

Bedford

Democrats endorse town board candidates

By JESS FASANO

The Bedford Democratic Committee came right out of the gate this campaign season with endorsements for two town board candidates for the fall 2019 election. Bobbi Bittker, of Bedford Hills, and Ellen Calves, of Katonah, were chosen by leaders of the 18 voting districts of the Town of Bedford who gathered at the Bedford Hills train station Tuesday night.

Earlier this month, the Bedford Democrats endorsed Chris Burdick in his bid for a fourth two-year term as town supervisor, and Kitley Covill in her run for a second term as county legislator.

Ms. Bittker and Ms. Calves are vying for the seats of current town board members Don Scott and Lee Roberts, whose terms expire at the end of this year.

Bedford's four town board members each serve a four-year term, while the supervisor, who also sits on the board, serves a two-year term.

On Tuesday, Ms. Bittker, Ms. Calves and prospective candidate Robert Siegel, who currently serves on the Town of Bedford Planning Board, made presentations to the democratic committee and participated in a Q&A "that focused on important local and national issues, and Democratic values, including affordable housing, immigration policy, the environment, and the sewer system soon to be under construction in downtown Katonah and Bedford Hills," according to the committee.

Following its endorsements, committee chairperson and current town board member, MaryAnn Carr, said in a statement, "We are so fortunate to have such highly qualified candidates. We look forward to a terrific campaign season."

Ms. Bittker served as a District Leader in 2017 and first started working with the Bedford Democratic Committee over two decades ago. In an



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The Bedford Democrats' slate for the fall 2019 election includes, from left, Kitley Covill for county legislator, Ellen Calves for town board, Chris Burdick for town supervisor and Bobbi Bittker, also for town board.

District leaders chose Bobbi Bittker, of Bedford Hills, and Ellen Calves, of Katonah, as town board candidates Tuesday night.

interview on Wednesday, Ms. Bittker explained that she has been active behind the scenes in past campaigns for other local elected officials. She noted that seeing candidates hold successful campaigns, and personally receiving encouragement from others herself, inspired her to run for town board.

In her letter of intent to the democratic committee, Ms. Bittker stated that she is "committed to community leadership and public service," adding, "Town Board is a forum where I will bring our democratic values and my skills to the table." As a longtime Bedford Hills resident, Ms. Bittker also noted that she would be honored to represent her hamlet on the board and described revitalizing its business district as one of her priorities.

"I would love to engage residents and find out what's important to them," she said Tuesday. She continued, "For me, it's central to leadership

that people need to be heard. I want to be there to listen to their concerns and do my best to address them."

An attorney by trade, Ms. Bittker serves as vice chair of the American Bar Association Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. She also sits on the advisory board of the Bedford Community Theatre, is a Girl Scout Silver Award Mentor, served as the vice president of the Fox Lane Middle School Association and touts years of nonprofit board leadership experience with her synagogue, Bet Torah, in Mount Kisco.

Ms. Bittker also volunteered for 14 years at Bedford Hills Elementary School, where her three children attended before going on to Fox Lane middle and high schools.

One reason Ms. Calves said she is seeking a seat on the town board is a desire to "help make Bedford a stronghold of Democratic values now and

for the future." She went on to state in her letter of intent, "I want to see Bedford continue to be a model for other communities on environmental initiatives and also to be a model of progressive Democratic values for our county, state, and our nation."

According to Ms. Calves, she has always had a passion for government and community organizing. Since moving to the Town of Bedford in 2013, her community involvement has included work as a Bedford Democratic Committee district leader, co-chair of the town's Reusable Bag Task Force, Katonah Village Improvement Society board member, Katonah-Lewisboro School District Arts Alive board member, and chair of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester's LGBTQ Welcoming Committee and Membership Ministry.

Ms. Calves has also worked as one of two staff members at Bedford 2020 since June 2015. Describing her work for the organization in her letter of intent, she said she creates and promotes programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect natural resources in Bedford, while also working closely with town board members and town departments, as well as community organizations, schools, businesses and residents.

"Through [Bedford 2020] I've really learned a lot about the town and I want to get more involved," Ms. Calves said in an interview Thursday. According to Ms. Calves, as a member of the town board she hopes to "become part of the team to drive progressive, sustainable, cost-effective and forward-thinking solutions."

A member of the Bedford Republican Town Committee indicated Wednesday that an announcement about the committee's nomination process for prospective town board candidates would be released in the near future.