MEDFIELD INSIDER

Library Trustee Candidates -- 2025 Town Election -- Responses to Questions

(Listed in alphabetical order. Responses verbatim from candidate e-mail responses – no editing except removal of spaces and insertion of words in parenthesis for reading guidance. Word limits also noted. Photos provided by candidates were cropped/resized for consistency.)



Caryn Picarillo



Phil Tuths



Sarah Westhoven



Richard White

1. **How long have you been in Medfield, and why is Medfield Public Library important to you?** (40)

Caryn Picarillo:
My family moved to Medfield in 2023. The library is important to me because it builds curiosity and critical thinking. Today, more than ever, libraries need support, advocacy and protection to inspire, educate and empower community members.

Phil Tuths:
My wife Beth and I have resided in Medfield for 30 years. We raised our three sons here. The Medfield Library has always provided family cultural and educational events. Today it is a source of information and education.

Sarah Westhoven:
Matt and I moved here in 2015 and have two kids, Molly and Zach. From day one the Library has welcomed us, helping us meet new people, connecting us with the community and providing a source of fun and learning.

Richard White:
Catherine and I moved to Medfield 6 years ago. We've supported libraries everywhere we've lived, believing that they are wonderful access to the humanities, science, art, literature. The Medfield library provides passes to over 20 local properties and museums. There is an excellent ratio of staff to patrons.

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2. **What do you consider to be the two biggest challenges facing the library in the next five years?** (100)

Caryn Picarillo:
Keeping up with digital technology, which has revolutionized how we consume information, is a significant challenge. Libraries must strike a delicate balance between maintaining traditional print collections and expanding digital resources, all while ensuring equitable access for everyone. Constrained budget resources can impact the acquisition and maintenance of cutting-edge technology. With limited budgets, libraries must make tough decisions about resource allocation. Addressing these challenges will require innovative solutions, community support, and strategic planning to ensure that public libraries continue to thrive and serve as vital community hubs in the years to come.

Phil Tuths:
(First) Censorship and intellectual freedom. As a growing wave of book bans and challenges move across the U.S., libraries are on the front line of defending intellectual freedom. Librarians may face legal and political pressure promoting a diverse and inclusion collection. Patrons will need help navigating AI-generated content. *(Second)* Meeting changing community needs. As libraries are becoming community hubs offering job training, mental health support, makers space, and library "things," Medfield library may need to rethink space usage in our limited physical plant. Offering content at Bellforge and The Center should be considered.

Sarah Westhoven:
Budget constraints may pose a challenge due to a likely reduction in federal funding for libraries and competing town projects. If elected, I would spend time understanding the details around the library's current expenditures and sources of funding and explore opportunities to increase fundraising activities and seek out additional funding sources. Second, kids and adults alike face so many distractions in daily life that it can be a challenge to spark and sustain a love of reading. The library can help by creating engaging programs, fostering community reading initiatives, and showcasing collections that cater to diverse interests and reading levels.

Richard White:
(First) It might be argued that all knowledge has become available online, but actual books and other physical media should continue to be available to our citizens. For many of us, there is nothing like holding a book and reading the printed word. Many movies, books and records are not available online and can only be used in physical form. Libraries provide the real thing. *(Second)* Some literature, science, and arts have come under attack and should be kept available to everyone despite efforts to censor or eliminate them altogether. The library is a force for intellectual freedom.

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3. **What is your view of disappearing/shrinking school libraries, and how might a community library respond (if at all)?** (100)

Caryn Picarillo:
This is a concerning trend with significant implications for students' education and development. School libraries play a crucial role in fostering literacy, encouraging a love of reading, and providing access to a wide range of resources that support learning across all subjects. They also offer a safe and quiet space for students to study, explore new ideas, and develop critical thinking skills. Collaborating with schools by providing curriculum-related resources or hosting joint events, offering educational programs and workshops, homework help/tutoring sessions, technology training are some ideas.

Phil Tuths:
The Medfield Library can play a vital role in supporting and enhancing our public school libraries through collaboration, resource sharing and joint programming. Medfield librarians can work directly with our public school librarians, finding ways to enhance and curate the school library collections. Summer reading programs such as summer reading challenge helps keep students engaged in literary activities during the summer months. The Medfield library provides after school access to technology and space for tutoring and homework help. Library card drives, in partnership with schools, ensures every student has a public library card to foster lifelong reading habits.

