

2021 Amherst Election Guide

Election Guide for Town Election, November 2, 2021



Pamela S. Rooney 42 Cottage Street Planner https://pamrooney4district4.org/	Amherst is a real estate investor's dream. Pressure for off-campus student accommodations feeds that demand. Greater density in the downtown and village centers can happen, but give more benefits to Amherst – lively facades, attractive public spaces, sidewalks with planting and seating areas, and some parking. Let's push for this.	Adoption of Community Safety Working Group recommendations, building up implementation year on year, is a good starting point. Support and carry through with CRESS as a program with long-term direct benefits to BIPOC that also carry important educational opportunities for the non-BIPOC community.
Anika M. Lopes 61 Chestnut Street Creative Entrepreneur http://www.anika4amherst.com	I think we should build bridges and start conversations with people who are building in our downtown and ask them to consider threats and opportunities we identify. To assure, without telling them how to do their jobs, that our vision of the future is respected and included in their plans.	Level up. Level the field. Learn from the past and decide the buck stops here. Implement all realizable opportunities to support our BIPOC youth so they feel loved, valued and respected by their town. Invest in them, open doors that teach and lead the way to generational wealth.
Candidate for District 5 Councilor Vote for 2	What are your thoughts about development in Amherst?	How can the Town Council support racial justice work in Amherst?
Shalini Bahl-Milne 78 Linden Ridge Road Mindfulness Researcher, Educator, and Consultant https://www.shalinifordistrict5.org	UMass growth contributes to our economy and culture but also increases a demand for housing. I support thoughtful development of housing near the university and on campus via public private partnerships to limit impact on neighborhoods and open spaces. We need affordable housing and homeownership and reduce racial inequities.	I co-sponsored the resolution to end structural racism in Amherst and the 2.5-day antiracism training for Town Councilors. Town Council should prioritize funding for a DEI officer and successful implementation of other racial justice goals including CSWG and AHRA recommendations in coordination with other partners like the library and schools.
Ana Devlin Gauthier 883 Bay Road Facilitator https://www.amherstana.com/	We need to ensure our zoning and planning policies reflect the needs and vision of our community, set a high bar for sustainability and affordable housing, enforce rental requirements, pursue grants for improvements wherever possible, and expand support for arts and culture in our downtown and village centers.	We must embrace community-centered outreach to create new pathways for engagement on council issues, committees and council itself. We must trust and support the committees which do this work (e.g. CSWG), and their recommendations. Councilors must work to unlearn and dismantle structures of inequity both personally and through policy.
Candidate for School Committee Vote for 5	How can the School Committee support civics education in our schools?	How can the School Committee support racial justice in the Amherst schools?
Peter M. Demling 20 Atwater Circle Software Engineer https://www.demlingforsc.org/	Periodically review and proactively update our civics curriculum. Continue to support safe student walk-outs and rallies in response to current events (Youth Climate Strike, Black Lives Matter, school shootings). Support and fund student advocacy groups and clubs. Encourage eligible students to register to vote.	Speak openly and honestly about the realities of institutional racism and white privilege when crafting policies and making decisions so that we ensure equitable opportunities for all students. Continue to provide training for staff, and continue to increase staff diversity through anti-bias hiring practices.
Irvin E. Rhodes 173 Pondview Drive Consultant	The school committee must support the inclusion of Civic education in the curriculum and encourage ways to be done in the classroom and outside the classroom. Appropriate opportunities for face-to-face classroom presentations by civic leaders should be made available to all students as a way of encouraging civic engagement.	The school committee as the policy-maker ensures that racial Justice policies are in place. However, no amount of policy support can support the school's pursuit of Racial Justice without the accompanying change in the minds, souls, and hearts of the wider school community, OUR COMMUNITY.
Phoebe Merriam 20 Western Lane Realtor https://www.facebook.com/PhoebeforSchoolCommittee	The SC needs to ensure adequate budget and resources needed for the important work our administration, teachers and staff must do to offer opportunities to learn about and participate in public outreach and programs designed to engage students in the work of civic engagement.	First, the school committee needs to be representative of the diversity of the town and the schools. Second, there needs to be an emphasis on training of all administration, teachers and staff to support racial equity and justice and the SC needs to hold the administration accountable to this.
