

[Sam Stivers: Blog Statement]

Hello, my name is Sam Stivers and I'm a candidate for the Planning Board.

Some of you may know me as the former Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). I'd like to use this opportunity to tell you a little more about myself, and why a vote for me for Planning Board is a vote for a better Southborough.

My Background

I've lived with my wife, Marilyn, on Presidential Drive in Southborough since 1997. We have two adult children and two grandchildren. Among the important reasons we moved to Southborough were the Town's rural character (reflected in part by the continued sense of the original "villages"), its abundance of open space, its colonial New England history and its blend of larger commercial businesses along the Route 9 corridor and the active small business community in the center of Town. I believe that this combination of characteristics is very desirable; that this combination of characteristics is difficult to find elsewhere in the Metrowest area; and that this combination of characteristics is worth working hard to preserve.

My professional background includes 5 years as a teacher, 25 years as a management consultant for private and public sector organizations (focusing on business strategy development and the related implementation activities of process redesign and organizational restructuring) and 12 years as a health care executive. I am currently semi-retired.

Since 2004 when I first became an alternate member of the ZBA, I have devoted a great deal of my time to serving the interests of the Town. This includes: (i) serving on the Southborough Zoning Board from 2004-2011, (ii) participating in the Master Plan workshops and (iii) serving since 2008 as a member of the Zoning Advisory Committee (ZAC) as we are working on updating the Town's zoning bylaw which will have a large impact on Southborough's future.

My Qualifications

I believe that the combination of my professional experience as a consultant and as a manager and my local experience with Southborough's ZBA and ZAC uniquely qualifies me to be an effective member of the Planning Board. Through my ZBA experience I have gained a detailed understanding of the day-to-day application of the Town's zoning bylaws. Through my ZAC experience and Master Plan participation, I've had the opportunity to think strategically about how the Town should manage growth.

I have demonstrated a strong commitment to keep myself informed about the various issues pertinent to planning and zoning generally and in Southborough specifically. I've attended hundreds of hours of various Southborough board meetings and external zoning and planning related workshops. Particularly through my ZBA role, I've attended more Southborough Planning Board meetings than the majority of the current members of the Planning Board, despite the fact that it's a board I don't yet sit on. My extensive experience will allow me to be a full Planning Board participant from day one.

My Planning Board Issues

One of the benefits of my experience with Southborough's Master Plan and ZAC activities and my having attended many local board meetings is that I've heard directly from many residents about what is important to them. This input has helped me to identify the following issues that I would expect to work on as a Planning Board member:

- First, I believe that the current ZAC-proposed zoning bylaw draft is not what the Town needs at this time and I'll continue to work to get this proposal modified. I'm particularly concerned about the proposed provisions that can allow additional development density "by right", without the current local board approvals. I believe that we should learn from Northborough's experience with a similar new zoning bylaw, which has created a substantial citizen backlash and resulted in their recent Town Meeting votes to rescind parts of their new bylaw.
- Second, I believe that open space issues need more effective management and coordination with the Open Space Preservation Commission and other groups. For example, at our recent Town Meeting we voted to spend \$62,100 to locate a number of parcels of open space that were "lost" somewhere between the agreement to provide them and the recording/tracking of their locations. I'll work to improve coordination between the Planning Board and other boards so we can better protect our open space, which is an important element in maintaining the rural character of Southborough.
- Third, I believe that the Planning Board, Zoning Board and Conservation Commission need better communication and coordination on multi-permit projects. As a Planning Board member, I'll commit to attending ZBA and ConCom meetings for "multiple permit projects" to improve the flow of information between these permitting boards. I'll also work to improve the permitting process coordination across these boards (for example, does it make sense to have a single application that works for all three boards?)
- Fourth, I believe that the planning process needs to carefully consider the total economic impact of growth/development proposals (to understand for every proposal the potential tax revenues versus additional costs for public safety, schools, etc.). I will work to include this concept in any analysis.

In Summary

Overall, as a candidate I offer a unique understanding of the "big picture" planning and zoning issues and the day-to-day details of the current zoning structure. My ZBA track record demonstrates that I possess the following important characteristics for success as a Planning Board member:

- I'm independent, as I judge proposals solely based on the facts presented. I have no axe to grind with respect to any issue and I'm not obligated to anyone (with no local business or social relationships so as to create bias on any issues).
- I treat every applicant fairly and consistently by applying the laws and regulations in the same way to all.
- I'm flexible as I explore a variety of ways to address competing interests that may arise as part of specific proposals.
- I support growth and development in Southborough in a thoughtfully managed way, and my ZBA voting record clearly demonstrates this.
- I listen to all sides of an issue and work to find solutions that address the major concerns of all parties—particularly the neighbors to new projects. I'm especially proud of my ZBA work in finding solutions that address the concerns of neighbors to proposed projects.
- I'm willing to work hard to get the best result for each proposal presented.

I ask for your vote on May 14th! Thank you.