

VOTERS' GUIDE for BLOOMFIELD

Candidates were given questions developed by the League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford (LWVGH). They were given a word limit in which to provide their answers. The text is printed as submitted. LWVGH hopes that this Voters' Guide assists you in making your decisions on candidates for the Tuesday, November 8 election. Exercise your privilege as a citizen and Vote.

Candidate Responses to Questions from the League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford, www.lwvgh.org They are provided in alphabetical order with Town Council candidates grouped together first, followed by the Board of Education Candidates.

TOWN COUNCIL CANDIDATES 2011

Donna Banks – Democrat

Member, Zoning Board of Appeals; President, Bloomfield Raiders Youth Football & Cheerleading Organization
Member; Building Renovation Committee for Laurel and Metacomet Schools;
Member, Bloomfield Education Foundation; Volunteer, Big Brothers/Big Sisters; Participant, Foodshare Walk for Hunger; Volunteer, Salvation Army Disaster Relief; Member, Bloomfield Democratic Town Committee;
Employed, by Brad Davis at WDRC



What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

We need to promote economic development by attracting new retail and commercial businesses to Bloomfield. In particular, I would like to bring an hotel or conference center to town. I believe that we need to revitalize the center of town and work with landlords to fill vacant stores and offices. We should make economic development a priority and determine if our staff as currently configured, has the time and ability to market our community. Bloomfield should be proactive in finding new businesses to come to town.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

I will help support Clean Energy and Solar Energy Programs. Bloomfield should maximize state and federal funds to promote energy conservation. We can encourage citizen participation through educational campaigns and teaching our students about the benefits of conservation. I would like to take advantage of institutions like the University of Hartford, to see if they could provide the expertise to help us create a long term strategy to achieve these goals.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

It is our responsibility to make sure that our most vulnerable and needy residents receive social services necessary to sustain them. I would direct our staff to prioritize such essential services to make sure that we properly fund them in our budget. In addition to continuing existing town programs, we should partner with organizations like Foodshare, Operation Fuel, Meals on Wheels, Independent Transportation Network (ITN) to help those in need.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

I will work with the Wintonbury Land Trust, Conservation Commission, and Town staff, to seek state and federal grants, corporate contributions, and individual legacies, to obtain revenue sources to purchase

(Donna Banks, cont.) additional open space. The recent acquisition of Lisa Farm is an excellent example of such efforts. I will also work to improve existing open space for the enhancement of community use. The Council should work with the Zoning Board to encourage the dedication of open space for new developments. We should also enlist the help of our legislators to inventory state owned land that isn't being used, and apply to transfer these properties to the Town for open space. Bloomfield should advertize the benefits of donating land to the municipality including tax credits and perpetual preservation.

Robert H. Berman – Republican

Having moved to Bloomfield in January, 1973, Bob & Phyllis Berman became active in the community by working for and supporting the Bloomfield ZIP newspaper until its demise. Both of their children attended Bloomfield Public Schools, graduating in 1989 and 1993 respectively. Bob has been an avid supporter of public education and served two terms on the Board of Education before being convinced to run for Town Council. Having served since 2007, he continues to be an advocate for reining in spending while providing support for needed and necessary town services.



What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

We need to bring a quality mid-level hotel/motel to town as soon as possible. We also need to partner with a commercial real estate firm to bring offices and small manufacturing firms into town.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

We must continue to search out residents who want to get involved; continue modernizing our aging town buildings, and bring solar and geothermal energy into town buildings.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

We have to continue publicizing the Senior Tax Freeze, continue support for Senior bus Transportation, and make more citizens aware of the Town's food bank and Fuel Assistance programs.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

Currently, over 30% of our town already consists of dedicated open space, wetlands, and state parks that can NEVER be built on. Before adding more land to these amounts, I think it is necessary to consider the effect of making decisions for future generations that will be difficult, if not impossible to change in the future. The town as a whole needs to decide how much, if any, additional land it is willing to remove from the tax rolls. Until and unless we have a town-wide forum to discuss this issue in detail, I am reluctant to ignore any potential tax revenue.

