

Special Edition THE BRIDGE

Town Meeting 2023
Norridgewock, Maine

ph (207) 634-2252
www.townofnorridgewock.com

In its second year of providing candidates a forum to introduce themselves to voters, *The Bridge's* Meet the Candidates is back! In the past it was limited to certain offices, this year, all candidates listed on the ballot were offered the chance to write about their goals and vision for Norridgewock.

Candidates were issued the same set of questions, given an allowance of up to 1,000 words in their responses, and each was given the opportunity to submit a photo. Submissions are listed by office; candidates are listed alphabetically by last name. Absentee ballots can be requested at any time between now and March 1. In-person voting will take place on Monday, March 6, 8:00 am to 7:00 pm.

MEET the CANDIDATES

**NORRIDGEWOCK
TOWN MEETING**

Retail Medical Marijuana Goes to Voters for Consideration

A citizen's petition was submitted to ask voters whether or not they support allowing retail medical marijuana stores to open in Norridgewock. Without approval, no new retailers of this type can open; this is a result of changes in State Law. There is one such facility already in operation (Norridgewock Springs, corner of Waterville Road and Skowhegan Road), and they are permitted because they were in operation prior to December 2018 when rules changed. The question to allow medical marijuana will appear on the secret ballot throughout the day on March 6; it will not be considered at the open portion of Town Meeting.

There will also be a question asking voters to consider whether or not they wish to approve the "Town of Norridgewock Moratorium Ordinance on Medical Marijuana Caregiver Retail Stores." If approved, this would allow the Town at least up to 180 days to develop regulations surrounding the operation of the same. This is similar to the moratorium that was approved by voters regarding commercial solar development, which allowed the Planning Board the opportunity to develop proposed regulations to send back to voters for consideration. A vote in favor of the moratorium will pause permitting on any proposed retail medical marijuana development.



Copies of the proposed moratorium ordinance are online at www.townofnorridgewock.com or at the Town Office.

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING INFORMATION

Monday, March 6, 2023

Mill Stream Elementary School Gymnasium

Polling Hours: 8:00 am – 7:00 pm

Open Town Meeting begins at 7:30 pm

Select Board Member & Overseer – One-year term, Five Seats

Kelsea Bickford

Work Experience: I have been an educator for over 9 years. For the past two years I have worked at Skowhegan Area High School as the JMG Specialist. I love what I do!

Political/Civic Experience: My experience is largely in volunteerism. Prior to moving to Norridgewock, I was a Rotarian with the Rotary Club of Augusta. Recently, I served as Co-Chair of the Search Committee for the new Director for Pilgrim Lodge in West Gardiner. Currently, I volunteer with a group of Somerset County community members working to address suicide in our communities. Serving on the Select Board would be my first political position, but I believe my prior experiences and skills working with groups of people are easily transferable to this type of work.

Why am I running? I am running because I believe Norridgewock is a great place to live and work and would be honored to be a part of our community's success and growth.

What qualifies me? I believe what qualifies me are my prior experiences with various committees and clubs as mentioned in the "Political/Civic Experience" section. I also believe my graduate studies in Peace and Reconciliation qualifies me as I have had extensive training with deep and active listening, conflict resolution, and community building.

What is the biggest challenge facing Norridgewock? In my opinion the biggest challenge facing Norridgewock currently is economic development. This isn't so much a problem as it is a missed opportunity. I believe Downtown Norridgewock has a wealth of potential that we haven't tapped into or made accessible.

How would you address that? I would address economic development in our community by listening and learning first. I'd engage local business owners and community members and work to understand and address the barriers to economic development in our community.

Name two other priorities and what you propose to do about them: Two other priorities of mine are teen programming and increasing community involvement at events. Again, I would approach this by listening and learning to youth, adults, and families to find out what excites them. I also believe a big part of this would be advertising but also finding resources within the community to grow opportunities for community members.

What's one thing you want voters to know about you? I want voters to know that I'm not running with any sort of agenda. I truly want to *serve* our community and lift up community member's voices as best I can. I pride myself on being a good listener, open-minded, and reliable.



Kelsea Bickford with husband Robbie Bickford

TOWN REPORTS WILL BE AVAILABLE BEGINNING NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 22

Once available, Town Reports will be available at the Town Office,
Norridgewock Public Library, Ainslie's II, Friends Food Mart,
Oosoola Country Store, and York's Market.

Select Board Member & Overseer – One-year term, Five Seats

Ronnie L. Blodgett, Jr.

Work Experience: I have been a Certified Police Officer since 2002. I am currently working for the Somerset County Sheriff's Office and have been assigned to Maine Drug Enforcement since 2016. During my time in law enforcement I have been a Patrolman, a Community Resource Officer, a Detective, as well as my current assignment. Prior to police work, I spent several years in the construction field, to include plumbing and pipe fitting. Prior to that, I spent time in Business Management for Shaw's Supermarkets, working in stores around the State of Maine. I owned my own lawn care business I ran for about 20 years, before concluding this endeavor to pursue other career interests.

