



2021  
TOWN  
ELECTION

## BOARD OF HEALTH

ANITA RAJ, INCUMBENT



### CONTACT LINKS

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## FINAL CANDIDATE STATEMENT ~ MARCH 8, 2021

I am so lucky to be running again for the Bedford Board of Health. I truly believe in the collaborative work of the Board and Bedford's Health Department. As part of the Board, I've found ways to support residents through immediate crises (the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing suicides, Vaping amongst our youth, and the Opioid crisis), and long term existing risks (protection from bio research projects, restaurant food safety, tobacco use and sales, hoarding and its mental health components, and Tick and Mosquito borne illnesses).

The overarching lesson of all this work shows that improving residents' basic mental health and physical needs dramatically improves everyone's resilience to crises. So we now have a psychological therapy referral service to make finding a therapist easier, increased access to co-pay free therapy appointments at the Yellow Building, a Food Bank that serves 400 families per week, support for the ill and elderly through free durable medical equipment, visits from our Town Nurse, and a falls prevention program.

I ask for your vote as I love supporting you and your family in living the healthiest life you can.

## QUESTIONS ~ LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

*What would you identify as lessons learned in Bedford's response to the current pandemic in relationship to the role of the Board of Health?*

As the incumbent, I learned many residents want their voices heard and do not understand how our elected boards interact with our professional town staff. This crushing, rapidly changing crucible of a pandemic has destroyed our normal lives, and we residents need our elected representatives to know how it is impacting us. While the Board has worked exceptionally creatively to protect and serve Bedford during the pandemic, it is obvious that I need to keep educating and involving residents so that you know that I am listening and working hard to be your voice during our meetings.

### *What resources will you use to inform your decisions as a member of the Board of Health?*

I use thoughtful and deliberate inquiry to deliberate on issues. I ask myself and the Board “What is the issue?”, “What is its impact on Bedford”, “What options and actions are available to us”, “What actions have other communities taken?” “What does expert advice recommend?”, “What would benefit stakeholders?”, “Who else can help us?”, “Can we collaborate with other towns?”, “What else could be true here?”, and “What is the most responsible action the Board can take?”. Emotions and “fad” solutions make easy, flashy actions seem the best route, but thoughtful, deliberate inquiry makes decisions that last for years.

### **INITIAL STATEMENT**

I’m running for re-election to the Board of Health (BOH) because I love being on the Board, and the work that it does to promote the health of and reducing injury and disease for Bedford residents and businesses.

The Board’s work covers a lot of topics and a lot of learning, and I thrive on learning and helping. I joined the BOH while getting my Nursing degree (BSN). I have a Master’s in Management, a 20-year career in high tech, and a first Bachelor’s in Genetics with several articles published in major medical journals. Currently I’m working as a Legal Assistant and working to become a paralegal, because why not?

Working on the Board requires a thoughtful and deliberate inquiry process. In every meeting I ask myself “What is the issue?”, “What is its impact on Bedford”, “What options and actions are available to us”, “What actions have other communities taken?” “What does expert advice recommend?”, “What would benefit stakeholders?”, “Who else can help us?”, “Can we collaborate with other towns?”, “What else could be true here?”, and “What is the most responsible action the Board can take?”. Emotions and “fad” solutions make easy, flashy actions seem the best route, but thoughtful, deliberate inquiry makes decisions that last for years.

This process has been helpful when a swanky lawyer from Phillip Morris sat directly behind me for a year because we were drafting tobacco regulations. Deliberate inquiry was needed during our extensive work updating our Biosafety Regulations to cover actual microorganisms that researchers currently use (ex. Do you know what a rickettsia is?). It helped during our update of the 1960 Keeping of Animals Regulations to encourage backyard farming rather than prohibit it. Thoughtful discourse is essential during monthly updates on activities of the Health Department, such as Food Code violations by local restaurants, creation of the Food Bank, Vaccine Clinics, and regular analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on Bedford residents and businesses.

COVID-19 has invaded every part of our lives. As the incumbent, I have learned that many residents want their voices heard, and do not understand how our elected boards interact with our professional town staff. This crushing, rapidly changing crucible of a pandemic has destroyed our normal lives, and we residents need our elected representatives to know how it is impacting us. While the Board has worked exceptionally creatively to protect and serve Bedford during the pandemic, it is obvious that I need to keep educating and involving residents so that you know that I am listening and working hard to be your voice during our meetings.