Sarah Westhoven:
While this is not a challenge I have seen in Medfield schools, it is something we should be aware of at a state and national level. Even in towns with strong school libraries, community libraries provide expanded access to books and materials, can offer a broader range of programming and allow families to learn together. In communities where school libraries are shrinking, the role of a community library becomes even more critical and can fill gaps left by reduced school access to books and resources. I would love to explore potential partnerships and initiatives to support libraries impacted by cuts.

Richard White:
School libraries are especially vulnerable to censorship. Books are blacklisted and removed from shelves and in some cases forbidden to be taught. The library can ensure that these books and the ideas they contain continue to be available to students who want to read them. A library with strong public support can stand against those who would restrict freedom to read and think about controversial ideas. Students should be free to learn and think for themselves, a necessary prerequisite for informed and critical citizens.

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4. **When might the trustee/director roles overlap and cause confusion or conflict, and how might you navigate it?** (100)

Caryn Picarillo:
Overlapping roles can occur in many areas: strategic planning, resource allocation, policy implementation and performance evaluation. Establishing a strong, collaborative relationship based on mutual respect and open communication is crucial. Encouraging open dialogue and ensuring that all perspectives are considered will be an important skill. By fostering a culture of collaboration, transparency, and mutual respect, trustees and directors can navigate potential overlaps and conflicts effectively, ensuring that the library operates smoothly and continues to serve the community effectively.

Phil Tuths:
Both the Trustees and the library Director are involved in shaping the library's long-term vision. The Director develops a plan and goals. The Trustees advise on ways to implement and meet those goals. The Trustees ensure financial accountability as the Director manages day-to-day financial operations. The Trustees support the Director in managing the library staff and addressing concerns of the public regarding library policies. The Trustees and the Director engage in open dialogue in a respectful way regarding major library decisions. The Trustees advise the Director on technology upgrades, programming, and physical renovations.

Sarah Westhoven:
In trustee/director roles there are certainly overlapping areas of responsibility and shared objectives around things like budgeting and strategic planning. Of course, this means at times the people holding those roles may have different opinions on how to best set the library up for success. However, differences of opinion can be valuable and lead to creative solutions that neither person could achieve alone. Coming to the relationship from a place of respect, maintaining open communication lines and sticking to regular check-ins can ensure alignment on goals while respecting each party's responsibilities and viewpoints.

Richard White:
In my three years on the board, the Trustees and director have rarely disagreed on important issues. Our individual political, social or religious beliefs are not nearly as important as our commitment to the well-being of the library itself. Should any significant disagreement arise, I am sure that the open discussion will result in a mutually acceptable compromise. The board has an admirable lack of ideological rigidity and grandstanding. No one's personal agenda has stood in the way of doing the best for the library and the community.

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5. **What role does a library play in helping to confront climate change?** (50)

Caryn Picarillo:
Libraries can play a role through various initiatives/activities. Education and awareness in the form of programs/workshops. Community engagement featuring collaborative projects with local organizations. Sustainable practices: green building initiatives, waste reduction. By leveraging their position as community hubs/information centers, libraries can serve to educate the public, foster community engagement, and promote sustainable practices.

Phil Tuths:
The library can play a significant role in combating climate change through education, advocacy and community engagement. The library can help the public differentiate between credible and misleading information on climate science. The library has reduced its carbon footprint by implementing energy efficient lighting, heating and cooling systems. The library can host experts to speak on sustainability, environmental issues, and eco-friendly practices.

Sarah Westhoven:
The library should serve as a trusted source of sustainability education and resources and support local, regional and national groups in sharing information and highlighting important climate research. From a building perspective, the library should implement sustainable practices whenever feasible and allowed by the budget.

Richard White:
The library is committed to the goals of Net Zero 2050. The Library of Things offers tools to monitor energy use. Environmental impact is a major consideration in building maintenance and improvement. For example, heat pumps have been installed to replace aging HVAC systems.

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