Patrick DeLorenzo - Republican

Patrick DeLorenzo has been active in town politics since moving to Bloomfield in 2004. Patrick is Treasurer for the Bloomfield Republican Town Committee. In addition, Patrick was appointed by Town Council to serve on the Board of Assessment Appeals (BAA). This Board is in session twice a year to hear appeals from residents on their personal and real property taxes. Prior to BAA, Patrick was a member of the Ethics Committee. In 2007, Patrick was endorsed as a candidate for Town Council.



Patrick lives with his wife Ellen in the Northwest Hills section of Bloomfield. He is on the Board of Directors for The Common at Sinnott Farm where he serves as Secretary. Patrick holds a Masters of Human Organization Science degree from Villanova University and is employed at Cigna in Bloomfield.

What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

To build up the economic base in Bloomfield we should bring in more business and use tax incentives to fill vacant store fronts. Bloomfield also needs the much talked about hotel. This will bring more people into the area to support local businesses and area restaurants.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

The best way to save energy is to fix and maintain our existing public buildings and make them energy efficient. It was reported that because of structural conditions on some buildings, solar energy cannot be installed. Town Council should consider programs to help lower energy costs for citizens that are offered by companies such as Direct Energy.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

Social Services are needed to protect our most vulnerable citizens especially the elderly and young children. Programs that currently exist should be given high priority but any new programs should be a lower priority unless funding is available for them without raising taxes. Bloomfield cannot support new social services unless other funding options are available. Seeking more state and federal grants would be one way to help fund new programs. In addition, the recent Tax Freeze for Seniors program is helping to protect these citizens from losing their homes.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

Keeping open space for recreation and personal enjoyment is important to many of Bloomfield's citizens. There has to be some additional studies done to determine how much open space needs to be preserved versus developed. Without some development, Bloomfield will not be able to increase the tax base. There are also not for profit organizations such as The Wintonbury Land Trust who work to acquire and preserve open space for future generations.

Joan A. Gamble - Democrat

Member of Bloomfield Town Council for 4 years; Lifelong resident of Bloomfield and attended Bloomfield Public Schools; Member Bloomfield Lions Club; Member and artist in residence, Sacred Heart Church; Bachelors and Masters Degrees, Hartford Art School of the University of Hartford; Retired art teacher East Hartford 1969-2004; Chair of Land Use and Economic Development; Member Town Plan of Development Committee; Illustrator of two children's book; "Zeno the Zebra" and "Zeno Lost in the Forest";
Former BEST Portfolio scorer for the State of Connecticut



What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

Work with agencies and departments to create a citizen friendly town that is responsive to the real needs of Bloomfield. Develop Bloomfield center into a shopping, entertainment, and restaurant destination. Promote Cottage Grove Road into a medical corridor.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

Bring affordable housing for young professionals into the mass transit corridor to promote a Green Community. Encourage future development to use state of the art technology.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

Bloomfield has provided outstanding human services through various agencies that serve all ages. From child services, recreation, food pantry, senior services, it is my hope that no one should go hungry, without shelter, or suffer from the lack from human concern and contact.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

Bloomfield has 30% open space, and more has been added this year (Lisa Lane) through grants. Filley House has been stabilized so that future use will be possible. My objective is to develop some of that space to make it more accessible for passive recreation. I am also exploring the development of Samuse Wheeler Park into a summer concert location.

Wayne Hypolite - Democrat

Four term Town Council member; 1999 - 2007; Majority Leader; Co-Chaired Economic Development and land use; Member of Finance & Administration sub-committee; Former Chairman and Board of Education Member 1992 – 1997; Wesleyan University Graduate; Past President, Bloomfield Local Access Television (BATV);
Former member, Public Risk Insurance Management Association; Member, West Indian Social Club; Executive Assistant, Office of the State Treasurer; Twenty-five year resident residing 55 Prospect Street with wife and two daughters.



