

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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1. Tell us about yourself and how your experiences will make you a good candidate for this office:

I was elected to the Board of Selectmen in 2022 after serving for 5 years on the Finance Commission. I made the decision to run for Selectman shortly after my retirement from a career in human resources management. The timing seemed right for me to dedicate my time and experience to expand my service to Norwood, the town where I was born and raised.

As Selectman I serve on a number of committees including the Capital Outlay Committee, Middle School Building Committee and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. I am the current chair of the Board and a 31-year member of Town Meeting. As a Finance Commissioner, I learned a lot about how the town raises revenue to fund the many services it provides to its residents. And as a Selectmen, I know how the town delivers services such as public safety, public works, water and sewer, and Norwood Light services to its residents and businesses. As a result of serving on many committees during my 8 years in elected positions, I have developed a reputation for working hard to solve issues and I've developed excellent working relationships with my Board colleagues as well as other elected and appointed officials and town staff.

During my first term of office, I used these experiences to advocate for improving town services to residents. These include sponsoring the Town Meeting article to develop a 10-year comprehensive plan, the first major town wide master plan in 30 years. I led the initiative for the town to pilot a curbside food composting program to divert tons of food waste from our trash removal service. I also led the effort for the Board to adopt a formal approach for approving and evaluating annual performance goals and objectives for the General Manager. As Chair of the Capital Outlay Committee, I presented the FY24 and FY25 Capital Improvement Plans for the Town Meeting. These plans have resulted in significant improvements in road repair, water service delivery, and public facilities such as the new Hawes Pool. These plans also resulted in the replacement of aging fire equipment and an ambulance.

I am an active member of the community serving as a volunteer on the Norwood Concert Committee and Food Pantry. I also volunteer for a number of other community activities including Norwood Trails, Earth Day Celebration, Community Food Forest and the Community Garden.

My wife, Michelle, and I raised our daughter here in Norwood and we both are vested in helping to ensure Norwood's future is as bright and rich as its past.

2. What do you think is the biggest challenge Norwood is facing right now and what would you do to address it?

I believe there are actually 2 significant challenges that Norwood is facing: funding town services and reopening Norwood Hospital. Please see question 4 for my ideas regarding funding services and balancing the budget.

We need to have Norwood Hospital fully constructed and operating as an acute care facility. This is what the State Department of Public Health (DPH) determined were needed in the region in 2021. On behalf of the Board, I wrote to the Governor requesting her assistance with reopening the hospital. I also have met with our state delegation, spoken with Congressman Steve Lynch, attended and spoke at the October DPH public hearing and communicated with other select board members in the hospital's primary service area.

The services that need to be restored at the hospital include acute care services such as in-patient and out-patient services, surgical services, emergency room care, cardiac cath services just to name a few. After months of lobbying, meetings with local legislators, conversations with operators and the property owner, we were finally successful in getting the Commonwealth to engage on the issue by organizing a regional task force. This task force will explore how the region can work together to put forward recommendations to the Governor on how the hospital can be reopened. The 250,000 residents of the primary service area deserve to have these acute care services restored to the region.

The Board has supported these efforts by collaborating with our state delegation, lobbying the Governor and appointing General Manager Tony Mazzucco to lead the effort to establish the task force needed to tackle this issue.

The Board can continue to support this task force by organizing our members to meet with regional select boards and town councils in the 12-town primary service area. We need to engage with our Select Board colleagues across the region and seek their support for the activities of the task force and get their help in persuading the Commonwealth to act on the task force's recommendations.

To learn more about how we can all help restore Norwood Hospital services, please visit this website: finishthejobnorwood.com

3. What do you think should be included in Norwood's Comprehensive Plan?

I serve as the Board's representative to the Comprehensive Plan Committee. In 2023, I presented to Town Meeting the article requesting the development of a Comprehensive Plan. Norwood lacked a planning document that summarized resident input on the future development of the town. The Comprehensive Plan, once completed, will provide elected officials with guidance on how the town residents see Norwood's development over the next 10 years.

By state statute, the plan must include sections on land use and zoning, housing, economic development, historic, arts and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and public facilities and a transportation section. Our plan will include all of these elements.

Since a comprehensive plan is a visioning exercise, it's important that the plan seeks a lot of public input. That is the most important part of developing a 10-year comprehensive plan. The Committee is conducting surveys and small group meetings (Meetings in a Box) to listen to residents and collect their input for use in developing a comprehensive plan. This is very important as the Comprehensive Plan will serve as a guide to town boards and committees as to how the town manages its growth and development over the next 10 years.

Please use this link to learn more about Norwood 2035 Comprehensive Plan:
[Norwood 2035 Comprehensive Plan Website](#)

4. What is an important issue that you would like the Board of Selectmen to address that they are currently not?

This question speaks to change. I have led changes adopted by the Board. I was successful in implementing a formal annual performance review for the General Manager and I was able to get the support of the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board to support a Town Meeting Article for a town master plan (now known as Norwood 2035 Comprehensive Plan).

What I would like the Selectmen to do now is focus on resolving our budget balancing issue. We have produced an FY26 Budget for approval at the May Town Meeting. To fund operations and services, over \$7 million in free cash reserves was needed to balance the budget. Free Cash is generated when town revenues exceed the budget or expenses were less than what Town Meeting appropriated. The amount of free cash can vary greatly from year to year. This is why free cash should not be viewed as a source for funding ongoing operations and services over the long term.

While Norwood has been able to weather the financial challenges presented by a post-pandemic economy and inflation, we have relied on our free cash reserves to balance the budget. Those reserves are the result of good financial and economic development planning by the town; however, they likely will not be sufficient to balance our budgets in the future.

I have proposed that the Board work with other elected boards as well as town and school management to address the deficit between revenues and expenditures. We have some important questions to answer such as how can Norwood provide the quality services residents expect while funding them through regularly recurring revenue and not from our free cash reserves?

I suggest that town and school management, and elected officials from the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Commission and School Committee establish a working group to examine our 5-year financial forecast and take a deep dive into the town's revenue sources and projections, economic growth projections, staffing levels, service levels and our ongoing financial obligations. Most importantly, I would like this working group to examine how the town can balance its budget without using free cash reserves. This would allow department heads to project their budgets using recurring revenue sources such as the tax levy, state aid and local revenue receipts. This would provide the working group with information on how such a budget impacts operations and services.

The FY26 budget included cost cutting by the General Government and the School Department. Further cost cutting is likely needed to cut expenses further to balance the budget in future fiscal years. However, we need to be clear as to what the impact to services and operations would be

under those circumstances. The good news is that we should have time to do this work as our FY26 proposed budget is well on the way for review and approval at the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Please consider giving Bob Donnelly one of your two votes for Board of Selectmen on April 7!!!
Thank you for your consideration!!

For additional information on my campaign, please visit my campaign website:

bobdonnelly4norwood.com