

✓ Voters' Guide 2017

To the voters:

The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford (LWVGH) is pleased to bring you the printed version of the Voters Guide for the West Hartford municipal election which provides information on all of the named races in one place as well as a sample ballot and list of polling places. All of the candidates received questions developed by the LWVGH; they provided answers and short biographies in 325 words or less. The League believes that by reading the candidates' thoughtful responses and viewing our candidate debates done in cooperation with West Hartford Community TV, citizens can make their own informed decision on election day, Tuesday, November 7. You will also find helpful information on voter registration deadlines and how to check if you are registered. Additional election related information can be found by doing an online search of the West Hartford Registrars of Voters.



**LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS OF
GREATER HARTFORD**
www.lwvgh.org

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization celebrating its 97th year. It was established in 1920, the year in which the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteed women the right to vote. From its inception, the League has been committed to promoting responsible political action through informed participation of citizens in government. Our mission "to produce informed voters" has not wavered over the nearly 100 years of service to the community.

We hope that you find the Guide helpful as you prepare to vote. We also encourage you to check out the schedule for the televised debates and candidate profiles that will be aired on WHC-TV many evenings right up until election day. You can also view the debates through the station's "You Tube" channel. An online version of the Voters' Guide can be found at www.lwvgh.org. Finally, we invite you to become a member of the League of Women Voters. Contact Membership Chair Libby Swietek at 860-561-2886 or lib5410@gmail.com

Carole Mulready

Voter Service Chair,
League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford

SAMPLE BALLOT

**State of
Connecticut
Official Ballot**



West Hartford, Connecticut	Municipal Election	November 7, 2017
----------------------------	--------------------	------------------

OFFICE → PARTY ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Town Council Vote for Any Six						Board of Education Vote for Any Three		
DEMOCRATIC PARTY	<input type="radio"/> 1A Liam B. Sweeney	<input type="radio"/> 2A Beth Kerrigan	<input type="radio"/> 3A Dallas Dodge	<input type="radio"/> 4A Leon S. Davidoff	<input type="radio"/> 5A Ben Wenograd	<input type="radio"/> 6A Shati Cantor	<input type="radio"/> 7A Cheryl Greenberg	<input type="radio"/> 8A Lorna Thomas-Farguharson	<input type="radio"/> 9A Deb Polun
REPUBLICAN PARTY	<input type="radio"/> 1B Ryan S. Langan	<input type="radio"/> 2B Chris Williams	<input type="radio"/> 3B Mary M. Fay	<input type="radio"/> 4B Julie Krug	<input type="radio"/> 5B Chris Barnes	<input type="radio"/> 6B	<input type="radio"/> 7B Jay Sarzen	<input type="radio"/> 8B Robert Levine	<input type="radio"/> 9B
WRITE-IN VOTES	<input type="radio"/> 1C	<input type="radio"/> 2C	<input type="radio"/> 3C	<input type="radio"/> 4C	<input type="radio"/> 5C	<input type="radio"/> 6C	<input type="radio"/> 7C	<input type="radio"/> 8C	<input type="radio"/> 9C

2017 Voters' Guide Questions for Town Council Candidates

1. Can WH afford to leave the UConn campus on Trout Brook Drive as a non-revenue producing property?
2. Without State funding, how should the town address a budget shortfall now and in the future?
3. Some property owners report an increase of 10% in their property taxes for 2107. What do you think can be done to keep increases from continuing to rise in significant increments?

2017 Voters' Guide Questions for Board of Education Candidates

1. What is the response to decreased State funding of schools? What strategies do you envision to address the possible shortfall in State funding for schools now and in the future?
2. For several years, West Hartford has been addressing the "achievement gap. Is enough progress being made?
3. Is the Board of Education's financial liability regarding pensions and compensation being well planned and managed? What effect does it have on the school budget currently?