What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

(Wayne Hypolite, cont.) Our current economic environment represents a challenge for economic growth. Yet it also affords the opportunity now to plan for the future. Sustainable economic expansion requires leadership, vision and long term strategic planning. Bloomfield has an updated Plan of Development and a University of Hartford Study which encourages public, private and citizen partnership, all of which will be needed along with dedicated financial & human resources. Beginning there, I would task the Town Manager to develop a consensus on a strategic approach to promote and revitalize our economic base, consistent with our shared vision and goals.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

Bloomfield has a community energy & conservation committee. I would first look to its expertise for specific programs to support. Foremost I would encourage town government and residents to weatherize their homes and buildings, as well as upgrade to energy efficient appliances, furnaces, windows, including the use of Solar, and bio-fuel cells. Many of these usages offer rebates & tax deductions and provide a reasonable return on investment.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

I would determine where assistance will have the most sustainable impact. Given cut backs at the state and federal level, town government plays a vital role in providing important social services. While we have a responsibility to provide assistance, we should also promote the generosity and involvement of private & not-for-profit agencies, such as the Prosser Fund, Food Banks, CRT, Operation Fuel, State rental assistance, Salvation Army, Dial-A-Ride and volunteers.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

Open space is a quality of life issue and can be an important economic factor supplementing our overall attractiveness as a community. Bloomfield is fortunate to have significant open space to preserve its rural character, including the most recently acquired Lisa Farm, much of it paid through State and Federal funding. Working with Town Planning & Zoning; Inland Wetlands; and our Conservation, Energy, and Environmental Committee I would challenge us to find creative solutions and policies to acquire and utilize open space.

Mark L. Jacobs – Republican

Mark Jacobs has been a Bloomfield resident for the past twenty-five years. He and his wife Nilda have been married for thirty-six years and have two adult children, Alex and Desiree. Mark is the owner of Sir Speedy Printing in Bloomfield for the past nine years, In those nine years he has doubled the size of his company. Prior to buying Sir Speedy Printing, he was a Vice President with CIGNA, responsible for managing a budget of \$20 million. He has been a member of the Bloomfield Rotary for seven years and is a Past President as well as a Paul Harris Fellow. Mark served on the Wintonbury Hills Golf Course building committee. He is a charter organizing member and President of the Wintonbury Hills Men’s Club since its inception, spearheaded the collection of golf equipment donated to the Bloomfield High School golf team. He is also a former member of the Town of Bloomfield Ethics Committee and a former Bloomfield Midget Football coach.



What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

(Mark L. Jacobs, cont.) But we need to think about keeping the businesses that are already in Bloomfield. We should be doing everything we can to take care of them. If they grow, then Bloomfield grows. We have the location with access to highways and the airport, the land and the skilled people to attract businesses to this town.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

Northeast Utilities has wonderful energy audits for homeowners that cost \$75. Energy specialists come to your home and change light bulbs, weather stripping and sealing, install low flow shower heads, and make recommendations for insulation, etc. These audits are also available to businesses at a low cost with a great payback.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

In these tough economic times social services are important because we have a large senior population in Bloomfield. The best thing we can do as Council members is to support the services we have today and do the best job we can to contain overall Town costs to keep taxes from escalating so seniors can stay in their homes instead of moving out of town. Also, continuing to publicize the senior tax freeze will help those eligible seniors.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

There is not a clear cut policy. We will take each proposal individually and determine if it benefits the town by being developed or left as open space. However, I am very much against blocking land from ever being developed forever. We do not know the future.

Quentin E. Johnson – Republican

Quentin Johnson graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Philosophy from Central Connecticut State University. He was an active part of the student body and participated in clubs and programs; Economics Club and volunteered to tutor fellow CCSU students in economics and math. Quentin has been an employee of The Hartford for almost 10 years and he continues to develop and grow within the company. Quentin will be marrying his sweetheart, Elizabeth, this fall. He looks forward to raising a family in Bloomfield.

What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

We need to continue to promote the establishment of small to medium sized businesses with a focus on emerging industries such as technology and clean energy. We should also take advantage of opportunities to redevelop existing structures and property so that we can increase our appeal to industries of the future.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

Update existing structures for the usage of solar and geothermal energy while ensuring these advancements become required considerations for all new residential and commercial construction. Free public WIFI can be better utilized as an effective collaboration tool for promoting events and receiving community feedback. The

(Quentin Johnson, cont.) town should also look at ways to make our website more interactive with current and future technologies; for example a town app for smart phones, iphones, ipads and tablets.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

We can do a better job of promoting town social services such as the food bank, fuel assistance, and senior tax freeze programs. We need to ensure that the needs of our community are always met.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

Approximately 30% of Bloomfield is dedicated open space which can not be industrially developed. It is important that we maintain dedicated open lands while maintaining a healthy balance of opportunities for economic expansion. I would like to see more revitalization of existing resources such as Filley Park.

