

## Eric Barber-Mingo Voters' Guide Responses

*How is your background related to the Select Board position you are seeking? Please include your participation in any town or community-related activities.*

Select Board Members are the chief policy-making officials in Westford. Effective policy-making requires active listening – eyes and ears open; mouth shut – to collect facts that support identified policies. Effective policy-making also requires effective argumentation, namely an ability to cogently and ethically justify policies by marshaling collected facts into concise arguments that survive public scrutiny. Active listening and effective argumentation have been my stock in trade during my 28 years as a trial attorney, and I will use these attributes on the Select Board.

Select Board Members are also responsible for the enforcement of all town bylaws and regulations. I am ready for this because I have spent my entire career applying laws to facts to determine proper outcomes. I am also ready for this because I know that “enforcement” requires fairness, equity and empathy, and my 28 years in court have taught me that lack of same inspires resistance and failure. I will most certainly foster said fairness, equity and empathy as a Select Board Member.

Regarding my town/community activities: Presently, I am Co-Chair of Westford's nascent DEI Committee. In a few months' time in that role, I have forged relationships with Westford leaders and begun to help further Westford's commitment to equitable practices. In the past, I have served Westford by serving on the School Advisory Councils in the Miller School and the Day School, coaching flag football and softball teams, and helping manage the Day School Chess Club.

For more information, see [www.ebm4sbm.com](http://www.ebm4sbm.com)!

*Why did you decide to run for Select Board Member this year?*

Two things launched my candidacy.

First was my belief that I have the interpersonal skills and temperament needed to be an inclusive and responsive – and thereby effective – Select Board Member. To me, this means having sufficient patience to avoid snap decisions, having sufficient self-confidence and “thick skin” to remain diplomatic and empathetic while listening to and responding to concerns raised on all sides of important issues, and having sufficient judgment and communication skills to make and support tough decisions when decision time comes.

Westford really needs this approach to governance right now. Our pandemic-stressed times have left budgets tight, emotions raw, and people huddled in “safe” or “familiar” corners where, too often, effective communication and cooperation occur only between like-minded people. Given the success I have had in resolving tension-filled legal matters – criminal matters, family disputes, and high-stakes corporate disputes – while making few (if any) enemies, I feel I have what it takes to bridge gaps and get things done in the current environment. So, no better time than the present!

Second, I am running now because I am responding to a literal call to service. Several members of the Westford community who are familiar with my values, abilities and background reached out to me and encouraged me to step up and use those attributes to serve Westford as a Select Board Member. I was both humbled and energized by their collective ask, so I said “Yes!” and jumped in with two feet!

***If elected, what issues will be a priority for you and how would you address them?***

- (1) I will promote effective and inclusive governance by (a) remaining the polite and approachable person that I always strive to be, no matter how tough the situation; (b) giving everyone a voice by actively listening to, and responding to, concerns raised on all sides of issues; and (c) justifying Town policies by marshaling collected facts into clear and concise arguments that withstand public scrutiny.
- (2) I will help forge equitable access to every aspect of Westford Public Schools, and I will help ensure that WPS embraces the cultures and experiences of each student. How? By fostering productive relationships with all members of the School Committee and with our new Superintendent of Schools, and then cementing their commitment to these goals, period. It is that straightforward, and I've already begun this work.
- (3) I want to improve police-to-community relations. So, I support funding initiatives to (i) screen out negative biases in any active officer; (ii) enhance de-escalation and mental illness recognition skills; and (iii) enhance public accountability for officer wrongdoing.
- (4) For pedestrian safety, I will support initiatives to gauge walking demand on our busiest roads and to build a greater network of sidewalks, crosswalks and streetlights on those roads.
- (5) I want to eliminate Internet “dead zones” in town; the pandemic has highlighted this weakness. To do so, I will champion any sensible and affordable initiatives to build cell towers and to improve wired Internet delivery to all homes and businesses.