

2009 Voters Guide



The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford

www.lwvgh.org

Responses by Question:

1. Which West Hartford services can be reduced and still be viable (assume no increase in state aid)?

Steve Adler

The integration of the Board of Education (BOE) and Town Information Technology Departments as one single operating function. I would recommend the BOE take the lead on managing all town wide IT hardware, software and infrastructure planning and business requirements since BOE has a significant IT demand and more mature service delivery capabilities in providing technology services to our community. This proposed IT shared service model would reduce operating costs by reducing staffing needs, improve procurement planning and allow BOE and town administration to use common IT infrastructure.

Denise Berard Hall

In times of economic slowdown, businesses don't stop providing customers with their products and services; they find ways to deliver the services in a more cost effective manner. West Hartford should not reduce its services, it should analyze and implement cost saving solutions to mitigate rising costs. Through my involvement with the Risk Management Advisory Board, I have seen how the Town saved \$165,000 in insurance premiums through reduction in the number of town vehicles, compliance with property loss control recommendations and commitment to safety compliance. I would advocate for an environment of continuous improvement and efficiency town wide to reduce and control costs without impacting services.

Tim Brennan

Services to residents should not be reduced; rather we need to continue to get scrappy to cut costs while maintaining or improving services. Successful examples include:

- Adoption of Connecticut's first Comprehensive Energy Plan, which will save millions of dollars for public safety, education and other services.
- Use of technology to cut costs in our Town Clerk's office and improve efficiency in other departments.
- Reduction in town vehicles.
- Obtaining federal grants and cheap financing to further efficiency goals.

Shari Cantor

Actually, past budgets have already reduced lower utilized services including, pool hours, office hours of some departments, library hours and mailings to residents. The

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budget includes reductions in capital expenditures, streamlining and adjusting trash, snow removal and leaf pickup while preserving the service as a whole. We continue to look for these opportunities.

Judy Casperson

The economic downturn combined with our continued lack of full funding of state aid for West Hartford has meant that we have to be very creative and to prioritize. Fortunately, while our residents have seen some changes to service delivery, we have been able to avoid elimination of essential core services. The cooperation of the town council and our unions helped us to stay strong in this challenging economic recession without risking our safety or services. We will endeavor to continue to make wise choices while seeking long-term State and federal assistance and, if reductions cannot be avoided, we should first maintain our priorities in education, public safety and senior services.

Justin Clark

I don't accept the premise that services in West Hartford need to be reduced. Unfortunately, for too long we have seen services decrease while taxes increase. West Hartford is blessed with many resources, the most important of which are our people. So that we can continue to provide the services we have come to appreciate, we need our people to continue to be an engine of economic growth to broaden our tax base by keeping West Hartford affordable and attractive for families and businesses. Therefore, we need to keep local property taxes under control.

Leon Davidoff

As a member of the Town Council's Finance and Budget Committee, I have thoroughly examined and asked probing questions about the town budget. We must continue to examine how we deliver services to our residents, while preserving our community's core services: public safety, education and infrastructure. I believe that there are areas where we can reduce services without negatively impacting our community. For example, I support the elimination of half of our twenty (20) polling places. Further, I would support further consolidation of services between the general government and Board of Education, especially in the areas of information technology and health plan administration.

Rob Durbin

West Hartford's residents need and deserve the services the town provides. We should continue to explore safe, reasonable ways to lower the cost of services. We should also continue to find additional funding sources. For example, West Hartford recently replaced a significant number of traffic lights, at no cost to West Hartford residents, with federal funds.

Scott Slifka

West Hartford has reduced its workforce by 1/3 since 1991 and we're 7% smaller since I took office. This past budget we cut spending by more than \$600,000 and reduced our capital budget by approximately \$35 million, while maintaining our AAA bond rating and keeping our core services of education and public safety intact. We achieved this, in part, via a combination of hiring and salary freezes and staff reductions. This is not sustainable in the long run absent comprehensive reform at the

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State level. So, assuming no increases in State aid and/or meaningful property tax reform, the answer is none. West Hartford will continue to endeavor to do more with less and to work creatively with employees and taxpayers to ensure continuity and quality of services.

Rob Sisk

Particularly as one gets further away from the classroom, patrol car or firehouse, all services are candidates for reduction. However, once we regain control over the runaway costs of employee/retiree benefits, (which are 259% of what they were in 2001, are increasing at over 10% per year and are siphoning off funds which otherwise would be providing services), there will be no need to reduce or eliminate services. Even in this election year, when the Council uncharacteristically restrained overall budget growth, the cost of benefits soaked up an additional \$2,500,000 that otherwise could have provided services to the community.

Joe Verrengia

No one service is exempt from being reduced. I will continue to evaluate all town services to ensure that we are providing them in the most efficient manner. I will continue to prioritize town services with an emphasis on public safety and education.

Joe Visconti

School Bus Transportation could be reduced by monitoring student participation and reaching capacity limits, saving energy, labor and the amount of buses necessary. The daily equivalent of one elementary school is absent daily in West Hartford (about 400 students) which is another cost driver.