Joseph Merritt –Republican (endorsed)

Joe Merritt, candidate for Town Council, and his wife Bev grew up in Bloomfield and raised three children here. A Dartmouth College government major with an MIT Sloan Fellow Master's Degree from the School of Finance, he served as a Navy Officer, a Vice President of Hartford Special in Simsbury, and since 1984, owner and manager of a manufacturing company. Retired now, he works seasonally as tax office manager. Elected to 11 Town Council terms and now Minority Leader, he also served as Chairman of our Health District, and as a Seabury director. In his church choir, he's a tennis player, one of the founders of the BVA, one of the founders and directors of Wintonbury Hills Golf Course, advocate for the East Coast Greenway (bike path) through Bloomfield and has seven grandchildren.



What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

Bloomfield's economic base would be strengthened with a pro-development Town Council. The majority party voted down the council's effort to develop South Cottage Grove killing a commercial development that would have contributed tax revenue and jobs.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

Our strong citizen's committee for energy and the environment, CEEC, has been ignored by the majority party with the exception of the mayor. Councilors have been slow to get on board with energy conservation and bike paths and other green efforts and need pushing. Our pre-1970 buildings need to include insulation in their renovations. Federal grants are available for renovating with a complete energy package the preschool on Rockwell because it serves low-income children and we have yet to apply for them.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

Unless an eviction notice to BELC is withdrawn almost 100 low-income preschoolers will have nowhere to go and 25 early learning staffers will be laid off. This is particularly ironic because the staff's salaries are completely covered by state and federal grants and the town's main expenses are energy costs which could be reduced by using federal grants to insulate the building. Closing BELC would not save us money, but it would destroy a worthwhile town service.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

(Joseph Merritt, cont.) Open space is a good thing and we should apply for all grants available. My family's donation to the land trust is perhaps the best kind of open space acquisition.

E. Leon Rivers - Democrat

E. Leon Rivers has been a Bloomfield resident for 32 years. He retired after 22 years from the Department of Corrections as a vocational education instructor. He is a Student Manager at the Metropolitan Learning Center. He was also a supervisor with the Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Department. He has a BS from Eastern Connecticut State University. Married for 46 years to Jeannette Rivers, they have one son, one daughter, and two grandchildren, Laina and Gabriel. Mr. Rivers was a Town of Bolton Selectman and served as a Lieutenant and Constable on the Bolton Volunteer Fire Department.



In Bloomfield, he served on the Community Awareness Task Force, head coach for Midget Football, and an alternate member of Zoning Board of Appeals. He has been on the Town Committee for 19 years and a member of the Town Council for the past 4 years. He is the Chairman of the Education Sub Committee, a member of the Golf Committee and Economic Development Committee. Mr. Rivers states, "Bloomfield flows better with 'Rivers'."

What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

The town needs to appeal to the owners of the Wintonbury Mall to encourage them to reinvest in the Center. The town should also work with a hotel chain to bring a hotel to town. We must activate the position of Economy Development Director.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

The town has an obligation to explore solar energy for any building that is suitable for such an application. We must continue to support companies that use clean energy. The Council should continue to support volunteers who are willing to invest time making the town aware of renewable energy sources that can be used by the town. We must contribute to support the Conservation Energy and Environment Committee so that they are not bogged down by local bottleneck.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

I would focus on citizens with the greatest needs; the seniors and children. We must help seniors to maintain their way of life through tax relief, Food Share, etc. when possible no children should go hungry, such as supporting Food Share.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

The Town has about 35 to 40% open space. We must start to develop some of the open space through the implementation of bike paths and walking trails. The Conservation Energy and Environment Committee has taken steps in this direction by seeking a grant to purchase the Lisa Lane Farm to be maintained as a farm.

