

RECORD REVIEW

The official newspaper of the towns of Bedford, Lewisboro and Pound Ridge

Building a strong and resilient community

By ELLEN CALVES

I might be biased, but I think you'd be hard-pressed to find a town that has more to offer than Bedford. It's not just the rolling horse farms or the beautiful parks or the array of cultural institutions that make our town unique. What is particularly inspiring to me about Bedford is the sense of community I see everywhere. I see it in the hundreds of residents willing to volunteer hours on behalf of town committees, fire departments and local nonprofit organizations. I see it in the countless parades and holiday events. I see it in the way residents are fiercely devoted to their hamlet libraries. We are building a strong and resilient community in Bedford, an inclusive and interconnected system for the people and families who live and work here together.



2022 was a busy and fruitful year; 2023 will be even more productive and dynamic as we work to support our vision for a vibrant Bedford.

We are excited about boosting economic opportunities in all the hamlets, especially Bedford Hills. We are working with the Hudson Valley Economic Development Corp. on long-term revitalization and have used federal grants to engage a promoter to increase foot traffic, fill empty storefronts and help strengthen synergies among businesses. As water and sewer infrastructure is crucial for economic development and environmental protection, we continue to implement the sewer project in Katonah and Bedford Hills and will form a sewer district in Bedford Village.

The issue of reliable cell service in our area has been kicked down the road for too long, so we are implementing a long-term plan to fill gaps in wireless coverage to maximize safety

for residents and support first responders while minimizing impact to the character and beauty of our town.

Our sustainable energy efforts have earned Bedford the designation as the No. 1 clean energy community in New York state. We will continue transitioning to fossil fuel-free town facilities, enact policies for better indoor air quality, and increase bike racks and EV charging stations in town. We will begin an extension of the walking path between Bedford Hills and Katonah, open the walking path between Douglas Drive and Druid Place, and maintain Bedford's natural beauty by mapping wildlife corridors to support healthy ecosystems. We also will finish development of the comprehensive townwide land use plan, the first since 2003, and will issue a draft soon for public input before adoption later this year.

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We are focusing on mental health and wellness with the Drug Abuse Prevention Council, and we held a health fair and established a task force for health and wellness resources. Safety priorities include traffic safety, police staffing, improved protocols for emergencies, and better preparedness and emergency management.

The Bedford Town Board is committed to promoting inclusion, diversity, equity and respect for all people. We will train board members and employees accord-

ingly and engage in a strategic partnership to address barriers thereto. We are looking forward to the construction of a more inclusive playground in Bedford Hills for children of diverse abilities, and we will work on understanding the needs of autistic people to help make Bedford an autistic-friendly town.

Last year the town board enhanced affordability tax exemptions for low-income seniors, disabled persons and veterans and is now looking to expand the tax exemption for first responders. Working with the Housing Action Council, we will help residents access funding to make improvements to accessory dwelling units to support aging in place.

We held our first annual newcomer event, collaborated on Katonah's 125th anniversary, supported the first annual Bedford Music Festival, partnered to hold Juneteenth at Caramoor, helped plant trees near the correctional facility, increased funding for each of the three public libraries and are working with neighborhood groups to beautify hamlets and re-landscape Depot Plaza.

A new website will offer more online applications, permits and payment options, along with information about town programs and services. We will refresh our townwide brand and develop new signs at the train stations and entrances to town.

I will continue to manage the budget responsibly, provide a high level of safety and services for all our residents, secure grant funding, streamline processes, advocate for resources, hold the line on taxes, and revisit policies and practices as we navigate new norms, regulations and opportunities. The town board is committed to continuous nonpartisan improvement, serving every Bedford resident and proactively working on their behalf to keep Bedford moving forward.

Ellen Calves is Bedford town supervisor.