



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

# 2015 Bloomfield Voters Guide

# TOWN COUNCIL CANDIDATES

The following questions were submitted to Bloomfield Town Council candidates by the League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford®. Responses are published in the order they were received. Candidates had 350 words combined for their biographies and responses. The Bloomfield Journal would like to thank the League for this valuable service and the opportunity to share it with our readers. For more information on the League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford, go to: <http://www.lwvgh.org/>

## THE QUESTIONS

1. What is the appropriate balance between cutting taxes and cutting spending? Are there specific programs you would like to see either enhanced or trimmed back?
2. Economic development is an important issue in most communities. Explain what your number one priority is for economic development in Bloomfield during the next year and address your priority for the long term.
3. Although it does not get a lot of media attention, many feel that there are significant issues with drugs in the region, including marijuana, heroin and prescription drug abuse. What should be the role of the police department and/or other town departments both in helping residents who have drug problems and in keeping our community safe?

### Patrick A. DeLorenzo

Republican



Patrick has been a Town Councilor since June 2012. He is Treasurer of the Bloomfield Republican Town Committee. He serves on the Finance, Administration and Education, and Land Use and Economic Development Sub-Committees. He was previously on the Board of Assessment Appeals and Ethics Committee. He earned a Master of Human Organization Science from Villanova University and is employed by Cigna as an Enterprise Project Manager. He is married to Ellen Moran.

#### Question #1

This was an unusual tax year for our town. We saw a decrease in our property values which reduced property taxes for most citizens, but to maintain our level of services and fund capital improvement projects, we had an increase in the mill rate. I believe that at the current time there are no programs we can trim. We have a large number of capital improvement projects that continue to require funding. This means working harder next budget season to strike a balance between reducing taxes and increasing spending. Tax increases are never popular, so we have to work together as a Council to keep taxes down while doing what is needed for our Town.

#### Question #2

Near term priority is the economic development of Town Center including Wintonbury Mall and Filley Park. We are looking forward to productive discussions with the new owner

of the Mall on how to make improvements and increase occupancy. The first phase of Filley Park is underway. Longer term is the new apartment complex and other Town Center improvements including the Library.

#### Question #3

I have full confidence in our Police Chief and police officers who work hard keeping our Community safe. While we do hear about drug related issues around us, I don't know that there is a serious drug problem in Bloomfield. I have read about heroin overdoses and how police officers have saved lives by using the drug called Narcan to reverse the effects of an overdose. Perhaps our police department should be trained in and carry this life saving drug. In addition, our Department of Social Services can assist individuals and families who need help staying drug free.

### Joan A. Gamble

Democrat



#### Question #1

Although many homeowners saw a decrease in their property taxes this year it was a revaluation that caused that drop. Business owners saw an increase in their taxes. In the future, it will become necessary for the Town to address the needs of our infrastructure, in the same way we needed to upgrade the infrastructure of our schools. This must be done carefully to hold the line on indebtedness that the Town carries.

#### Question #2

Economic development is the key to holding the line on taxes. We have been fortunate recently with the turn in the economy that has allowed new business to come to Bloomfield and established businesses look to expand. In the near future we will be seeing the renovation of Wintonbury Mall, new apartments in the center, and proposals for two senior housing apartments. All of this adds to our tax base.

#### Question #3

Drugs have been an issue for years. Rehabilitation, education, and law enforcement are our first line of defense. The Town has lead the way with the department of Human Services, the police with educational programs, Leisure services provides a place for our youth to gather with supervision. With these agencies and the help of the families in town we can work together to show healthy alternatives to addiction. We really need to view the idea that "It takes a village to raise a child" no matter the age of the child.

### Wayne Hypolite

Democrat



A graduate Wesleyan University, Hypolite works as Executive Assistant, Office of the State Treasurer. He has served Bloomfield in various positions, including Chairman Board of Education (1996 - 1997); Town Council Member (1999 - 2007 and 2013 to present); Deputy Mayor (2011 - 2013); and Chairman Finance Sub-Committee. He is also a member West Indian Social Club.

#### Question #1

Finding the appropriate balance is often elusive since it takes far more dollars to meaningfully cut taxes, approximately \$700,000 from the Town budget to reduce an "average residential" tax bill by \$100 annually. To avoid the negative impact such an approach would have on delivery of services, one must instead find other non-tax revenue arrived from growth in the grand list or prior years surplus revenue to adequately reduce the burden of high taxes while continuing the delivery of necessary services. I would support enhancing our capital improvement budget for road repairs and funding additional resources in the building and engineering departments.

#### Question #2

In the short term further tax reduction, however true economic development as measured by attracting and retaining new businesses, expansion of existing businesses and residential development can only be viewed in the long term. This requires an extensive list of items to

be addressed. They include but certainly not limited to quality of our roads and infrastructure, acquiring available land for development & redevelopment; utilizing where appropriate competitive tax incentives and having a proactive and streamlined process that can assist potential new developers. One must also focus on quality of life concerns such as public safety, education, transportation, and strengthening our financial health such as our bond rating and fund balance. This takes leadership, commitment, and a strategic long term view. There are no short term solutions or quick fixes.

#### Question #3

Drug addiction is not a victimless crime and laws must be obeyed. Nevertheless the traditional war on drugs has failed for many communities and alternative approaches beyond incarceration and more towards prevention and treatment, early intervention through education must be considered. Social services, public safety & education must align themselves though communication, and shared goals to protect both the individual & community as a whole.

### Joseph Merritt

Republican



Merritt grew up in Bloomfield and has served over 25 years on the Town Council. During that time he has served as Minority Leader and on the Finance, Public Safety, Golf Course, Police Building, Library Renovation Building Committees. He also served with the West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District (2000-to 2010, Chairman, 2004-to 2008). He was Founder/Owner/Manager of Merritt Machine Co. (1984-2002) and Owner of J.M. Metals, LLC (2002 - 2012) following a career at Hartford Special Inc. of Simsbury, CT. He has received degrees from the MIT Sloan School of Finance and Dartmouth College. He also served in the United States Naval Reserve. He is married for 50 years to Beverlee S. Merritt and has 3 children and 7 grandchildren.

#### Question #1

Bloomfield's debt and annual debt service is the highest in history and one of the highest in the region per capita. This is giving us our high mill rate. We cannot afford bonding until our debt decreases over the next few years.

#### Question #2

We have done very well in economic development and can afford to pick and choose what is best for Bloomfield. We need to focus sustaining a village milieu in our center and avoid urbanization.