✓ Voters' Guide 2017

Town Council

Liam Sweeney



Democrat

Liam is a lifelong resident of West Hartford where he attended its public schools K-12. After graduating from Temple University, he went on to work for Senator Dodd and at the State Legislature. Liam is now a principal at Penn Lincoln Strategies based in West Hartford. Liam is a founding board member of Active City, a nonprofit that helps to provide affordable sports recreation options for underprivileged. Liam also participates in the West Hartford Public School's mentoring program and is a parishioner at St. Patrick-St. Anthony's Church. Liam and his wife Whitney live in the Morley School area with their son, Rory.

RESPONSES:

1. West Hartford would benefit from purchasing the UCONN property as it is potentially a huge revenue generator for the town that could stabilize our taxes and fund our amazing schools for years to come.

2. No municipality could responsibly plan for the cuts in the Governor's Executive Order. Considering that, West Hartford is one of the few municipalities that has planned for what would be considered significant cuts in a normal year, which this is not. In fact, the budget that was adopted by the Town Council had a plan to cut \$5 million. Mayor Cantor, has also fought tooth and nail alongside of our State delegation to ensure that West Hartford receives its fair share of education dollars and municipal aide. If the Executive Order's cuts were to materialize, I believe the Council would continue to conduct an open and inclusive budget process that works with the community to create a budget that prioritizes all of West Hartford residents.

3. West Hartford needs to continue to be innovative and creative to stabilize our tax base. Currently, the State is structured in a way where towns depend significantly on State funding for their schools and capital improvement projects. West Hartford needs to continue to work with its residents to stay nimble and innovative to ensure it is maximizing its resources.

Town Council

Ryan Langan



Republican

Ryan grew up in West Hartford, graduating from Conard in 1995. His parents also grew up here, in Elmwood. He earned his BA from George Washington University, and his MBA from Babson College. Most of his career has been in energy efficiency and renewable energy to help improve our environment. He currently serves as the Vice Chairman of the West Hartford Conservation & Environment Commission. After working for General Electric in Connecticut, Texas, Ohio, California, and overseas, Ryan returned to West Hartford in 2012. He and his wife, Audrey, live in their "forever home" with their two dogs. Ryan is currently GM of Sales & Business Development for Doosan Fuel Cell America, which manufactures renewable energy systems in South Windsor. Ryan plans to bring his global business acumen and fiscal responsibility to the Town Council to ensure West Hartford remains one of the best places to live and work in Connecticut.

RESPONSES:

1. West Hartford cannot afford to put town funds at risk by acting as a speculative land developer of the UCONN property. Through zoning, the town can control development there. Protected wetlands and PCB contamination severely limit how it could be developed. Therefore, even if the land were developed (to create new taxable properties), it would not materially improve town finances.

2. Facing a potential loss of +\$20 million, the town should have already approved savings. School Superintendent Moore offered +\$9 million in savings opportunities for the 2017-18 budget, but only \$300,000 in savings were approved by the Town Council. This is a complete failure by the current town leadership.

3. Property Taxes charged by the town have increased from \$172 million in 2007 to \$250 million in 2017. That's a 45% increase in ten years! Yet town services have remained the same or declined. Every line item in our budget should be re-visited to find savings opportunities to improve property tax affordability, which is ranked 47 of 50 in Greater Hartford.

Town Council



Beth Kerrigan

Democrat

I'm a married mom with two sons attending West Hartford public schools. Serving a second term to protect what we all love about West Hartford would be an honor. Our nationally recognized schools, our safe walkable neighborhoods, our beautiful parks make West Hartford a desirable place to live. Our diversity in businesses, food and entertainment is a result of the diversity of the people who call West Hartford home. Affordability is critical to the future of West Hartford. As a middle-aged mom nearing retirement while still saving for my son's college I feel the squeeze of increasing expenses every day.

