A Newsletter from the Stonington RTC



Stonington Points



Town Elections Special Edition | September 2023



In This Campaign Issue

Board of Selectman Candidates
Board of Finance Candidates
Board of Education Candidates
Voter Guide
Join Us for Upcoming Events
Town Meeting Dates

SRTC Meetings

Third Thursday of Every Month 7PM Start Stonington Police Station

Please join us for the remaining 2023 Meetings:

> Oct 19 Nov 16 Dec 21

Join Us This Campaign Season 2023

We hope you had a healthy and relaxing summer with friends and family. The SRTC is energized and ready to launch into the next couple of months that will be packed with crucial campaign initiatives for the election of Stonington town officials. We hope you will join us in keeping Stonington a wonderful place to live and raise a family. Please read further to learn more about our Republican candidates for First Selectman, Selectman, Board of Finance, and Board of Education. We are excited to present a slate of highly qualified and committed candidates all of whom live in and love this town. Together, they will strive to keep taxes low, ensure safe streets, foster open lines of communication, and maintain critical infrastructures and quality education without overburdening taxpayers. With your vote, they will work to achieve each and every one of these objectives to preserve our quality of life. You can bet on it!

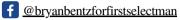


Vote the Republican Team

Bryan Bentz

First Selectman







Bryan is deeply rooted in Stonington, where he was raised and has actively served the community. He loves this town and wants to keep it a quality place to live and work. "To me, the First Selectman is the steward for maintaining the unique character of this town so it will be enjoyed by future generations," Bryan explains. "This means not taxing people out of their homes or developing our town in ways that change its very nature. It also means putting in place policies that ensure excellent constituent services and financially stable budgets."

Bryan graduated from Stonington High School in 1977 and went on to earn a degree in Physics from MIT, where he met his wife, Maryann. Together, they returned to Stonington and raised their three children, all of whom were educated through Stonington Public Schools. Currently, he is the owner of Bentz Engineering.

He has served Stonington in vital roles on key organizations. Bryan joined the Quiambaug Volunteer Fire Company and completed Firefighter One training. He was on the 1998 Charter Revision Commission, was Treasurer and board member of the Stonington Historical Society, and two-term Chairman of the Stonington Republican Town Committee. His contributions on the Board of Education's technology committee led to an appointment on the Board of Finance (BOF), where he served for 20 years, during which time schools were renovated and the town achieved AAA bond rating.

As a BOF member, some of those years as Chairman, Bryan knows the ins and outs of town operations and understands its challenges. He has built working relationships with all municipal departments. "On the BOF," Bryan explains, "I listen to different points of view and requests and understand resident's needs. My job is to reconcile conflicting demands, craft practical solutions in the best interests of the community, and communicate those decisions transparently and honestly." Being an innovator in the technological field, he has also proven he can pivot with changing circumstances, such as shifts in availability of resources and emergence of new information.

If elected, one of Bryan's major goals will be to keep our tax burden low while funding key services through implementation of responsible budgets. "I have seen on the BOF there are always forces pulling us towards more spending, and it requires judgement to understand those things that are vital and must be done now versus at a later point, perhaps when grant money is available to ease the burden on taxpayers." Bryan will work to resolve questions surrounding the Pawcatuck Water Loop initiative and to finalize that project, vital to public safety. He also intends to develop plans to complete outstanding projects to which substantial resources have already been dedicated, such as the Mystic River Boathouse Park.

Bryan wants to ensure that our economic development initiatives, which are geared to providing employment opportunities and keeping

Stonington affordable for all residents, do not "radically change the nature of the town, its rich history, and beautiful open spaces." In cooperation with the Economic Development Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission, which will finalize zoning changes over the next 6 months, "we can encourage businesses to come to Stonington that would benefit the community, while ensuring minimal impact on traffic and municipal services," he states.

Bryan's long-term vision for Stonington includes mitigating some of its glaring risks. He intends to begin careful assessment of infrastructures threatened by flooding that has occurred over several years and that will continue to pose a risk to the community. Bryan acknowledges, "One of the greater risks is our sewage treatment infrastructure. It is important to have the discussions now to address those challenges, especially as we face questions of development." Bryan is solution-oriented and committed to results that keep Stonington the coastal gem that we have all grown to love.



Deborah Downie

Selectwoman







Debbie Downie, a Selectwoman for the past two consecutive terms, has lived in Stonington for 29 years and has volunteered on many local organizations. Her combination of municipal experience coupled with her professional credentials makes her an ideal candidate. "As a Selectwoman, I am first and foremost a public servant and believe I have served this community well for the last 4 years," Debbie says. "During my tenure, I have worked hard to make our town a better place to live and hope to continue to do so."