Political/Civic Experience: While working as the Community Resource Officer for the Skowhegan Police Department, I had the opportunity to be on the Board of Directors of Youth and Family Services. I was involved with the local Domestic Violence groups, the Sexual Assault Response groups, youth outreach programs, and volunteered with the Maine Special Olympics.

Why am I running? I am running for this position on the Select Board as I want to be more involved here in Norridgewock, which has given my family a place to live and grow. I feel this is an opportunity for me to help the community grow and provide this opportunity to others who choose to live/work here.

What qualifies me? I feel that my time spent in community governments (Sheriff's Office and Police Departments) has given me the opportunity to work with the public for over 20 years and hear their thoughts/concerns on issues from multiple levels. As part of this process, I have been part of the resolutions instituted to rectify these issues.

What is the biggest challenge facing Norridgewock? I believe one of the biggest challenges facing residents is budgets and how to stay current with the rising costs as a community while keeping taxes affordable.

How would you address that? I think by keeping a close eye on revenue and expenditures, we can continue to make the necessary adjustments to keep us current with town needs and fiscally responsible without falling behind so that it costs us more in the long run.

Name two other priorities and what you propose to do about them: I have not been involved in town politics, but try to stay abreast of items and believe roads and internet services are always on the radar for issues in most communities. I think proper planning and working with other government entities to address these issues is helpful.

What's one thing you want voters to know about you? I want voters to know that I do not have an "agenda" and my main priority is to do what is right for the Town of Norridgewock and its Citizens.

What does a School Board Director do?

- Policy Making
 - Designate a Superintendent of Schools
 - Plan, set goals, and appraise results
 - Approve and adopt financial resources
- Negotiation and approve collective bargaining agreements
- Set clear expectations/standards and adopt policies regarding instructional programs
- Communicate with various constituencies
 - Advocate for the needs of students
- Establish procedures for the operation of the Board
- Review and evaluate Board operations and performance
- Approve the annual school calendar

The Board generally concerns itself with broad questions of policy rather than with administrative details. Those details are typically addressed by the Superintendent and his/her staff, who is then in turn held responsible for the supervision of the entire school system.

Select Board Member & Overseer – One-year term, Five seats

Matthew Everett

Work Experience: Self-Employed Owner/Operator at 4 Seasons Home Repair & Camp Care

Political/Civic Experience: Over the past 16-plus years, I have been very involved in the community and in municipal government. I began by volunteering and coaching youth sports. I served on the recreation board for a few years, have been a volunteer firefighter for over 10 years, and I am finishing my 11th term as selectman.

Why are you running? I am running for selectman again this year because I enjoy what I do, and I believe that my presence has made a difference. I have learned a lot from other selectmen over the years and I feel that we are really making progress. As a board, we have begun to work on many projects that have enhanced our community. There is more to be done and I am excited to have the opportunity to be part of it. I want to continue to develop our community and expand services, while continuing to offer affordable tax rates. I am open to new ideas and change, but also enjoy the small town feel that we have now.

What qualifies you? I have lived in Norridgewock most of my life. My wife and I raised our two children here. I care about our community and the people in it. I may not have a college degree or a political background, but I have always worked hard to ensure that I was doing what was best for the community. I don't believe there is a set of qualifications needed. I think you have to be open minded, unselfish, and willing to listen.

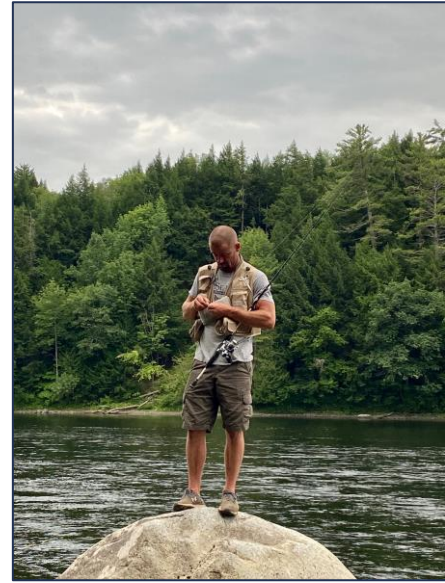
What is the biggest challenge facing Norridgewock? Currently, the biggest challenge facing Norridgewock is the rising costs of virtually everything. Our community is filled with families and individuals struggling to make ends meet.

How would you address that? As a board, I believe we need to find ways to keep taxes and expenses affordable to lessen the burden on our citizens. All boards, committees, and departments should continue to be conscious of spending.

