

Questions & Answers

→ Why do you feel you are the best BOF candidate for Redding?

- ✓ I have the experience, professional background, and temperament to play an integral role in working with other elected town officials and community leaders to keep Redding one of the best small towns in America. I have spent 12 years on the Board of Education, and I have spent 20 years as a management consultant and corporate executive. I will hit the ground running with an intimate understanding of the issues and pressures facing town resources. I know what it means to create realistic budgets, manage efficient spending, make payroll, and search for new revenue sources.
- ✓ While on the Board of Education, I was a strong and challenging voice for long-term planning and new ways to effectively and efficiently improve education outcomes. I was instrumental in the formation of the BOF long-term capital projects committee and co-chaired the successful BOE facilities/long-term capital project committee.
- ✓ I believe my town government experience and professional background provide me with a unique set of skills to help the new Board of Finance define and communicate a financial vision for our future, identify and nurture new sources of revenue, and work with the other town boards and the entire community to find cost-effective solutions to fund the Redding we value.
- ✓ To maintain the quality of Redding long-term, we need to reduce our reliance on residential property taxes and find new ways to more efficiently deliver the quality services we need. That requires better planning, better thinking, and better collaboration.
- ✓ I believe I am uniquely qualified to help the Board of Finance communicate the financial vision for our future, to identify and nurture new sources of revenue, and work with the other town boards and entire community to find cost-effective solutions to fund the Redding we love.

→ Do you feel a finance background is important to be on the BOF?

- ✓ I absolutely agree that financial acumen and financial management experience is an important qualification for the BOF. Financial management has been a major part of my career. I have spent more than 20 years as a management consultant, corporate officer, and CEO. I know what it means to plan strategically, find more effective spending solutions, and search for new revenue. I have raised money in the capital markets, overseen annual audits and SEC filings, and I know what crushing debt looks like. I have the financial management experience to quickly assess the issues and opportunities – and when I have a question, I know to rely on the multiple professional resources supporting the town and BOF.

- ✓ Financial acumen is an important qualification, but certainly not the only one. To protect and lead the financial health of the town, you also need to be strategic, analytical, and a problem-solver. You need experience and intimacy with the operating budget drivers – some of the best BOF members over the years have been like me, former BOE members – and know how to find solutions that deliver the most effective and efficient results consistent with the values of the town.

➔ What is your point of view on the senior tax credit? Are you in favor of it?

- ✓ Yes. Tax policy is a very important tool that the BOF has available to promote long-term town prosperity and financial health. The senior tax credit is an example of that policy – providing incentives for older residents to remain in town and support the town institutions. Older Reddingites are critical to the fabric of the town and the vitality of the community.
- ✓ Similar to the senior tax credit, the BOF needs to explore other tax policies that support town values and contribute to the long-term financial stability of the town. As a BOF member, I will encourage a comprehensive exploration of our tax incentives as part of our long-term financial planning.

➔ Collaboration between boards has broken down. How will you fix it?

- ✓ The distrust and lack of respect among the town boards is very disheartening. It is corrosive and results in weaker thinking, poorer solutions, and less effective budgets for the town. The four boards are all elected officials, entrusted by the people of Redding to represent them and protect the values we hold dear. This issue is very important.
- ✓ I plan to work to restore mutual trust and respect. I believe the solution is part process including a frank discussion of our long-term budget pressures, and part attitude. The process I advocate for is to change the way the BOF leads the developing annual operating budgets. We need to have a 3-year rolling budget. We need to kick-off the annual process in September with a presentation from the BOF on the financial health of the town and its perspective on what the town can afford over the next 3 years. That “top-down” process will enable a public discourse on the operating budgets upstream, well in advance of springtime demands for cuts that seem arbitrary and capricious. Those responsible for the “bottom-up” budget development need to know what the targets are before they spend days and months developing their recommendations.
- ✓ The attitude part is to remember that the other three boards – the Board of Selectmen, Board of Education, and Region 9 – are also elected officials. Sworn to do what’s best for the town of Redding. They sincerely believe that what they advocate for is best for the town – both in breadth and depth of services and the cost to deliver it.
- ✓ I have that attitude and respect for the other three boards and I will bring that to the Board of Finance this November.

→ Are you supportive of Georgetown?

