

My name is Katie Robey and I am a candidate for the office of councilor at-large.

Albert Einstein once said, “Try not to become a man of success but a man of value.”

Sixteen years ago, I saw that I could contribute to improving the education of Marlborough’s children by becoming an active and committed voice in determining how our city’s schools would be run. I am proud to have been elected to the school committee in 1995 and re-elected to three additional terms. I hope I have, at least in some small sense, become a person of value.

When I was first elected to the School Committee, the high school was not meeting accreditation standards and we faced the possibility of losing that accreditation. The School Committee worked with the school administration to take the steps necessary to correct the weaknesses. As part of this process, I worked to re-establish a sense of trust between the council and school committee. As chair of the finance sub-committee, I worked with the council to get appropriate funding and with administration to make sure we did not exceed our budget.

With funding established, we have been able to enhance and improve the resources provided by the Marlborough Public schools. Over the years, I have supported adding in-house programs so that we could reduce our out-of-district tuition and bring students back to the district to meet their needs. I served on the Middle School and Jaworek Building Committees, which added much needed classroom space for the district.

The challenge of building a school system for the 21st century has also involved tough decisions on personnel contracts. In the past I voted in favor of a teacher’s contract that put an end to their Work to Rule action. More recently, I voted against several contracts that I felt were inappropriate in light of the city’s financial situation.

Over the years, people have urged me to run for a council seat. I never felt it was the right time. There was always more to do.

But there is *always* more to do. This year the important question for me became: where can I apply my skills and experiences in a way that provides the most value?

The single greatest value an elected official can bring to public service is an abiding commitment to a clear and thorough understanding of the facts. As I contemplate a new and larger set of responsibilities, I understand that city councilors must consider the whole city with all of its complicated and interconnected issues.

The lines of communication between all parties of government need to improve. The mayor and city council have continually come to an impasse, leaving much of the city business at a stand still or fraught with high levels of tension. Both the next mayor and the new council need to understand that effective communication is in everyone’s best interest.

We are facing a difficult and uncertain economy. The recent recession has had a marked effect on businesses in Marlborough. We have lost several corporate partners and risk losing more. Many people are unemployed or underemployed. Under these circumstances it's tempting to frame issues as either-or propositions. We can avoid increases in fees *or* we can ensure the roads are safe and well maintained. We can keep our property taxes low *or* we can have well-funded, effective and safe schools.

It is possible to confront these issues without this 'either-or' mentality. Our job, as the representatives of the people of Marlborough, is to find the right balance in handling these issues.

In the face of declining property values and dwindling state and federal aid, the Council has made some difficult decisions and responded to the fiscal challenges with conservative budgeting. I am in favor of continuing this conservative budget planning if it does not affect the needs of the city in public safety, roads, human resources, education, or recreation. Taxpayers should not have to watch their property tax burden increase while critical services are slashed. There are many ways this might be avoided. Here's one example:

We need to move to a new recycling model with better incentives for residents to participate. Regulations already prohibit placing glass, plastic and metal food containers in your curbside garbage. The same is true for newspapers and junk mail. However, according to MA Department of Environmental Protection, our recycling rate for 2008 was only 29%, low compared to our neighbors. Disposing of our solid waste costs the city \$94 per ton. A mere 5% increase in the curbside recycling rate will save the city about \$75,000. Despite the lost opportunities, the city council has tabled discussion on recycling in the city. A lot of work has gone into studying the issue. It needs to come off the table and a decision made on the best way to motivate residents to recycle. Improving our recycling rate would lead to real savings that will help the city budget.

As a member of the school committee, I am responsible for voting on the department budget, which encompasses the largest portion of the city's total budget. I have acquired a good understanding of municipal financing, which will allow me to contribute meaningfully to finding balance in dealing with the city's issues.

But the decisions we make should be more than a simple accounting of dollars and cents. Government, *especially* local government, is one of the clearest expressions of our sense of community. Through government we can act on our responsibilities to share and help each other.

I will strive for openness and honesty as I tend to the business of the city. I have a reputation for asking questions, seeking out answers, and making a decision based on all the facts. I will continue to do that as a city councilor. I may not always vote the way the mayor or council president would like, but I will always back up my vote with facts and will always be respectful of everyone as they bring their business to the City Council.

As a city councilor, I will continue to talk to people, listen carefully, do the homework and find the answers. I ask for your vote when you go to the polls on Tuesday, Nov. 1st.