RESPONSES:

1. West Hartford is fortunate to have in the center of town 58 acres being sold by UCONN. This property can serve to benefit both our residents and businesses. With developers in line presenting revenue generating options to us we are in a position of strength. West Hartford's Little League and Miracle League have a limited lease on this property. Securing the future of the largest piece of land in West Hartford is smart. Exposing ourselves to the risk of unsightly, unwanted development without increasing revenue isn't smart.

2. We are fortunate to have strong voices who have a vested interest in the success of West Hartford and are committed to fighting for us. While maintaining our AAA rating we will continue to look at cost efficiencies such as combining Fire and Paramedic services. Every year the council reviews the budget line by line to find savings. Where there's an opportunity to save money we act.

3. No one likes when prices increase. This year our property tax reflects a tax increase, as well as an increase in the value of our biggest investment, our home. With a state budget in crisis we must work to preserve and protect what we have built. We must continue to work lowering expenses such as the inequitable sewer use charged by the MDC.

Town Council



Chris Williams

Republican

It has been an honor to serve on my hometown's Town Council these past two years. I grew up in Town, graduated from Conard High School and am now raising my two children, Lilia and Joey, in Town with my wife, Holly. I am a litigation attorney with Conway Stoughton also located in Town.

RESPONSES:

1. West Hartford cannot afford to purchase the UConn property. As has been reported, the property is contaminated with truly unknown remediation costs and substantial maintenance obligations that are UConn's responsibility— which should be our expectation. Would you buy a home with a known termite infestation and not expect it to be remedied first? Let's not let UConn's liability become ours. Through zoning, the Town can work with all potential buyers and UConn to ensure that the campus' future enhances that of the Town's.

2. We should work with our collective bargaining units and Town departments to become as independent from the state as possible – like we should have done during the last budget cycle. Instead, the majority party passed a \$285M budget that kicked the proverbial can down the road and – despite the state's dire financial situation - added personnel. Moving forward, we need to evaluate all programs, contracts and services to ensure that services are provided in a sustainable way. Status quo is not a good way to run a town.

3. Our Town budget has skyrocketed \$127M or 80% since 2003 – when during that same time our population has been flat and our school enrollment has declined. Our mill rate is now 41.04, putting us in league with many urban centers whose poor economic health illustrate the harmful consequences that never-ending tax increases have on a municipality's success. West Hartford's harmful exponential budget growth will only stop if we change "old way of doing things," have a compassion for residents' pocketbooks and pass level budgets

Town Council



Dallas Dodge

Democrat

In 2016, Dallas was appointed to finish Scott Slifka's term on the Town Council. Dallas is a long-time volunteer coach in town, involved in youth basketball and soccer. A graduate of Conard and UConn, he is a strong supporter of public schools. Dallas lives in the Morley neighborhood with his wife, their pre-school aged son and daughter, and their Australian Shepherd.

RESPONSES:

1. West Hartford – not the state – should control the future of the UConn property. West Hartford is a fully built town, and this is a once in a generation opportunity. The campus consists of 58 acres of land in the heart of town. It is bordered by some of our major thoroughfares.

We will need to engage in an open community discussion to determine the best use, especially considering the proximity of densely populated residential neighborhoods. Revenue generating economic development that fits the character of the town and neighborhood should be a priority. Public uses, like setting aside land for athletic facilities or park space, should also be considered.

2. West Hartford must continue to fight for our fair share of state funds. Fortunately, we created a contingency fund – separate from our rainy day fund – in case state aid is reduced, and I am confident we can weather this storm. Maintaining an excellent credit rating, fully funding long term liabilities and achieving greater efficiencies are all critical to long term financial health.

3. Due to state-mandated property revaluation, some owners saw an increase in the assessed value of their property. The good news is that this was because of a strong real estate market. West Hartford's great schools, businesses and diverse community make it a highly desirable place to buy a home or invest in property. We must continue to grow our tax base by encouraging smart economic development that fits the character of our town. We must also work to achieve operational efficiencies and fight to make sure West Hartford receives its fair share of state funding.