Sydney T. Schulman – Democrat

Sydney T. Schulman has practiced law for forty-eight years, serving in the United States Air Force from 1963-1966 and as Executive Director of Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc., a legal services program for the poor, from 1966 – 1974. While carrying on a general law practice, he has practiced as a trial lawyer and has a specialty in establishing and advising profit and nonprofit organizations.



Atty. Schulman currently serves as Mayor of Bloomfield, Connecticut, having so served since January, 2003, and served as Deputy Mayor from January, 1993 – January, 2003, except for the years 1997 – 1999 when he left Council to serve as District Governor of the Lions Clubs and then Council Chairman for the Lions Clubs for the State of Connecticut. He is also a past president of the state-wide Connecticut Lions Eye Research Foundation. While on the Town Council, Atty. Schulman has served as chair of the Economic Development Committee of Council, and before coming to Council, he served as chair of the Town Ethics Commission. He also served as Bloomfield's representative to the Greater Hartford Transit District for over twenty years. He has served on the Boards of the Spanish American Merchant Association, Inc., the Capitol Region Council of Governments Citizens Forum and Transportation Committees, Raul Wallenberg Foundation, Inc. and the Ebony Horsewomen, Inc.

Atty. Schulman is a congregant of Beth Hillel Synagogue in Bloomfield. He and his wife Elba Cruz Schulman, a medical social worker for the City of Hartford have seven grown children and twelve grandchildren.

What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield's economic base?

Focused development of Cottage Grove Rd. as a medical corridor. Prioritized outreach to prospective corporations of Bloomfield's development assets.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support? Develop awareness of Bloomfield's 20% clean energy program. Implement suggestions of energy audit being performed.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

Senior Services guaranteeing transportation to medical and food shopping. Youth and family counseling. Low income loans for emergency home repairs for low income citizens. Awareness of the Town's discount pharmaceuticals program.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

It is time we provided for quality of life usage for open space, including walking trails, viewing areas, resting areas, picnic areas, tours, museum in historical area.

JOSEPH E. WASHINGTON - Democrat

Member, Town Planning Zoning Board; Member, Bloomfield Democratic Town Committee; Co-chair, 2nd District of Bloomfield Democratic Town Committee; Hartford Public High School Graduate; University Hartford and Central State University: Public Administration; United States Post Office: Managerial Administrative Service Career Training (1983 – 2004) ; United States Air Force.



What would you propose to strengthen Bloomfield’s economic base?

The Town Council should make economic development a priority. We should adopt policies that will help attract new businesses and allow existing businesses to expand. One example might be the creation of a special tax district in an area where growth is desirable. I support efforts to attract hotels or conference centers to town. It is important that our staff maintain regular contact with our businesses and that the Town Council hold periodic forums to solicit their ideas. Working with our Chamber is of utmost importance. The need for an Economic Development Consultant that will spend the time devising and implementing a strategy of economic development and outreach is also needed.

In addition to talking about forward looking policies, what specific energy saving programs and citizen engagement efforts would you support?

I hope to be a strong advocate for conservation. Bloomfield could create a walking path thru the center of town and connect it to other walkways. Bloomfield was among the first towns to pass a goal of achieving a 20% clean energy by 2010. That plan was never fully promoted. I will urge that we begin an educational campaign to promote conservation. The Town should designate a specific department to promote conservation and to be a resource to residents. Bloomfield can lead by example by providing solar panels for schools and municipal buildings.

In these challenging economic times, how would you prioritize social services?

Bloomfield owes it to our citizens to protect social services which are most important to our residents. We have an excellent reputation for services to senior citizens and those in need of food, medical assistance and transportation. These services must be protected and continued. Bloomfield should aggressively partner with private and public agencies to strengthen services. For example, we can grow our relationships with groups like the Individual Transportation Network (ITN), Foodshare, Operation Fuel and community based health clinics.

In recent years there has been considerable development of open space. What will you do as a policy maker to acquire and preserve open space in Bloomfield?

The ability of residents to enjoy open space and recreational needs to continue to acquire and preserve Open Space. We should adopt a plan to encourage private land donations and to maximize the use of state and federal grants to purchase new open space.

BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATES 2011

Donald Harris - Democrat

Education: Bloomfield High School Graduate; Springfield College; University of Hartford

Professional Employment: Physical Education Teacher; Director of Athletics; Vice Principal;

Principal – Bloomfield High School; Real Estate Sales Agent

Community Affiliations: Deputy Mayor Town of Bloomfield 2007 – present; Literacy Volunteers Board of Directors 2010; Amistad Center for Art & Culture Board of Directors 2004 – 2008; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; Seabury Board of Directors 2010 – present; Rotary International –

Bloomfield Chapter;

Deacon Union Baptist Church

Accomplishments: 2006 – Bloomfield High recognized by Hartford Magazine as a Top '10' high school in the Greater Hartford area; 2007 – Elected to the Bloomfield Town Council; 2007 – Elected Deputy Mayor, Town of **(Donalds Harris, cont.)** Bloomfield; 2009 Urban League Community Service Award; 2010/2011 Chaired Bloomfield Police Chief Search Committee; 2011 Paul Harris Award - Rotary

Personal Profile Skills: Commitment to the Town of Bloomfield; Proven Leadership skills; Ability to create and analyze budgets; Ability to listen, learn and lead; Problem solver; Communicator;

Memberships: Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; National Association of Realtors; Connecticut Association of Realtors; Greater Hartford Association of Realtors

What is your vision for the Bloomfield Public Schools?

As a product of the Bloomfield Schools and having worked in the system for 39 years, my vision is to be a part of the effort to restore Bloomfield Schools to its rightful place: The Best of the Best in the Greater Hartford area.

Given that Bloomfield students' performance in state test results is below that of surrounding towns, what strategies would you suggest to close the gap?

The current Board of Education needs to be commended for their hiring of the Best: Dr. James Thompson. Our job as a newly elected Board will be to be the supportive mechanism to give the Superintendent and his team the latitude to make changes and implement programs that will increase the learning curve and ultimately test scores.

What would you do to encourage more families to get involved in the education of their children?

It is my opinion that a major function of the Board is to get out into the community and become the drum bearers for the schools. We need to be in attendance at athletic events, concerts, PTO meetings and all Board meetings. We need to meet with the public who elected us and be able to answer all questions they have about the Bloomfield Schools.



ROBERT W. IKE –Republican

90 Darby Street Bloomfield, Connecticut; Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA; Yale University, New Haven, CT; 1996-2003 and 2006-Present Bloomfield Board of Education; Chairman Policy Committee; Curriculum Committee; Superintendent Search Committees; Negotiation Committee; Budget and Finance Committee; 2011 Commissioner Bloomfield Housing Authority; 2009 Secretary Carmen Arace School Building Committee; 2004-2005 Bloomfield Town Council; 2003-2004 Bloomfield Library Board; 1994-1995 Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Committee; 2011 Chairman Bloomfield Republican Town Committee.



What is your vision for the Bloomfield Public Schools?

THE Bloomfield Public Schools must be an institution where students can be prepared to meet the vicissitudes of life when they graduate from the school system. The citizens must have confidence in the school systems ability to educate the populace and be willing to send their children to this public entity.

Given that Bloomfield students' performance in state test results is below that of surrounding towns, what strategies would you suggest to close the gap?

Establish annual targets and timelines for CMT and CAPT district wide achievement. Analyze daily reading, math and writing instruction with an emphasis on programming, practices and professional development. Identify school-level factors correlated with growth or decline for each grade level and determine which strategies to continue to implement, modify or discontinue. Develop school-level corrective action plans based on individual school data and monitor implementation of these plans utilizing school-level data teams. Paying attention to data improves student achievement.

What would you do to encourage more families to get involved in the education of their children?

I would be loath to judge or question a parent(s)/guardian(s) commitment to their child's education. The assumption being, that just because the Bloomfield School System is perceived to be low performing, not all of our parent(s)/guardians are committed to being sure that their children get the best preparation possible. I would say that all the citizens in Bloomfield are committed to developing a superior system.