Debbie and her husband, Tom Downie, have three children and three grandchildren. All of their children attended Stonington Public Schools and graduated from Stonington High School. Debbie was active in the school community, serving as co-chairman of the PTO or School-Based Improvement Teams at Deans Mill and Mystic Middle School and as chairman of SHS Music and Drama Boosters. She is the proud mother of an active-duty soldier. Her son, a Captain in the Army, has been deployed three times in foreign wars.

She is a former trustee of the Denison Homestead and Nature Center, and volunteered with both the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, serving as a Merit Badge Counselor, Eagle Scout Advisor and Advancement Chairman of Mystic Boy Scout Troop 76. Debbie has been an active member of the following: Stonington Inland Wetlands Commission for over 15 years, including as Chairman and Vice Chairman; Stonington Water Pollution Control Authority and Storm Water Task Force; and K-12 Building Committee for Deans Mill and West Vine Elementary Schools. She was on the Stonington Board of Education for two terms, where she helped on committees to select a Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and additional administrators.

Vote the Republican Team

Deborah Downie (Cont'd)

Professionally, Debbie holds degrees in Geology and Biology from Bucknell University and a master's degree from the State University of New York. For 35 years, Debbie has worked as an Environmental Consultant and Project Manager and is a Connecticut Licensed Environmental Professional (LEP). Her expertise in environmental affairs earned her a position on a State working group, representing Stonington as it works through regulatory changes.

Debbie points to several accomplishments as Selectwoman and notes that she has "worked to foster important avenues for open communication between town departments and the public." Notably, she facilitated the Pawcatuck Water Loop project, helped appropriate \$2.7 million to address this public safety issue, and prepared the regulatory assessments, saving the town several thousand dollars. Additionally, she worked with the BOE and school facilities staff on a cost-saving energy agreement and led efforts with Stonington schools, federal agencies, and legal consultants to ensure that the town remains compliant with PCB regulations. She has worked closely with CT DEEP on projects to resolve questions surrounding environmental matters (e.g., potential soil contamination), initiatives that came in under budget with her guidance. Debbie also assisted the Planning Department, Inland Wetlands, and P&Z Commissions to protect town interests and avoid environmental liabilities. One of her more rewarding achievements was proactively assembling a team to conserve over 200 acres of open space on Al Harvey Road through a partnership between the town and Trust for Public Land, US Fish and Wildlife, Aquarion, and Avalonia.

As Selectwomen, Debbie will pursue several important goals. She will work to complete projects started over the past 2-4 years, including the Mystic River Boathouse Park and Threadmill. She emphasizes that the town must understand better and find solutions to challenges associated with coastal erosion and resiliency. This endeavor is twofold and requires that the town "ensures that it is financially prepared and addresses critical issues related to infrastructure threatened by increased flooding, including assessment of the feasibility of operating three sewage treatment plants, options for stormwater drainage in Mystic, and safety of some coastal bridges and roadways." Debbie says she will continue to lend her valuable expertise on environmental issues to assist town departments and regulators in ongoing efforts related to the monitoring of landfill groundwater, PCB surveillance, stormwater drainage upgrade projects, and the Water Loop initiative.

She will work to keep our town affordable for senior citizens and young professionals. "We need to monitor town finances and find a balance between wants and needs," she states. "We must maintain our infrastructure, but we require a plan to do so sensibly, while considering future needs and expenditures." Opening communication between town agencies and with residents will remain a top priority. "We have only single digit percentages of voters weighing in on important town issues," Debbie says. "I hope to foster more involvement in elections and municipal decisions."

David Brown Board of Finance



@davidbrown



David is a native of Stonington where he was born and raised and graduated from Stonington High School in 1966. He is a dedicated and proud member of this community and has consistently done his part to give back to the town. He seeks a position on the Board of Finance (BOF) to "keep our taxes low while providing critical services that preserve the quality of life here and that foster affordability in maintaining a home in Stonington."

David is known for his sound leadership on several community posts. David served on the Pawcatuck River Harbor Management Commission, the Stonington Police Commission, and the 2004 Charter Revision Commission. He was a dedicated member of the Mystic Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors for several years and was President of the Groton Rotary Club. Most recently, he was an active member of the Stonington Veterans Memorial Committee to build a monument to pay tribute to the over 7,000 Stonington veterans that have ever served from World War II to the present. His efforts directly helped to raise thousands of dollars to complete the memorial. David has proven his ability to build strong community relations through his work as the liaison for his Providence College alumni group in the Washington County/New London area.