Town Council



Mary Fay

Republican

Mary Fay, a resident of West Hartford for 15 years, is a Financial Services Senior Executive. Mary was raised in East Hartford, graduating from Skidmore College and earned an M.B.A. From Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Mary was appointed to the West Hartford library board, volunteers at Morley school, and is active in "Save our Water". She serves on the board of overseers for Newton-Wellesley hospital, is chair of the reviewing stand for St. Patrick's Day parade, and was named a "Top Woman in Business" by Hartford Business Journal. Mary was a member of West Hartford's inaugural Parent Leadership Training Institute, and was elected class speaker. She is a member of the Irish American Home Society, Thistle Lawn Bowling Club, and is a parishioner at St. Timothy's. Married to Mary Smith; they have a 7 year old daughter, Katie.

RESPONSES:

1. Unanswered questions swirl. Not all 58 acres are developable. Demolition is expensive. The property is contaminated. Any profit if sold, UConn receives 90%. Issues need addressing prior to purchase. West Hartford controls use through zoning. Upon issue resolution, there are many terrific uses. Open space is great for part, with best fit development/revenue for another portion. Town residents must be able to weigh in.

2. Town leaders should have anticipated state cuts. We need to analyze every opportunity to trim, consolidate, and redesign unsustainable pensions and benefits. The private sector has done this over two decades ago. Focusing on key priorities allows growth, maintaining services and stabilizing taxes. We need to push back at our legislators so West Hartford gets its fair share.

3. Affordability dominates conversations. Seniors, young families, middle class, and small businesses, find it difficult to live/work here. West Hartford's expenses have risen 60% over 10 years, and taxes too. Our mill rate is among the highest. We need to find efficiencies, consolidate, and budget priorities. We need to compete with towns such as Avon, Simsbury, Farmington, etc. which also have amenities and great school systems.

Town Council



Leon A Davidoff

Democrat

Leon has resided in West Hartford since 1997. He received his B.A. from Clark University and his law degree from Case Western Reserve University. Leon and his wife, Lexy, have two daughters, Becky, a senior at Clark University and Lani, a freshman at The College of William and Mary. He currently serves as Deputy Mayor, and was first elected to the Council in 2007. He chairs the Public Safety Committee. He has been Chair/Member of the TPZ. Leon is an attorney as well as the co-owner of The Paper Station. The Davidoffs are members of The Emanuel Synagogue.

RESPONSES:

1. The decision by UConn to vacate their 58-acre West Hartford campus presents a unique opportunity for the town to explore development opportunities. The town needs to attract smart economic development proposals that are in harmony with the character of our community. Town ownership will guarantee that this will occur. By undertaking this course of action, West Hartford will remain the best place to live, to work and to raise a family.

2. Every budget presents unique challenges. My approach to the budget requires understanding the programs and services offered, finding operating efficiencies, pursuing alternatives when necessary, and working cooperatively with my Council colleagues to support budgets that are fiscally prudent and which minimize the impact on the taxpayer. We must continue to demand fairness in the allocation of state aid.

3. The Town of West Hartford, as required by state statute, conducted a revaluation of all property. This state mandated program impacted our residents unevenly. The revaluation found growth in our commercial tax base as well as residential property values staying strong. Moving forward, we must advocate for smart economic commercial growth to alleviate burdens on the residential homeowners. We must be forward thinking to find creative solutions to our fiscal concerns, while preserving quality town services and our excellent school system. We must continue to advocate for our fair share of state aid.

Town Council



Julie Krug

Republican

Growing up in West Hartford, Julie attended Morley and Bugbee Elementary Schools, King Phillip Middle School, and graduated from Hall High School in 1992. She went on to obtain a B.S. in Business Management and her M.B.A. from Bay Path University. After working in the Risk Management Departments of The Hartford and Stanley Black & Decker, she is now the Director of Risk Management for Sunrise Communities, a social service organization that provides assistance and support for adults with disabilities. Julie's commitment to the community and volunteerism knows no bounds. This includes her involvement with the Junior League of Hartford since 2006, serving in various leadership roles including President from 2015-2016 and as a current Board Member. She has also served on the Board of Directors for the Intensive Education Academy, a small special education school located in West Hartford, since 2010.