Lesley D. Mara - Democrat

My husband and I have lived in Bloomfield since 1991. We are both attorneys and he has a law firm in town. I am home with our children: Ben, 11 and Kate, 8. Prior to that, I served as Deputy Secretary of the State (January 2006 - January 2011). I have held several other positions related to children: Deputy Commissioner, Department of Children and Families (1991 - 1995), Executive Director, Lawyers for Children (1995 - 2000) and Superintendent of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (2000 - 2002). In all of these positions, I was directly involved with interpreting Federal and state education law, budget development and monitoring, policy-making, legislation, labor relations and personnel matters. I also have experience representing individual children in special education matters. For the past 6 years, I have



(Lesley D. Mara, cont.) served as Vice Chair of the Alliance for Bloomfield’s Children, an organization created to engage parents to improve services and opportunities for children birth to 8. I also take part in the PTO and spend time in my children’s schools. I have dedicated my career and community service to advocating for children. I look forward to bringing these experiences, and my commitment as a parent, to the Board of Education should I have the privilege to serve.

What is your vision for the Bloomfield Public Schools?

As a Bloomfield parent, I want our schools to provide students with the academic tools they need to succeed and for each school to be a safe, nurturing environment conducive to learning and modeling respect, tolerance and good citizenship. I look forward to working with my fellow board members, the superintendent and with families to shape education policy in a way that promotes more effective learning.

Given that Bloomfield students’ performance in state test results is below that of surrounding towns, what strategies would you suggest to close the gap?

As a new Board member, I will be anxious to learn what other districts have done to close the gap and to learn what the Superintendent and his team have put in place. Strategies might include: review and re-alignment, if necessary, of resources to provide additional classroom and individual support for students, especially those struggling with reading and math, and greater emphasis on early childhood education as a foundation for future learning.

What would you do to encourage more families to get involved in the education of their children?

As a Bloomfield parent, I know that there are many families already involved in their children’s education. We must continue to reach out to families to learn how we can welcome them and make it easier for them to be involved.

Michael R. Walters, M.S., M.Ed. - Democrat

Michael is a veteran educator, human resource professional and public speaker. He has been a resident of Bloomfield for approximately two decades. Michael is a graduate of North Carolina A&T State University, Cambridge College and the University of New Haven. He has also been accepted into the doctoral program for education at Northeastern University.

As a college faculty member of Communications and Speech, Mr. Walters has first hand knowledge of the growing demands of employers and the current skill set of today’s youth and aspiring professional. He creates a structured learning environment that is inviting for students yet provides the necessary skills required in today’s global market.

As a seasoned Vice President of Human Resources, Mr. Walters has lectured to businesses, educational and community groups instilling motivation, communication skills and organizational effectiveness. Additionally, he facilitates lectures on Valuing Differences, Managing Diversity, EEO, Affirmative Action, Organizational Development and Employee Relations.

Mr. Walters has served on numerous community boards such as the Board of Directors of the Women’s League Child Development Center; Board of Trustees of Jumoke Academy; American Society for Personnel Administration; American Society for Training and Development and the Board of Directors, of the Weekly “Black Perspective” Television Program at Connecticut NBC.



What is your vision for the Bloomfield Public Schools?

(Michael R. Walters, cont.) High performing schools - Attract families into Bloomfield; Build positive relationship between home, school and community; A school system where students feel safe; Where diversity is valued and celebrated; Teachers love to teach and students love to learn.

Given that Bloomfield students' performance in state test results is below that of surrounding towns, what strategies would you suggest to close the gap?

Provide professional development for teachers, staff and administrators; Provide extended learning opportunities for all students in Bloomfield such as: After school programs, Summer school, Academics on Saturdays; Provide training to parents on engaging and reinforcing academics at home; Create a collaboration where everyone, i.e., Board of Education members, parents, teachers, staff, district leadership and the town feel they are a valuable member of the process towards creating a quality school system.

What would you do to encourage more families to get involved in the education of their children?

Improve the school climate where the atmosphere is welcoming to parents and families; Build positive relationships with all stakeholders; Clear communication between parents, teachers, students and staff

Parents should help their students to see the value in getting an education; Parental engagement in the home where learning is celebrated and encouraged; Provide meaningful workshops for parents that will help with student academic growth, i.e. scholarships, transition to college; Events that will bring parents to the school to build relationships with administration, teachers and staff.