He has extensive hands-on experience in overseeing finances and establishing realistic budgets. For several years, he served on the Endowment Board of Trustees for the Fairview Odd Fellows Home of Connecticut and was responsible for overseeing the firm hired to invest the Home's endowment, which totaled over \$2,000,000.00. During his 7 years on the Police Commission, he helped formulate the department's annual budget.

As a prospective member of the BOF, David has important objectives. "I am a senior citizen. I feel the Board could use someone who has a different perspective and will look out for the interests of our retirees and seniors by working to keep our mil rate one of the lowest in eastern Connecticut," he says. Ensuring that Stonington maintains its AAA bond rating is too a high priority for David. By making well-reasoned and practical choices, David also wants to see that our children have the necessary tools to receive a first-rate education without a ballooning budget. He wants to guarantee that our police and fire departments have the funding necessary to protect us. "The challenge is always how to spend the taxpayer's money in the most judicious manner possible," David says. "I have worked with both political parties over the years to come to consensus on some very difficult issues and to formulate practical solutions." On the BOF, he hopes to support this community in a way that preserves the way of life here for generations to come.

Vote the Republican Team

John Prue Board of Finance







John Prue has lived in Stonington with his wife, Teresa Giordano, for 28 years. They have two grown children, who are Stonington High School and UCONN graduates. John is currently a Project Manager for Waterford Hotel Group and has been the owner of a small woodworking and display business for the last 27 years. He has held leadership positions on vital Stonington boards and commissions. His experience as a public servant and as a private sector businessperson, especially one attuned to the needs of small businesses, makes him uniquely qualified to serve on the BOF. "I am committed to making well-measured decisions to enable the town to continue its growth, while resisting pressures for unnecessary and costly expenditures," John says. "I have made myself available and listened to everyone's concerns in this community, without exception, for the good of Stonington."

From 2007-2010, John served on the Zoning Board of Appeals. In 2010, he became a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) and remained on the P&Z until 2016, serving as Vice Chair and Chair during his tenure. John also took an active role on the Plan of Conservation and Development from 2012 -2015. More recently, he was a Selectman for the Town of Stonington from 2017-2019. While serving on these bodies, John was faced with the questions and challenges that accompany growth and changing economic circumstances. He effectively assessed the town's resources and needs to achieve the most beneficial solutions for the community. "My background and experiences provide a balanced perspective on all the issues confronting the town," he explains. "My skill set complements the existing Board of Finance. I have built relationships with all areas of the town government and am able to work cooperatively with individuals with diverse opinions."

John's priorities as a prospective member of the BOF include "prudently managing the town's needs without breaking the backs of taxpayers." He adds that "items such as roads, bridges, and sewer plants will need planning and financial commitments from the town. These are public health and safety issues that must be addressed, but at the same time, they will allow grand list growth to keep taxes down." He emphasizes it is incumbent on the town to retain its AAA bond rating, attained while he was Selectman. John promises to bring the experience and knowledge necessary to help the BOF fulfill its responsibility of setting sound fiscal policies and securing Stonington's financial stability.

Katie Gauthier **Board of Education**



f <u>@katiegauthierforstoningtonboardofeducation</u>



Katie was raised in Mystic and attended Stonington Public Schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, graduating from SHS in 2000. She and her husband settled in Stonington with their son, citing the school system as a major factor in settling here. Having spent nearly 10 years as a first and third grade teacher in an elementary school, Katie is well-versed in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and appreciates the challenges teachers face. She believes that knowledge paired with being a mom of a student in Stonington schools is essential to service on the Board of Education (BOE). "I can be an advocate for parents and teachers. I understand both roles and how critical the teacher-parent partnership is," she explains. "I cannot stress how important it is to have at least one BOE member that has a child currently enrolled in the district. Being this person puts me on the same playing field as all parents, so they are more likely to speak freely, and I am more likely to understand their concerns."

After obtaining a bachelor's degree in Business Administration at Northeastern University and working for a higher education internet company in Boston, Katie returned to the area to pursue a master's degree in Education. Upon receiving her master's, she became an elementary level teacher in Groton. She currently works alongside her husband and together, they operate a busy flight school and air charter operation at the Groton/New London Airport. In this role, Katie listens to the diverse needs of customers and employees, much like she listened to the different needs of her students in the classroom when tailoring her instruction so they could succeed. She will bring to the Board of Education that same genuine interest in addressing the concerns of residents, staff, and families and will remain "open-minded, seek to see situations from multiple perspectives, and will provide honest, yet compassionate responses."