Julie lives in the Norfeldt neighborhood with her husband, Jonathan Kaplan, and their dogs. Julie will bring her professional experience as a risk manager and her community activism to responsibly lead West Hartford into the future.

RESPONSES:

1. No. The current majority leadership sought fit to proceed with this wasteful endeavor in purchasing the UConn property, with environmental issues that will require clean-up costs estimated in the millions if not higher and no planned use.

2. This town cannot count on State funding as it is likely to decrease or be eliminated in coming years due to the State's fiscal issues. Budgeting properly for long-term sustainability should be our primary goal.

3. We need new and responsible leadership as the current majority has shown that they will not live within the town's budget. The majority's only response is to increase taxes and there is no doubt they will continue to do so in the future. The status quo is not working and we need responsible leadership that will live within our means going forward and won't burden our residents with additional tax increases.

Town Council



Ben Wenograd

Democrat

Raised in West Hartford, attended our great public schools. Graduate of Wesleyan University and Northeastern Law, finishing his first year on Town Council as Chairperson of Community Planning and Physical Services. Works for the American Federation of Teachers as a Field Representative. Served on Executive Board of Congregation Beth Israel, but is better know there for running Community Coffee on Sunday mornings. Lives with wife Shannon and daughter Sasha, Conard '18.

RESPONSES:

1.No. The potential purchase of the UConn property is a unique opportunity for the town to both expand our grand list, develop new recreational facilities for our residents, and protect the current ball fields. We should continue our efforts to purchase the property at a fair price, then work with developers and the community to do what we do best: balance public and private interest to create a great new space in town.

2. We need to continue the struggle to protect as much state funding as possible. Perhaps because of how well run the town has been over the years, there is a perception that we are wealthier than we are. But we are an economically diverse community with far greater needs than some of our suburban neighbors, and any fair formula for state aid will account for this reality. We need to continue our preparations for reduced aid. We have already combined Town and Board of Education functions, negotiated less expensive health and pension benefits for our employees, and built into this year's budget a contingency fund in anticipation of a cuts.

3. Revaluation hit many homeowners hard this year. Even though most of the increase is a result of higher relative property values in some areas of town, that doesn't help pay the bill. We need a better State law on revaluations that would allow annual indexing to avoid sudden jumps, a general reduction in the State's reliance on property taxes, and continue efforts to control costs at the local level.

Town Council



Chris Barnes

Republican

My wife, Stephanie, and I have lived in West Hartford for 21 years and we have 3 teenage daughters. I am an attorney with UnitedHealthcare, and I am seeking re-election to the Town Council.

RESPONSES:

1. While generating new property tax revenue is always an important consideration, the fit and scale of any development needs to be right for the town and neighborhood. If the town decides not to purchase the property and leave it for private development, a position I support for reasons beyond the scope of this question, the town will have sufficient control over the future use of the property through planning and zoning. A preferred use would include a combination of taxable and non-taxable development.

2. The biggest issue facing West Hartford is financial – at the state and local level. The state has been in fiscal decline for years and regularly threatens to cut or eliminate state aid to West Hartford. We can no longer run our town based on the expectation of state aid. It is not prudent.

If we want to maintain our schools, public service, and overall quality of life we can not ignore the town's unsustainable budget, tax, and debt trajectory. The majority party consistently passes higher budgets with ever-increasing property taxes. This must change. We need to work together to restructure and right-size our town government to get our budget under control for the benefit of everyone in our community.

3. As a result of the property revaluation and higher mill rate, residential and commercial property owners saw a dramatic increase in their property taxes, some as high as almost 40%. I have been on the Council for four years and have consistently voted "No" on the budget. The town needs to stop passing "maintenance" budgets with no new services or programs for town residents, and substantial spending increases to cover employee salaries, healthcare, and pension contributions, and debt service. This is where we need change.

