

THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Abigail Hafer – Candidate for Library Trustee

Incumbent and Caucus Nominee



Events:

No events scheduled

Contact information:

Candidate Q&A - February 18, 2016

What major challenges do you expect to face during the next three years?

The Bedford Free Public Library provides excellent, helpful and knowledgeable service to the citizens of Bedford, and to the surrounding towns. Our library is so good that people come from surrounding towns to use our library, and I am often told that this is because the Bedford Library's staff is so friendly and helpful. However, librarians are professionals and deserve to be paid as such. Although our library staff love their jobs, they often leave for jobs in other towns, in part for the better pay offered elsewhere. Finding ways to keep more members of the library staff in Bedford will be an ongoing challenge.

What innovative metrics might capture the less tangible qualities that make the Library vital to the life of our town?

Simple circulation statistics provide only one measure of how many people use the library. In fact, one difficulty in assessing circulation is that books downloaded on line to not currently count as circulation according to the state. We know from our own records that ever larger numbers of people are downloading books. Including downloaded books as circulation is certainly one way of achieving a more accurate measure of circulation.

However, more things happen at the library than are counted by circulation figures. Many people go to the library to read periodicals, study, or use the computers, and don't check out books. Simply recording the number of people who go through the doors each month would help to get a better idea of how many people actually use the library. This of course would not count all our patrons who access materials on line, but it would give us a better idea of how many people benefit from using the actual library building.

In the past, we have also used library-user surveys so as to get at the very intangibles mentioned in this question. This has helped us to find out what aspects of the library people are pleased with and which could use improvement.

2016 Citizen's Caucus Statement

My name is Abby Hafer, and I'm running for re-election as a library trustee. The library is an invaluable resource for the citizens of Bedford, and the trustees work to help it remain so. As the resources for accessing information have changed with technology, so have the library's offerings. At present, in addition to printed books and periodicals, and recorded DVDs and audio books, the library also offers the use of its computers and access to the internet, downloadable books and audio books, and access to databases that are useful in doing research on line. People have asked me if I see the library as a part of the social safety net. It is that, but it is also a social springboard that gives people many resources that allow them to improve their lives.

The library is a community resource as well. People benefit from the many programs offered by the library, from a cook book book club, to weekly films, to help with tax forms given by a retired accountant.

Library use is counter-cyclic. That is, when the economy is bad, library use increases. We had a string of record-breaking years for circulation in our library. In fact, circulation may still be breaking previous records, but it is harder to tell now, because books that are downloaded online onto electronic reading devices are not added in to our official circulation numbers, and numbers of these downloads (which we do count) have risen dramatically in the past few years.

I have been a member of the Trustees, member of the Library Corporation (a subgroup of the Trustees devoted to managing the use of bequests to the library), and Chair of the Trustees. I have enjoyed all these roles and look forward to continuing to help the library as a member of library's Board of Trustees. We have two members stepping down from the Board of Trustees this year, so I also look forward to providing continuity on the board and in the governance of the library. I hope that you will vote for me as a member of the library's Board of Trustees in this year's town election.