Katie maintains an active presence on the Stonington RTC, serving on the fundraising committee. Additionally, she frequently volunteers at Deans Mill and assists with school events. Being a parent volunteer has sparked her interest in serving a greater role in our community, prompting her decision to run for the Board of Education. As Katie explains, "I want to be involved so that students of this community take away similar characteristics - so that they, too, want to give back in the same way I seek to do so today."

As a former teacher, Katie has identified sound goals for the BOE. She understands the relationship between the community and the classroom should be a collaborative partnership for the betterment

Vote the Republican Team

Katie Gauthier (Cont'd)

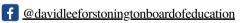
of our children. Katie will engage with the community to hear and respond to concerns and will ensure Stonington school staff have the support they need. Recognizing that investment in the highest quality education for our children and their future is one of the most critical that our community can make, she will commit to developing responsible school budgets. Katie assures, "I will be sure that any budget put forth by the BOE will be an ideal balance of keeping costs as low as possible without forsaking the quality of education that our next generation deserves." Additionally, she will promote a positive school environment, which leads to better outcomes. "Companies that value their employees find the most success. The same should be true in our schools," she says. "We must be dedicated to creating the best school climate where students and teachers thrive. This includes practices set by the BOE to ensure teachers look forward to work and feel valued. When that happens, students are equally as happy to attend school."

To maintain long term success in education, Katie recognizes the town has challenges to address. The teacher shortage is a nationwide issue, and Stonington is no exception to that problem. She will investigate how the district retains its current teachers and staff and policies for promoting from within. While she understands fewer and fewer are pursuing education degrees, "Stonington still should be a top contender for the smartest and brightest entering the workforce," Katie stresses. "I think we can come up with strategies to attract and entice new staff to work within our incredible community."



David Lee Board of Education







David has called Stonington home with his wife, Rhandi, for over 36 years. His parents fostered a strong tradition of volunteerism and civic duty, and he has carried on their legacy through his service on many community organizations. David currently seeks to give back to his hometown by serving on the Board of Education (BOE) to ensure that "all students reach their full potential." He says, "We owe it to our students to offer them the education they need to prepare and succeed in whatever life-path they choose."

The Stonington school system was one reason David and Rhandi chose to raise their family here. They are fortunate to have two children who attended Stonington schools from kindergarten all the

way through high school graduation and who pursued further education at competitive programs. David credits their success to the educational foundation they received at Stonington schools. Both children were actively involved on athletic teams and various extracurricular activities, making David keenly aware of how important these activities are to opening doors at the college level and beyond. "I want the next generations to have access to the same opportunities for success. When our students prosper, so does our community," he said.

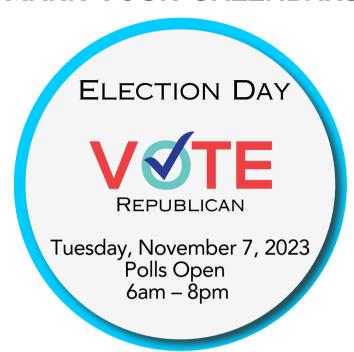
David has been an exemplary contributing member of our community. He served six years as a member of the Board of Deacons at Mystic Congregational Church, leading the Spiritual Life Committee. He volunteered at Pawcatuck Little League, assisting in grounds and field maintenance. In addition, David took classes required to become YMCA-certified and USA Swimming-certified as a Swim Official, a post he held for a combined 10 years. After a day of competition at one of his children's Stonington Crew events, he stepped in to offer help. For the next seven years, he was the assistant boatwright, helping the coach in shell repair, equipment refurbishment, and readying the shells for competition at regattas. He now volunteers on the Board of Directors for Stonington Community Rowing, which is engaged with the Town of Stonington, in creating a community rowing facility and public park at the planned Mystic Boathouse Park.

David began his career at United Builder's Supply in Westerly, RI and Niantic, CT, where he was an Inside Sales Representative and was later promoted to Assistant General Manager. He finished his career at Niantic Lumber, now part of the Ring's End Lumber family of stores, where he was Sales Manager, Product Consultant, and Estimator until he retired in December of 2020. He was responsible for staff training and development, workforce scheduling, trade show planning and implementation, and customer relations. He showed an astute eye for planning for the future and the ability to act quickly in response to new challenges. David worked to develop consensus among different and, sometimes, competing interests. His main goal was to make sure that his clients received the best product for the money they could spend. This objective is what you can expect David to bring to the BOE if elected. "I will work together with the BOE members to find a way to provide the best possible education our community can offer, for both the students and the taxpayer," he states.

