



JOANNA GITHA MARIE WILLOTT *

Party: RTM has no party affiliation

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Q: Please provide a brief biography of yourself for the voters.

A: I grew up in Finland. I came to the US as a graduate student in California in my late twenties, after which I lived in Washington DC, London and Sao Paulo before moving to Old Greenwich nine years ago. My husband and I have four boys who have gone through the Greenwich Public Schools -- three are now in college and one is at GHS. We love OG and Greenwich for its diverse and welcoming community, and the freedom and safety it has provided my family. I have tried to give back through being active in the community, including two years as Co-President of the EMS PTA.

Q: What are one or two pressing challenges of the upcoming term and how would you approach them?

A: Two challenges near to my heart for the upcoming legislative term are schools and sustainability. Maintaining educational quality under a tightening operating budget and funding school infrastructure is a huge challenge. We need to find savings and efficiencies wherever we can, but we cannot let the standards of education we offer to our children slip -- strong schools are a fundamental part of who we are as a community. We also need to do our part to promote sustainability and reduce climate change. There is no simple solution, but we should always consider and analyze the environmental impact of both our capital investments and day-to-day decisions to reduce our carbon footprint where practical.

Q: In April, the Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET) voted to reduce the Greenwich Public Schools budget by approximately \$4 million. This reduction allowed GPS to increase its budget year over year by 3% (vs 5%). [Minutes of the FY 2025-2026 Budget Decision Day Three (3) Meeting of the BET held April 4, 2025]. What is your position on this decision?

A: Like many families, a big factor for our family in making Greenwich our home was its reputation for having an excellent public school system. I am saddened to see the immediate impact of the BET budget cut vote on our community. The cuts have led to a disruptive schedule change for our high school and are already evident in the staffing changes and the reduced support services provided to our students. It also sets a bad precedent for our priorities as a town, and undercuts the attractiveness of our community. I am grateful for RTM's efforts to request the BET to reconsider their vote. I want the BET to provide a long term economic analysis of the impact of the cut, including as to potential reduction of property values.