



ELECTION ~ 2017 FINAL CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

RACHEL FIELD

Incumbent and Caucus Candidate for a 3-year term as a Library Trustee

*Bad libraries build collections
Good libraries build services
Great libraries build communities*

I'm thrilled, on behalf of the Library and the community of Bedford, that we have three such wonderful candidates for Library Trustee. It's a reflection of the community spirit that is one of the hallmarks of our community. But I am asking that you vote for me, on March 11.

I have served as Library Trustee for 9 of the 18 years I've lived in Bedford, and have brought leadership, energy and creativity to the Board. I helped draft some of the basic Library policies; worked closely with staff to enhance our film collection; took the initiative of obtaining a list of the languages spoken in our schools – twenty seven, at last count – and suggested ways for the Library to better reflect and celebrate the breadth of diversity here in Bedford. I also created a task force on exterior design to make our grounds more user-friendly, bringing in new teak seating and commissioning the outdoor chess tables our patrons now enjoy.

But a library is more than a building and more than its collection. There's an adage that says: *"The most important asset of any library goes home at night – the staff."* I wholeheartedly concur.

As Chair of the Board, I reached out with a conscientious ear to staff members about issues that had been brought to the Trustees, and I suggested ways to enhance our collegial and supportive environment.

I was an integral part of creating the town-wide survey we conducted last year, and of developing the new 5-year Strategic Plan we submitted to the Board of Library Commissioners. My sights are now set on future challenges, which include:

- ensuring that our programming, services, and resources respond to the needs of our growing, and increasingly diverse, community.
- obtaining support for public art projects, including library-themed mosaics to decorate exterior walls that are now uninspiring bare cement.
- fostering closer collaboration between Library, Bedford Public Schools and other town boards – the Board of Health in particular – for the creation of community-wide campaigns around the opioid crisis that has landed squarely at our doorstep, and around the issues of discrimination and violence.
- creatively reconfiguring our space to provide more study and small meeting areas, as well as space for new technologies, as we strive to become a more vibrant nexus of collaboration and innovation.

To the above I would add that, should they be in any way threatened, I will devote myself to safeguarding both our Municipal and State funding, and will stalwartly support the principle of, and the public right to, intellectual freedom.

Two of our current Trustees came on board only last year. Should I continue to serve, I will provide an historical perspective, an “institutional memory” and a continuity that are all critically important to the Board of Trustees.

I hope to count on your enthusiastic support, and your vote, on March 11!

SARITA K. PILLAI

Candidate for a 3-year term as a Library Trustee

Bedford is fortunate to have an abundance of qualified candidates for its open positions. I am an ardent supporter of the public library enterprise and believer that public libraries are important contributors to high-quality public education. I will work tirelessly on your behalf to ensure that BFPL maintains a robust and vibrant collection. I will work to encourage BFPL to consider a broader range of activities that expose our children to both STEM and the arts, and to also consider adding events that would speak to our increasingly diverse community. I will strive to ensure that the needs of patrons drive every question the BFPL asks of itself and every change it considers. I will thoughtfully offer my informed opinion and guidance on issues relating to technology integration and the best use of physical space throughout the library. The library is doing a great job in these areas but new ideas and perspectives can always lead to improvement.

BFPL remains critical to Bedford's social, cultural and educational well-being. I believe my experience as a non-profit leader and running several long-term educational, technology-based projects for the last 15 years, will enable me to be a productive, forward looking, patron-focused Trustee.

Your vote is an important part of Bedford's democratic process and symbolic of your commitment to the vibrancy of this great town. I hope you will support my candidacy but, most importantly, I hope that you will come out to vote on March 11!

ROBIN GRACE SILBERT

Candidate for a 3-year term as a Library Trustee

Over the last week, I've been thinking about what the library means to me personally and what I would bring to the board and the community. What occurs to me is that the library has been an evolving place for me as I've moved through the different stages of my life:

When I was young and living in public housing, it was my refuge and window on the world.

When I went away to college, the library was the place I went to do research and for a quiet place to study.

After college and faced with student debt, the library became even more important to me as a place to borrow books, though I still bought books. Like Erasmus, "When I have a little money, I buy books; and if I have any left, I buy food and clothes."

When I was a newspaper reporter for the Middlesex News, I went to the library to research articles or to cover library events.

When I taught elementary school in Boston, we had a wonderful school library where teachers gathered to chat and eat lunch. But we also found time to take out books to read to our students. And of course, there were our weekly class visits.

When I became a tour manager, the library became an important center of research.

When scheduled for a major tour, you received a comprehensive information packet and were sent on a training tour, but it was imperative to do your own research and reading to grasp the social, political, geographical and historical aspects of the destination. Do I dare tell you where that research began? It began in the children's and young adult areas because when you needed to learn a little about a lot, in that bygone era before the internet, that was the place to start.

As the mother of preschoolers, the library became a morning out and a time to introduce my boys to a place that had been formative for me. During those visits, the kids enjoyed attending programs and then choosing a few books before we returned home. When my children started school, it became an after-school or Saturday destination. By the time my boys were in middle school, I was demoted to designated driver so the library then became a place to meet with my writing group or to be tutored in French – yes, I am a struggling adult foreign language learner.

Now that my sons are in college, I look for audio books for my drives to Philadelphia and Maryland. And there is the work I do for the Friends' book sales. Add to that my ongoing search for books on topics that I can fully invest in now: travel, volunteering in retirement, quilting, my beloved mysteries. It seems my time is once again my own and my relationship with the library has come full circle. It has once again become my refuge and window on the world.

My prime goal as a trustee would be to insure that the Bedford Public Library continues to be a welcoming, enriching and nurturing place for all who walk through its doors just as libraries have been for me throughout my life.