Town Council



Shari Cantor

Democrat

Shari Cantor is the Mayor of her hometown of West Hartford and a member of the UConn Board of Trustees, her alma mater. Shari graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of science in accounting and is a registered CPA. She has served as a Town Councilor since 2004, Deputy Mayor since 2011, and Mayor since May 2016. As a leader in the community, Shari is committed to leading with honesty and integrity, including and valuing all voices in respectful dialogue, and engaging people of all ages in shaping a caring, diverse, and dynamic community.

RESPONSES:

1. As a Trustee I will not comment on the UConn property.

2. Well-planned development and smart growth throughout town add to our grand list and preserve our quality of life, but most importantly it builds on our community's vibrancy and desirability.

West Hartford is one of the few AAA bond-rated communities by both Moody's and Standard and Poor's in the country due to our fiscal responsibility and strong management. We do not have a state budget but we have established a separate contingency fund to offset shortfalls in state funding. I, along with my democratic colleagues, have fought tirelessly to preserve education support to our diverse and efficient school community. We will continue to find savings and efficiencies to protect and build on our long-term financial stability.

3. Overall, property values in West Hartford have remained strong. State-mandated revaluation affects taxpayers unevenly. While some homeowners saw declines in their property assessments and taxes, others saw their assessments and taxes rise. We cannot change the state revaluation system ourselves, but we will continue to encourage smart-growth and strong investments in town, make difficult choices to protect our quality of life and our schools, continually innovate to deliver services more effectively and efficiently, and fight for our fair share of state aid.

League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford® 2017 Finance Drive

The people listed here make this voters' guide possible. We greatly appreciate their generosity and support in bringing you this voter service.

Patron

Alice Kugelman, Emily Rankin, Susan Fellman, Anonymous

Sponsor

Eleanor Caplan, Richard and Mary Ellen Thibodeau, Sandy and Phil Fry

Supporter

Victoria Albert, Alyce Hild, Beverly Greenberg, Carol and Ed Lennig, Anne Streeter, Heide Williams, Shirley Zelman, Ann MacGillis, Mary Everett, Sarah Hambrick, Carole Mulready

Contributor

June Rosenblatt, Susan Andrews, Annette Gavens, Katherine Wilson, Joan Hagan, Elizabeth Swietek, Doretta Andonucci, Anonymous, Marlene Wenograd, Libby Pearl, Modern Tire of West Hartford, Ann Steele, Eileen Leo, Robert Belliveau, Carol G. Fine, Pam and Joe Lorenzo, Barbara Blechner, Shuli Graham, Denise Merrill

Voting Reminders

**Election Day is Tuesday, November 7.
The last day to register is October 31.**

- Register to vote weekdays in the registrar's office, Town Hall, 50 South Main Street.
- Polls are open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Remember to bring your ID.
- Your completed ballot can be fed into the electronic reader in any direction.
- All polling places are handicap accessible.
- A new accessible voting system is available. Search: Registrars West Hartford CT for information and practice.
- At the polling place, refer any questions or problems to the moderator.
- Find your polling place www.westhartford.org/vote. Click on Government, then voting district information. Then click the first letter of your street address.

You can make a difference

Why not join the League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford? You could help to prepare voters' guides like this one. Or you could become involved in studying important issues in our communities such as education, health care, or environment.

E-mail Libby Swietek at lib5410@gmail.com or call 860-478-5760 for more information. Membership forms are available at www.lwvgh.org.

Questions?

For any questions regarding voting and polling place, contact the Registrars of Voters office in Town Hall 860-561-7451. Registrars are Beth Kyle (Republican) and Gail Crockett (Democrat).