David has outlined key goals as a BOE candidate. He will strive to provide clear communication from the BOE to parents and the community without the use of "education speak" to enhance transparency. David will prioritize looking at measures to "attract and retain teachers and paraprofessionals given today's staffing shortages." Hearing the concerns of parents, whom David recognizes as partners in their child's education, he will work on "accountability for improving student's state test scores." Moreover, David will uphold and support what he sees as the "four cornerstones of a school system: children, parents, teachers, and taxpayers."

Voter Guide: When, Where, How to Vote

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



Where to Vote

Stonington Polling Locations

District 1	Stonington Fire House, 100 Main St,
	Stonington
District 2	Board of Education District Office
	(Former Pawcatuck Middle School),
	40 Field St, Pawcatuck
District 3	St Michael Church Community
	Room, 60 Liberty St, Pawcatuck
District 4	Stonington Middle School, 204
	Mistuxet Ave, Mystic
District 5	Former School Administrative
	Offices, 49 North Stonington Rd,
	Old Mystic

To verify where you should vote on November 7, 2023, please consult the Town of Stonington website at www.stonington-ct.gov/registrars-of-voters/pages/polling-places. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the attachment to look up your street and determine your correct district and polling location prior to voting on Election Day. You may also contact the Registrar of Voters at 860-535-5054.

Remember There Are 2 Ways to Vote

- Vote in Person on Nov 7th, Election Day
- Vote by Absentee Ballot

How to Obtain Absentee Ballot

Absentee ballots may be obtained from the Stonington Town Clerk's office. You are eligible to receive an absentee ballot if you cannot appear at your assigned polling place on Election Day due to:

- 1) active service in the military
- 2) absence from town
- 3) illness or physical disability
- 4) religious tenets forbid secular activity on Election Day
- 5) duties as an election official at a polling place other than your own during all voting hours

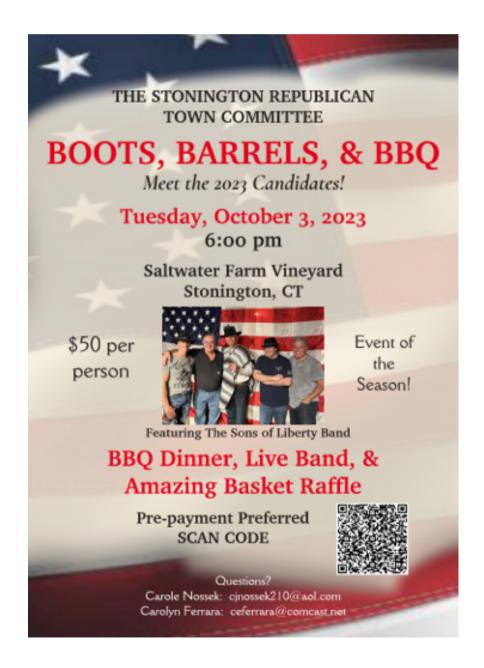
To receive your absentee ballot, you must complete and sign an application and return it to the Town Clerk. Please visit www.stonington-ct.gov/town-clerk and click on Absentee Ballot/Absentee Voting in the drop down menu on the left hand side of the page for more detailed information on the process of obtaining an absentee ballot. You may also call the Town Clerk's office at 860-535-5060 with questions.





Upcoming Events





Town Meetings

YOU'RE INVITED. LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD.

Remaining 2023 Regular Meetings of the Town of Stonington Boards

Stonington Board of Selectmen

2nd & 4th Wednesday of Every Month Stonington Police Station Community Rm 5:30 PM

Wed, Sep 27, 2023

Wed, Oct 11, 2023

Wed, Oct 25, 2023

Wed, Nov 8, 2023

Wed, Nov 22, 2023

Wed, Dec 13, 2023

Wed, Dec 27, 2023

Stonington Board of Education

Bd of Education District Office 40 Field St., Pawcatuck 6:30 PM

Thu, Oct 12, 2023

Thu, Nov 16, 2023

Thu, Dec 14, 2023

Stonington Board of Finance

1st Wednesday of Every Month Stonington Police Station Community Rm 7:15 PM

Wed, Oct 4, 2023

Wed, Nov 1, 2023

Wed, Dec 6, 2023



We want to hear from you!

For inquiries and/or to subscribe to our newsletter, please email info@stoningtongop.org

Please also visit our website, www.stoningtongop.org or our Facebook @StoningtonRTC.

Paid for by the Stonington Republican Town Committee. Approved by the above listed candidates.