

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS CANDIDATES GUIDE

2008

Valerie Wormell – Board of Selectmen

No Photo
Available

Background and qualifications:

I am a happily married Westford resident with two children, working to serve my family, church, schools or community. I am the chair of the Board of Selectmen, finishing my first term. I have also been the Board's clerk. I am a communicant of St. Catherine's, former CCD teacher, PTO volunteer, coach and League of Women Voters member.

Besides being a Selectmen, I have served the Town on the Tax Classification Study, Bylaw Review, Senior Center Needs, Comprehensive Master Plan, Policy and Procedure, Representative Town Government Study and many ad hoc committees.

I have a degree in chemical engineering from Miami University and have worked as a research department manager for Procter & Gamble and W.R. Grace. I have also worked as a quality control consultant, baker, farmer and for the Middlesex Conservation District.

My chemical engineering degree has been invaluable when faced with the Abbot School oil release. The oil release is expected to be resolved in half the time a spill of its magnitude would take and I successfully lobbied the state legislature for \$1.5M in clean up funds. I will continue to put the same energy toward the perchlorate problem, Town budget and resident needs.

1. Why did you choose to run for Board of Selectmen?

I am running for reelection to the Westford Board of Selectmen to continue fulfilling the promises made during my first campaign. I have never forgotten these promises. I wanted to change the way business is conducted by the Board and not accept "that's the way it's always been done," but rather begin putting policy in writing. I have put more new policies in place than past boards. Written policy makes a difference. The Town received the 2008 e-Government Award from Common Cause for transparency in government by posting Selectmen's minutes to the Town web site as a result of written Board policy.

The second promise was, "I firmly believe that Westford is in need of long range growth management and financial planning." I have been serving on the Comprehensive Master Plan Committee developing a 10-year plan for balanced growth, resource protection, transportation, housing, governance and economic development. The plan is a remarkable balance, with new ideas, such as expedited permitting, transfer of development rights, and funding sources. Incorporated into the Master Plan is the Long Range Fiscal Policy, which I also helped craft. I want to see to the plans implementation in a controlled and fiscally responsible manner.

2. In light of the recent disastrous house fires, given the geographical size of Westford, and knowing insurance rates are affected by response times, how would you propose funding staffing for the Roger's fire station?

Staffing Rogers is in the best interest of the WHOLE community. You cannot put a price on life or safety. The station is in proximity to 5 schools, housing 2800 children and the largest commercial area with thousands of employees. The station is located within the fastest growing cohort of older adults.

Funding 8 firefighters will require difficult choices, even with a Federal SAFER grant. A long and short term strategy is needed to provide sustainable funding. The immediate options are to slash amenities, such as solid waste disposal, reduce service levels, including schools, a modest override or hope for increased state aid. These choices are not palatable. Time is needed to put a long term strategy in place. Immediately stop waiving development fees, continue the hiring freeze, and aggressively pursue new revenue streams, such as utility pole tax, contracting Town services to neighboring communities and collecting fees for private use of municipal property. Long term, increase commercial property value and the tax base. Use state economic development tools to fill existing commercial space and promote new local businesses. Make Westford as desirable a place to work as it is to live with improvements in infrastructure. It can be done!