Jennifer Shiao Page 291 Potwine Lane Communications and marketing https://www.jenniferpageamherst.com/	A critical part of education is preparing students to participate in a democracy. I will advocate for a curriculum that includes robust civic engagement and learning. Groups like Amherst Sunrise at ARHS are already leading the way when it comes to civic engagement at the local level.	I will advocate for policies that incorporate anti-racism practices into the everyday work of the district. We should be applying a racial justice lens to everything we do, but especially to our budgeting decisions, and setting of goals for the superintendent and ensuring that they are met.
Heather A. Lord 700 Riverglade Drive Apt. F Licensed Social Worker https://www.facebook.com/Heather-A-Lord-Hala-on-Amherst-School-Committee-106825711774936	Encourage the goal of increasing civic education as a way to understand democracy and become actively engaged in making our schools and town better. Great work around this is happening with some of our teachers, so also sharing what is being done increases awareness and shares strategies.	School Committee must make equity a priority and be representative of our students. We also should be trained so that the lens of equity is used when crafting policy and making decisions that impact practice. Every student has a right to a great education that is accessible and representative.
Benjamin Joseph Herrington 37 Southpoint Drive Assistant Director of Facilities, Amherst Public Schools http://www.BenjaminHerrington.com	While we don't deal directly with curriculum, we can certainly support and advocate for initiatives to add civics related courses. Public outreach is another avenue we can use to inform the public, minimally, about how our processes work as well as educating folks about how our local government operates.	We should continually create and support sound policies surrounding racial justice and awareness. Racial justice is only achieved through a vigilant approach that permeates every aspect of our lives, especially in our school system. Creating an atmosphere conducive to racial consciousness is key to moving towards a racially just society.
Allison Bleyler McDonald 43 Hop Brook Road Marketing & Communications https://allison-4-amherst.mailchimpsites.com/	Our schools have rich programs to support civics education for our students. Social studies curriculum at elementary and secondary schools engages students in deep research and advocacy on issues of interest to them. The School Committee can support this further by involving students on its Advisory Committees or Task Forces.	The School Committee can better support racial justice in our schools by defining, tracking, and reporting on measurable, multi-year goals for the on-going work happening now in the District to diversify staff, implement anti-racism curriculum, and expand restorative justice practices. We should involve students, staff, and families in defining goals.
Candidate for Jones Library Trustee Vote for 6	How can the Library Trustees ensure that the Amherst library system is able to adapt to changing needs for services and facilities?	Are there resource and program changes you would like to see at the Jones Library and the branches?
Robert Pam 229 Amity Street Retired	An expanded Jones building allows an "open plan" that can adjust to changing needs. The North Amherst branch has needed the addition now proceeding for decades. While the need for printed materials continues, we will broaden and improve our electronic services and capabilities, and respond to community demands.	Our website, outreach and off-site services must improve. Programs that bring patron groups into the library should expand. Arts and cultural programs can be integrated with other town initiatives. We can use our history and archives to maintain links to college and university alumni.
Farah Ameen 57 Glendale Road Editor/Writer	Supporting the renovation/expansion project is the most effective way for Trustees to ensure our library system adapts to changing needs/populations. The plan's focus on enriched services guarantees enhanced children's programming; a safe, inviting teen space; designated adult education areas; accessibility for those with mobility issues; and many more computers.	I'd like to focus on greater community outreach and increasing access to books (especially in the summer), so ALL kids can read year-round. I've also proposed hosting conversation circles in multiple languages, so immigrant families can pass down their native language to their children—and share it with the community.
Austin D. Sarat 76 Snell Street Apt A Professor	I support the renovation and addition to the Jones Library. If approved, I will ensure that planning for the building is efficient and inclusive. As the renovation of the NAL moves forward, I will help bring the best in services and programs back to that gem of our library system.	We need to implement the recommendations in the strategic plans for the branches. We should partner with organizations like the Literacy Project to better serve all Amherst residents. We must move forward with anti-racist planning and ensure that our collections, programs and staffing reflect the wonderful diversity of our community.
