

THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Emily Jean Mitchell – Candidate for Library Trustee

Caucus Nominee



Events:

No events scheduled

Contact information:

[Emily Mitchell's Facebook page](#)

Candidate Q&A - February 18, 2016

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

The biggest challenge facing the BFPL in the coming years is the completion of its next five-year strategic plan. This is a multi-dimensional effort with many different stakeholders, and the job of the trustees will be to provide whatever input, advice, support, and feedback we can to ensure the plan is both comprehensive and flexible.

The redesign of the library website will be another major effort during the next three years. Principles of accessible and responsive design are important for every online entity, but for the library, with its commitment to serving all patrons regardless of need or ability, those principles are even more critical. How can the library present its many program offerings in the clearest, most searchable way? What elements of the website are most important when viewing on a mobile device? What flexibility, if any, does BFPL have in integrating those parts of the website that are common to the entire consortium (catalog, databases, etc.)? How does the website serve patrons who speak languages other than English, or who need accommodations for low vision or other physical challenges? What does the current website do well that we want to preserve?

Finally, as Abby Hafer mentioned in her caucus statement, library usage runs countercyclical to economic growth. If the current rate of economic expansion begins to slow, the library will likely experience higher use, and will need to respond accordingly with increased staffing. The annual budget is always an exercise in tradeoffs and smart resource use, and in times of economic uncertainty, the budgeting process becomes even more important.

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

I'm always impressed by the breadth and variety of programming at the library, and the way so many different populations come together to take advantage of its resources. I would love to have a fuller picture of who's using the library at different times of day, and what areas they're using—regardless of whether or not they check out items at the circulation desk. Anyone who's visited the YA section on a Wednesday early-release day has seen the great mix of teens and adults working at neighboring tables, and I love watching the community puzzle in the large print/periodicals area take shape, seemingly by itself.

I'd also like to know how many non-Bedford residents are using the library. I know from my years behind the circulation desk that BFPL has a great reputation among our surrounding towns: many people visit us instead of their hometown libraries because of the service and collections we provide. With the extensive interlibrary loan system through the Minuteman network, you don't need to visit BFPL to borrow Bedford materials, but the sense of community, scholarship, and inquiry that the library offers holds appeal beyond our town borders.

I believe much of this information already exists, but it would be instructive to make it more public, so residents and visitors have a fuller understanding of the myriad ways in which the BFPL is an integral part of our community.

2016 Citizen's Caucus Statement

I am announcing my candidacy for Library Trustee, and I ask for your support in the Town Election on March 12. Many thanks to Betsey Anderson for her kind introduction.

When I moved to Bedford in 2001, one of my first acts as a new resident was obtaining a library card. As my needs and interests have varied over the years, the Bedford Free Public Library has provided for me: from baby and toddler storytimes when my kids were little, to museum passes and book sales funded by the Friends, and now to a reliable alternative work space when I need it during the day.

I have spent my career in children's publishing, first as an editor and now as a literary agent, and therefore have a professional interest in the health and future of public libraries.

Libraries are a great leveling and elevating force in society, bringing information freely and widely to all patrons, regardless of demographic, educational, or socioeconomic background. I strongly support the BFPL's commitment to intellectual freedom and equal service to all.

In the coming year, the BFPL will begin working on its next five-year strategic plan, as well as a redesign of its website, with particular emphasis on responsive and accessible design for all patrons. These initiatives require a board that is forward-thinking, flexible, and detail-oriented, and I believe I have the necessary qualities to be a valuable asset to the trustees and staff.

In the interest of full disclosure, I have also been a BFPL employee: from 2001 to 2008, I served as a part-time circulation assistant. I believe this experience gives me additional insight into the strengths and challenges of the library, from the day-to-day concerns of front-line staff serving patrons to the broader issues of policies, budgets, and membership within the Minuteman Library Network consortium.

My volunteer experience includes seven years as a warden (lay leader) at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, part of which occurred during a clergy transition and interim period; fifteen years as a trustee of the Harvard-Radcliffe Collegium Musicum Foundation, including four years as its president; and current board membership of the Bedford Citizen, Bedford Patrons of Music Students, and the Bedford Center for the Arts. I hold a bachelor's degree in English from Harvard, a master's in secondary English education from Syracuse, and an MBA from Babson.

I look forward to serving the needs and interests of the Bedford Free Public Library in whatever ways I can. I ask for your support tonight at the Town Caucus, and for your vote on March 12.