

SPECIAL: ELECTION EDITION

Town of Leverett Newsletter

➤ **Annual Town Meeting and Elections: April 30, 2022**

Election time in Leverett is unlike any other place in the Commonwealth.

Leverett is the only town left in the Commonwealth to elect our public officials from the floor of Town Meeting. How does this work? A few weeks in advance of Town Meeting those who have terms that are expiring take stock of their lives, weigh their happiness, and either decide to run again **or** begin to discuss with friends, neighbors, and family the unequivocal importance of civic involvement. Next, anyone who fell for said speech is nominated from the floor of Town Meeting and their political career is off-and-running. For the Town, this method results in few vacancies, occasional chaos, hysterical bouts of laughter, bursts of applause, standing ovations, memorable quotes and speeches, and the rare election of those not present (physically).

All joking aside, being on a Town board or committee is a very rewarding way to contribute to our community. If you are interested, please call Lisa Stratford, Town Clerk, at 548-9150 for more information on any of the Town boards or committees, elected or appointed.

The candidates up for (re)election are listed below:

Assessors: New mapping and GIS—brining the Assessor’s Office into the 21st Century. *Cat Ford; Sam Black;

Board of Health: COVID—Ew. Mike Fair; (N);

Constable: Makes sure the coffee is strong and voters are civil. Tom Masterton;

Finance Committee: Bean counters. *Phil Carter; Steve Nagy;

Library Trustees: Town of Leverett activity directors. Georgie Schmidt (N); Elaine Barker (N);

Planning Board: Masters of planning and working on a Master Plan. Jean Bergstrom;

School Committee: Tight-rope walking skills encouraged. Gene Stamell (N); Aaron Bufford;

Select Board: Tight-rope walking skills required. Julie Shively (N).

* Statement included below.

N not running.

Candidate’s Statements

Finance Committee

I am running for re-election to the Finance Committee. I have been on the committee since 2015, and am currently serving as its chair. I am asking for your vote to allow me to stay on the committee for another term. The Select Board and Finance Committee have been trying hard to provide high-quality services, especially education, to the town while also trying to keep property taxes as low as possible. I hope to continue working collaboratively with the School Committee and all town departments in this effort.

Phil Carter

Board of Assessors

Hi, my name is Cat Ford. I have been on the Board of Assessors for about twelve years now. I am asking for your support to continue in this position.

When I first started on the Board of Assessors about twelve years ago, I did not know much about assessing, but I took the 40-hour class and I was lucky enough to serve with members who had been on

the Board for over twenty or thirty years each. I learned a lot from them and would like to continue to use those skills.

I feel that I have also had useful knowledge and a unique skillset to contribute to the Board over the years. I have been a carpenter for thirty years, building and remodeling houses in the area. This experience has been helpful during my time on the Board enabling me to explain to the other members things like how houses of different ages are built; what is behind the walls that can't be seen but does add or detract from the value of a home; how much damages or neglect might cost to repair and how much this might deduct from the value of a house; and what percentage of an unfinished house was completed and what that percentage that might represent in actual value.

I also like math, numbers and solving problems. In past years I spent hundreds of hours outside of our regular meeting hours researching high end property values all over the state and working with my fellow board members to defend the town of Leverett against a significant law suit. Currently at the Board of Assessors it has come to our attention that property values, and thus individual property taxes, throughout the United States appear to be disproportionately skewed with higher value properties consistently under-assessed relative to lower value properties. Meaning that lower value properties are carrying more than their fair share of the tax burden for the town where they are located. Since accurately finding "the full and fair cash value" of all properties in our town is our job, the Leverett Board of Assessors has embarked on a project to figure out if this pattern is present in Leverett as well, and if so, what we can do to remedy the situation. I would like to continue working on this project as a member of the Board of Assessors.

School Committee

Jya Plavin

In 2018 my family was looking to buy our first home, and when I saw a listing in Leverett, I jumped at it. Having grown up nearby in Shutesbury, I have fond memories of walking dogs on Rattlesnake Gutter Road, visiting Leverett Crafts & Arts, and regular trips to the Co-op for penny candy, barrel pickles and VHS movie rentals. I have also had the very special experience of attending a small-town elementary school that integrates into the Amherst Pelham Regional system. I am thrilled to now have a 2nd grader at LES, and I've become involved with the school community through the School Council and the LES Anti-Racism Commitment Working Group. I have also begun collaborating with the Town of Leverett on a community-driven research project serving Leverett's elder population. These projects have given me insight into how much hard work and dedication goes into all areas of our Town government and community. My career has been in public health sciences, focused on community health education, equity, and social justice. I am also a functional strength coach supporting the unique wellness needs of parents and caregivers. I feel so fortunate to be part of this community, and would be honored to bring my skills to serve on the Leverett School Committee.

Choosing Not to Run

I have chosen not to seek a second term on the School Committee. What I will miss most is the privilege I have had working with some of the most intelligent, dedicated, and hard-working townspeople I could imagine. Colleagues, current and past, have modeled for me the meaning of true citizenship. We are all fortunate to be represented by compassionate people who care deeply about the education of our children.

- Gene Stamell

Choosing Not to Run

It has been a pleasure to serve my 1-year term alongside my fellow committee members. I've learned so much from their thoughtful and intelligent deliberation throughout the process and am honored to have worked with such a dynamic group. I've gained a tremendous amount of insight about what it takes to make our small, lovely school function and encourage other passionate

folks that are invested in the town's future to get involved with school community. Let's preserve this local gem and surround the school community with support!
With gratitude, Aaron Buford

APPLICATION: 2022 DOG LICENSE Renewal _____ or New _____

license

Name of owner _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Name of dog _____

Age _____ Breed _____

Color _____

Male (\$10.00) _____ Neutered Male (\$5.00) _____ Female (\$10.00) _____

Spayed female* (\$5.00) _____

Send check payable to Town of Leverett, business-size self-addressed stamped envelope, proof of rabies immunization, and proof of spaying to Town Clerk, Box 300, Leverett 01054. Documents will be returned with license.

Dogs must be licensed on or before April 1st! Thank you.

**Pre-Town Meeting Town-Wide Budget Hearing
Tuesday, March 15, 2021
Remote Meeting
7:00 pm**

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://www.gotomeet.me/townleverett/selectboard-meeting>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: [+1 \(408\) 650-3123](tel:+14086503123)

Access Code: 502-625-813

Join from a video-conferencing room or system.

Dial in or type: 67.217.95.2 or inroomlink.goto.com

Meeting ID: 502 625 813

Or dial directly: 502625813@67.217.95.2 or 67.217.95.2##502625813

***Attendees at Select Board Meetings must wear a mask.**

****The last day to register to vote in order to participate in the Annual Town Meeting is Monday, April 11, 2022 from 2:00-4:00 PM and 7:00-8:00 PM at the Town Hall. You may register any time before that at Town Hall or online at <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>**