- ✓ I am enormously appreciative of the efforts of Julia Pemberton and the Board of Selectmen and others to find a way out of the mess that the town is currently in and to propose a solution that will be consistent with the values of the town and contribute to the tax base. And I pledge to help in any way I can as a Board of Finance member and taxpayer.
- ✓ That being said, I am also risk averse. I want to make sure that we strive for the upside, while protecting the town from the downside -- and that means developing alternatives. I am uncomfortable with the town getting into the development business, and I am loathe to the idea that taxpayers take on major financial risk. In the event the revenue or cost assumptions prove false or there is an economic collapse, it will be the taxpayers who will be saddled with bailing out the project.
- ✓ We need new sources of non-residential tax revenue. We cannot continue long-term to be in a situation where the town trade-off is either higher taxes or lower education spending. On the BOF, I will work to help make Georgetown a success, but also to identify solutions in addition to Georgetown in the event Georgetown doesn't materialize as we hope and plan.

→ Do you think our taxes are too high?

- ✓ Everyone wants lower taxes. The answer to "are our taxes too high" depends on who you ask. If you ask someone like me, who has lived in Redding in the same house for 20 years and have seen their taxes go up by 30% in the past 7 years, they might say yes. Someone on a fixed income might say yes, but someone who is more affluent or who lives in Redding on the weekends, the answer may be "not really."
- ✓ The taxes on the median price home in Redding are **lower** than all of the other 7 towns in our DRG peer group. Furthermore, the monthly carrying costs on a 3500 sq ft, 4 bedroom house in Redding are, along with Easton, the lowest in that same group -- half of what they would be in Darien despite having a mill rate that is nearly double Darien's.
- ✓ The point is that for people considering moving to Redding, you get great schools, beautiful countryside **and** more house for your money.
- ✓ But for the people who live in Redding today, tax increases are a concern. We need to work hard to make sure we are as efficient as possible in delivering the services the town demands, and we also need to use tax policies to make sure tax burdens are fair and used to promote the long-term well-being and prosperity of the town.

→ Do you think we are “punching above our weight” when it comes to school spending?

- ✓ Quality public schools are our obligation to our children and critical to the prosperity of Redding. Excellent schools are a shared value among Democrats and Republicans. Both party platforms advocate for great schools.
- ✓ I am committed to keeping the Redding and Easton schools in the top tier of schools in Connecticut: DRG A. The peer group towns of Weston, Ridgefield, Wilton, New Canaan, Westport, and Darien are the benchmark towns that keep Redding's appeal to prospective homeowners high and our property values more robust.
- ✓ Redding spends nearly \$35M a year to educate our children. As a percent of our Grand List, the spending is comparable to Easton (2.1%), lower than Weston (2.3%), but higher than the other, larger DRG A towns.
- ✓ Spending per pupil is a metric often cited, but it is not the true marginal cost of educating a child or the definitive measurement of the return on our education dollars. I don't believe adding 20 more kindergarten children justifies a \$500K budget increase, nor does a 20 student enrollment decline justify a \$500K cut.
- ✓ Compared to other small, high-rated school districts (~5 schools, <4K students) around the country, Redding's spending appears to be in line. So I don't think we are “punching above our weight.”
- ✓ Better long-term planning, better visibility to future budget challenges, and better respect and collaboration among our elected officials and town employees will help us continue to deliver education excellence at the best cost to the taxpayers.

→ What specific plans would you recommend to improve the budget process?

- ✓ The Board of Finance needs to lead the town budget process in a much different way. It needs to begin with a frank articulation of the financial horizon for the town and provide a financial roadmap that defines the challenges and opportunities ahead. Such a clear statement of the town health prospects will enable better long-term planning and more relevant public discourse, leading to more successful solutions.
- ✓ The BOF must provide direction on what it believes the town can afford aligned to Redding's values and vision for the future. Up to now, that leadership has been lacking or not well understood.
- ✓ The BOF should implement a rolling 3-year budget planning process. This process would begin each fall with a review of the 3-year pro forma annual operating budgets from each of the three boards (Board of Education, Selectmen, and Region 9) along with a similar review of the rolling 3-year projection of our town's financial health and revenues.

- ✓ This more transparent public discussion at the start of every annual operating budget cycle means greater and earlier visibility to the financial challenges facing the town and will provide a more meaningful opportunity for town discussion and debate and a focus on affirming our values and where we need to spend or not spend and invest.
- ✓ Finding sustainable efficiencies in the budget may require more than one budget cycle to identify, regional or public-private partnerships which can be complicated and take time to explore and implement, or require new ways of thinking about delivering the desired services altogether.

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