Board of Education



Lorna Thompson-Farquharson

Democrat

I've lived in West Hartford for over 17 years, having moved here to obtain my Master and Doctorate degrees in Clinical Psychology from the University of Hartford. My husband Jerome and I are blessed with two daughters, Julianna & Gabrielle, both students at Charter Oak International Academy. Professionally, I strive to empower others to address challenges and improve their quality of life. Personally, I'm passionate about education promoting the development of well-rounded youth, where excellence is defined by thriving academically, socially, and emotionally and where the values of learning extend beyond the walls of a classroom.

RESPONSES:

1. We need to be driven by rational thought and purposeful action where providing quality education is a priority. I will encourage action steps grounded in quality thought and quantitative analysis by being aware of components of the budget and the benefits they offer, both short and long-term. We need to be mindful that investments in education yield lifelong returns benefiting us all.

2. Proactive steps have and will continue to be taken. I recognize there are some polarizing views and skewed perspectives of who represents West Hartford. WH is nationally known for its excellent school system and quality of life; we must recognize all residents in town contribute to this excellence. The vibrant fabric of WH is defined by diversity in culture, ethnicity, economics, and ability levels. While these diverse threads connect us all, it's our collective responsibility to ensure all children's educational needs are met. We need to respond to academic challenges with a lens of objectivity, dedication, and a belief that all youth have the potential to achieve.

3. Responding to the budget in a fiscally responsible manner has and will continue to be exercised by the BOE and Town Council. WH's low per-pupil spending and delivery of quality education is evidence of this. It's mutually beneficial to prioritize the need for quality education and recognize the value teachers, staff, and administrators have in educating our youth.

Board of Education



Cheryl Greenberg

Democrat

Current Chairperson, West Hartford Board of Education; Trinity College History professor; town resident since 1990; both daughters WHPS graduates.

RESPONSES:

1. Any decrease in state funding harms every town. West Hartford embraces its economic, racial and international diversity, but with that diversity comes multiple programming needs that impose costs. West Hartford has managed those challenges by consolidating services and efficiencies of scale – we already spend less per pupil than 128 of Connecticut's 169 towns. There is little fat left to cut. Nevertheless, we will have to address whatever cuts do come. Town reserves can cushion some of the blow. Beyond that we must prioritize or our legal mandates (Special Education, ESOL, etc.), protect our classrooms and most effective programs, explore creative collaborations with non-profits, continue to pursue grants, and work closely with the Town Council to ensure the schools continue to meet their core mission to serve every student.

2. "Enough" progress will only be made when there is no gap. Meanwhile, newly implemented curricular and programmatic innovations and thoughtful hiring policies have already begun to address the issue. In West Hartford, test score gaps between "high needs" students (the state's category combining economically disadvantaged students, those with disabilities, and English language learners), and non-high-needs students declined five percent last year, although it rose slightly statewide. Our racial testing gap declined three percent, despite a three percent statewide increase.

3. Several years ago, the town began replenishing underfunded, non-certified pensions out of current budgets; the school pays our proportion. (The state manages the troubled Teacher Retirement program although the governor wants to push costs to towns). Future compensation levels and structures have been carefully negotiated through collective bargaining agreements, with good faith on both sides. Each recent contract lowered health care and other costs to the town by shifting to a hybrid benefit/cost plan. We must fairly compensate our teachers, administrators and staff, but do so with continued fiscal restraint and careful planning.

Board of Education



Jay Sarzen

Republican

Jay has served on the Board since 2012 and has been an advocate for all citizens (students, parents, alumni, and taxpayers) on a variety of matters. Jay has been a strong proponent for performance metrics, specifically, metrics that gauge how well students are prepared for either educational or vocational life after high school. Jay also led a bipartisan compromise among Board members to allow "Chieftains" and "Warriors" to remain as sports teams' names. Jay graduated from Trinity College and received his Masters of Business Administration from Notre Dame. He currently leads the property and casualty insurance practice for Aite Group, a consulting firm. He has a 6th grader at Sedgwick.

