richmond Town Council in November of 2021 I have taken my role on the committee seriously and have been present at every meeting. I attend plays, sporting events, award ceremonies, National Jr. Honor Society inductions, Artsy, and graduations, and I am continually impressed by how talented our students are. As a public school teacher for 30 years I have an understanding of what our students, staff and teachers are facing on a daily basis. As a Richmond taxpayer for 22 years I understand the concern that homeowners face. And as a parent of 3 I understand the chal-

lenges that parents encounter. I pledge to work tirelessly to ensure that our students receive a high quality education while recognizing the financial concerns of our residents. I will not be influenced by outside political interest groups. I will focus on the needs and goals of our community.

2. How do you propose paying for the needed improvements to our elementary schools, now that the opportunity has passed to receive 81% State reimbursement for new school construction?

We need to begin by assessing each building and prioritizing the overall needs of our district. With that we can create a long term plan to optimize the money available, then in all likelihood will need to move forward with a bond. This is because the cost of several projects will exceed our available capital budget, such as the creation of preschool classrooms and the building of an elementary CALA building or classroom at Ashway. That elementary CALA program is currently housed in trailers that need to be replaced. While we are no longer eligible for 81% reimbursement we are still eligible for 61% reimbursement as a regional district. The district has utilized grant funding to help create 21st century learning spaces for our students. The Chariho Director of Development will be extremely important in the coming years as we try to identify alternative resources other than taxes to fund

these projects. I will continue to advocate for the use of this alternative funding.

3. When it comes to developing K-12 curriculum, what do you think is the most critical consideration?

Child development is the most critical factor to take into consideration when developing the K-12 curriculum. The curriculum should be aligned to the grade level and state standardized tests. Chariho has a system in place to regularly review and update curriculum. This process utilizes a committee made up of teachers, department or grade level leaders and community members. The curriculum is then reviewed and approved by the School Committee. The curriculum is made available on the district website.

4. How do you balance the opinions of professional educators and librarians and parents on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and books that are available in our classrooms and school libraries?

Students, parents, teachers and librarians should discuss books available in our schools. We should not be hiding or banning books, but discussing them, listening to one another about the benefits and concerns of the topics covered. All students and families should see themselves represented in books throughout our schools. I understand that

this is a hot topic and I believe in discussing age appropriateness of materials available to students. I value parent input, they should have the ultimate say for their child(ren) read but that does not mean they have a say for all children. I welcome book discussions. It would be a great learning experience for students to see adults reading and having in depth discussions about reading materials.

5. What benefits should Chariho provide teachers and staff to assure that we attract the best to teach our precious children?

Chariho has great faculty and staff that we need to support. Our community benefits from the hard work and dedication that the faculty and staff provide. Clearly we need to offer them equitable compensation that reflects the work that they do. This is an important subject as it directly impacts the budget, but we need to offer competitive compensation packages to encourage quality teachers to apply and stay in our district. In addition to a salary package we need to value teachers and not denigrate them on social media. Feeling valued and working in a positive environment will retain teachers as much as compensation will. Chariho has a positive reputation within our state and many families move here because of our highly rated district. Similarly, teachers want to work here because of our strong school district. If we allow our schools to decline then it will

be more difficult to retain teachers and attract new teachers.

6. When it comes to budgeting for the Chariho School District, what priorities will influence you?

My first priority is the education of all of our students, maintaining teachable class sizes, with a direct focus on the younger grades. Making sure that we provide programs and classes that enable our students to successfully move beyond high school. Secondly, prioritize the safety and integrity of all of our educational spaces. Of course these needs must be balanced with the ability of our community fund schools. When cuts need to be made we should focus on programs/services that have the least impact on students and families. I will work with our state representatives to ensure that we obtain all of the state funding that our regional district was promised when it was created and additional funding that may be available. This is not an easy task, but with open constructive dialogue we can make sure the interests of our students and taxpayers are well served.

7. Do you support the \$15M school bond proposal, which will appear on this ballot, at 61% state reimbursement, to fund the needed capital improvements to the main campus?

Yes.



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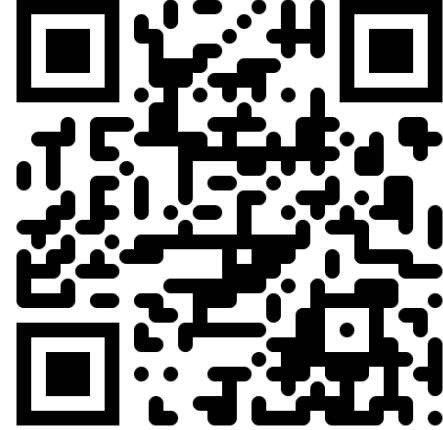
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