

Susan Puddester

My name is Susan Puddester and I'm running for re-election to a 5-year term on the Williamstown Planning Board. I arrived here 10 years ago, about six weeks before Tropical Storm Irene. After the destruction that occurred locally I became involved in helping the residents of the town, specifically The Spruces Mobile Home Park, find alternative housing arrangements. There were not many options available to them. It was due to this experience when the community lost over 225 homes, displacing 325, that I became aware of the housing issues here.

I grew up in Vermont, so for many reasons I was so glad to return to the area. I grew up in a small town, about the size of Williamstown. I love living here. The area has so much to offer. My hope is that we can be a community with increased acceptance and diversity

I was, by occupation, a geriatric social worker during my career in Maryland. In the years I have lived in town, I have served as the case management supervisor and then president of Higher Ground, the organization formed to help those who lost their homes at the Spruces. I am currently the President of the Williamstown Community Chest, which partners with 17 local non-profits providing support to members of the Community. As a result of that connection, I am a volunteer with Louison House, a homeless shelter for Northern Berkshire County. I also serve on the Williamstown Council on Aging.

Five years ago, I decided to run for the Planning Board. It's not something I ever expected that I might do, but I felt it was important to be able to add my voice to that Board. A couple of years later, I attended the Women's March in Washington D.C. That was a time when women were encouraged to run for public office. I had already done that!! As my first term came to an end, those words came back to me, and I decided to run again.

The Planning Board has tackled several complex issues over the past five years. Finding ways to add a variety of housing options has been one of our goals. It's not easy. There are many voices to be heard. I am feeling optimistic about the community's ability to come together in a welcoming way to include any and all people who would like to call Williamstown home.

Thank you. I hope that you will consider voting for me as I continue to listen to the voices in our town.