Lee R. Edwards 5 Wildwood Lane Retired	To serve a diverse population and be accessible to every member of our community, the Library's physical plant must be renovated and expanded. The Trustees will continue to work with the town and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to accomplish these goals.	More robust teen programming is needed. Further, the Library needs to be better able to address the needs of those whose first language is not English, who are unfamiliar with the full range of Library services, or who are physically unable to access the current building.
Alexandra J. Lefebvre 52 N Prospect Street Retired	Collaboration and building partnerships with service agencies and organizations enables the library to continually identify and adapt programming and services to meet the needs of underserved and underrepresented community members. The new addition to the Jones will provide flexible spaces that can be adapted to keep pace with community needs.	We need to focus on our reach and effectiveness in helping generate socioeconomic mobility and justice in our community with a focus on achieving information and digital access. This includes building equity, diversity, and inclusion into our policies and procedures as well as into our staffing, programming, spaces, and collections.
Tamson M. Ely 26 Middle Street Librarian (retired)	Libraries need open and flexible spaces to accommodate new technologies, increasing patron needs for ESL, literacy and computer access. Also needed is an enlarged space for children's collections and programs and for teens. Current building as configured is inflexible and cannot adapt the changing needs of our community.	More children's programs at all three, assuming space and staff availability. Additional resources including books, eBooks/magazines, non-English materials and online services. All residents need full accessibility to the three buildings. A renovated and expanded Jones will provide access to those unable to fully use the current building.
Candidate for Housing Authority Vote for 3	How can the AHA mobile voucher program stretch its resources to keep up with the rising cost of renting in Amherst and surrounding communities? *	How should the AHA work to expand the total amount of affordable housing available in Amherst?
Nancy Ellen Schroeder 168 High Street	No response	No response
David W. Williams 158 Rolling Ridge Road	No response	No response
Jessica Mix-Barrington 39 Pine Street Sewing machine repair	The Commission's job is oversight. One can encourage this priority. It is up to the staff to make plans and for the board to review them.	The Commission should encourage the staff to work with other affordable housing entities - Amherst Housing Trust, Amherst Community Land Trust, Valley CDC - to coordinate all programs. Commissioners should unofficially reach out to these entities to foster strong bonds.
Michael A. Burkart 92 Aubinwood Road Retired	We are in a bind. We can increase the amount of the vouchers but we have a limited pool of money and that will mean we would have fewer people to whom we can give vouchers. The voucher funds are appropriated by either state or federal government.	Our housing stock is all state or federal funded properties. We have a big challenge just keeping up with the constant maintenance on buildings and all the heating systems, some of which are many decades old. We need support by state and federal representatives to increase funding.
Candidate for Elector, Oliver Smith Will Vote for 1	How will you educate and alert Amherst residents about the benefits available under the Oliver Smith Will?	
Carol Jeannette Gray 815 South East Street graduate student / teacher/ attorney / mom https://homepageforcaroljgray.wordpress.com/	As current Oliver Smith Elector, I published grant eligibility requirements in the newspaper, with schools and churches, and am working on a Town webpage. Please spread the word! New brides(\$100); Widows:1st child(\$300)/Additional children(\$100); Nursing students/Trade-apprentices(\$600). Applications here: https://www.thesmithcharities.org/qualified-recipients.html . For more about me, visit: https://homepageforcaroljgray.wordpress.com . I would appreciate your support! Carol	
Sarah A. Marshall 64 Eames Avenue homemaker, retired consultant	I made one family aware of their eligibility for a nursing scholarship while I gathered signatures for my nomination. Clearly, constant outreach is required, and I would communicate regularly with area schools, guidance and career counselors, the Clerk's office, and community members, hopefully with information in multiple languages.	

BALLOT QUESTION

Shall the following measure authorizing a borrowing for the expansion and renovation of the Jones Library, as voted by the Town Council on April 5, 2021, be affirmed?

A "yes" vote means that you affirm the Council's vote and want the project to continue.

A "no" vote means that you reject the Council's vote and do not want the project to continue.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Additional candidate statements are posted at amherstma.gov on the Amherst Bulletin Board and Town Clerk Voter Information page. View candidate videos at amherstmedia.org. Find links to Candidate Forum programs on the League of Women Voters of Amherst website lwwamherst.org.