RESPONSES:

1. The Board needs to be smarter about spending and assess programs through a combined lens of results, impact, and cost. During the most recent budget season, I advocated for keeping programs such as full day kindergarten in place because of their broad reach, but questioned whether other programs with a more limited reach could be retained in a more efficient manner. We cannot allow programs to be eliminated without attempting to deliver them in a less costly manner.

2. Progress is being made as we are seeing gains made by kids who have typically lagged. Ensuring English for Speakers of Other Language instruction remains a strong offering will help the gap continue to close.

3. If Connecticut forces municipalities to assume a portion of teachers' pension obligations, the District would be severely compromised. This is not something within our control, unlike salaries and benefits, the two largest components of our budget. I voted for the last teacher contract because it moved teachers to high deductible health plans (we will begin to see the benefits of this move in future years). The contract also modestly raised salaries, which allowed us to remain competitive with other districts. However, given Connecticut's financial condition, it might not be possible for the next contract to include significant raises, if any at all.

Board of Education



Deb Polun

Democrat

After almost twenty years of public policy and advocacy experience, I'm excited to run for the Board of Education. My husband Ian and I moved to West Hartford in 1999, chiefly for its schools. Our children have thrived from the strong, personalized education they received at Aiken, King Philip and Hall; Jordan is now a sophomore at University at Albany, and Megan is a junior at Hall. Background: Senior Director for Policy & Outreach at the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut; Member: West Hartford Advisory Commission for Persons with Disabilities, League of Women Voters, Hall PTO, Jewish Community Relations Council; Prior service: Mentor - West Hartford Public Schools, President - Congregation B'nai Tikvah-Sholom. My priorities are: thinking creatively to maintain critical programs; integrating health and wellness into the school day; and promoting civic engagement among students, their families and the broader community.

RESPONSES:

1. We must continue working with our legislative delegation and the governor to ensure West Hartford receives the funding it deserves. Our schools and the town have found administrative savings already – West Hartford ranks 128th in per pupil spending, while upholding high quality and outcomes. We will continue seeking efficiencies that do not compromise our students' education. I will think creatively to maintain programming, leveraging partnerships with community-based organizations, businesses and colleges/universities. Budget reserves can cushion some reduction in state aid this year.

2. West Hartford is rightfully known for its high performing schools. Analyses of the SAT and other tests show progress in closing the achievement gap; however, disparities remain. I will work with our educators to ensure all students have the opportunities, support and tools they need to realize their potential.

3. Yes. Our Board of Education and Town Council planned ahead to control long-term compensation and benefit liabilities and will continue to exercise responsible fiscal practices.

Board of Education



Robert Levine

Republican

I have been a small business owner of Hart Real Estate for 7 years and my wife, Gayle, has taught math in town for 16 years. We have three school age children, Jack, Cameron, and Katie. I currently serve on the West Hartford Board of Assessment Appeals. I also serve as the Vice President on the Board of Directors for the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors. I worked as a policy analyst on the Speaker's task force on education in New York State. I then became a budget analyst on the ways and means committee. I had consulting jobs doing program evaluation and financial audits for public housing authorities and child support enforcement agencies around the country. My educational background includes an undergraduate degree in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts and a Master's degree in Public Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon University. I believe we can have a dynamic school system for all students and a fiscally sound budget. Please help me become a new voice on your behalf by voting for me on Tuesday November 7th.

RESPONSES:

1. West Hartford is chronically underfunded by the State and this will likely not change. We need to better manage our money to best serve our students so they can achieve the highest possible outcomes during their educational careers. Reducing administrative costs and duplication of services will allow for smaller class sizes as well as after school programs that are vital for our children's most enriching school experience.

2. If there are children that need help, then we must continue to strive in assisting them.

3. No, it is not. Money that should be allocated to enriching student experiences is going to have to continue to be diverted to pensions due to the gross fiscal mismanagement of past administrations at town hall and the board of education. We need to honor our commitment to teacher pensions, and plan for how we fund it more responsibly in the future.