Name two other priorities and what you propose to do about them: It is hard for me to prioritize everything that I envision and hope for in Norridgewock. However, my biggest priorities are bringing the sense of "community" back into our community. I want to find new ways to bring the community together. We have a lot of great assets within Norridgewock that are underutilized. As a board, we have already begun to work on making our public areas safer and more accessible. I want to expand further and create a cohesive "whole" town development plan. Specifically, I want to ensure that we continue to expand offerings at Oosoola Park and find ways to connect the park to the downtown area. I want to see events being held and kids playing on the playground. I want to continue to work with the Airport Advisory Committee to expand offerings there, as well. Using the airport for an additional day of "Oosoola Days" was a fantastic addition and the community responded positively.

Another priority for me is developing a plan for the Rail Trail connection to our existing recreational trails. I have begun to volunteer time to help build new trails, install bridges, and working directly with the sportsman association. This trail will offer a connection through many other communities and stands to create economic development opportunities as well as increased revenue to existing businesses. Through grants and volunteer hours, we have begun to organize our plans and can build what is needed. We will need to work with other municipalities to create a system that is well organized. I have traveled another rail trail in Maine recently and it is a great opportunity. The rail runs through a lot of wooded areas but will also allow access to downtown areas.

What's one thing you want voters to know about you? I am honest and I care. I will be honest when I do not agree with projects and will always work to make sure that all demographics are served by our select board. I support the will of the voters, even if I do not agree with the outcome of a vote. I take the job of selectman very seriously even though I may not always be politically correct. I am always willing to listen and will always try to assist the people of Norridgewock where I can.



**ABSENTEE BALLOTS ARE NOW AVAILABLE
FOR TOWN MEETING ELECTION OF OFFICERS & REFERENDUM**
Call (634-2252), stop by the Town Office, to request your ballot

Select Board Member & Overseer – One-year term, Five Seats

Charlotte Curtis

Work Experience: Norridgewock Town Office, 23 years

Political/Civic Experience: Several years on the Select Board, Planning Board, Budget Committee, Sewer Commission, Board of Assessors, ran a warming center (hot meal) for 7 years.

Why am I running? Giving a different look at municipal issues.

What qualifies me? Many years of municipal service in the Town Office and civic service on the above municipal boards.

What is the biggest challenge facing Norridgewock? In my opinion, although the Town offers many sports programs for young people, we could still do more than a sports program for the children.

How would you address that? The idea of a community building for the other activities for young people has been discussed for several years, but so far there has been no action on it. This is a rural community and a lot of kids live far from town center; some kind of program to get these kids to the activities and home again.

Name two other priorities and what you propose to do about them: I really want our town to stay a rural community and keep our country atmosphere.

What's one thing you want voters to know about you? Most people in town know me and there isn't much they don't know about me. I strive to be a good neighbor and I work to be a good public servant.

Proposed Commercial Solar Regulations Goes to Voters as Amendment to Site Plan Review Ordinance

After nearly a year of considering solar regulations, the Planning Board developed proposed regulations to be integrated into the existing Site Plan Review Ordinance. The Planning Board's recommendation was to regulate commercial and community solar development and not residential development. The residential exclusion covers roof-mounted panels, as well as ground-mounted, so long as the energy generated is for the benefit of the resident.

Under the proposed regulations for commercial or community solar energy systems all components of the system shall be setback a minimum of 25 feet from all property lines and the facility must be surrounded by a fence (at least 6' high) that allows for small wildlife passage and movement. There was significant discussion regarding the process for decommissioning and removal, which was aided by certain new requirements set forth in State Law. Under the proposed regulations, if the facility falls to 10% or below of the permitted capacity for a period of 12 months, the facility will be considered abandoned and removal will be required. There is a bonding requirement in place that protects the Town financially, should the owner not remove the system as required under the ordinance.

The proposed ordinance sets up standards for emergency services access, as well as requiring the facility owner to provide facility orientation to emergency personnel (i.e. firefighters, etc.). This consideration is important, as the nature of such an emergency at this type of facility may be unfamiliar.

The consideration of commercial and community solar regulation will be sent to voters by secret ballot referendum. This allows for qualified voters to cast their ballot by absentee or during the day of Town Meeting. Voting on this item will not be during open meeting held in the evening.

Copies of the proposed ordinance with amendments is available online at www.townofnorridgewock.com or at the Town Office.



Planning Board Member – Three-year term, Two Seats

Charles “Chuck” Farrand

Work Experience: Retired Dairy Farmer

Political/Civic Experience: Served as a delegate to National Convention for DHIA, a director of Maine Dairyman’s Association, a director of Farmington Farmer’s Union (store).

Why am I running? Would like to serve my community and protect local landowners that have large parcels of land.

What qualifies me? Have the time. Enjoy seeing what is going on in the community. Have been a resident of Norridgewock for 60 years

What is the biggest challenge facing Norridgewock? Too much government.

How would you address that? Protecting landowners’ rights and being open to opposing views.

Name two other priorities and what you propose to do about them: Keeping spending under control and keeping landowners’ rights intact.

What’s one thing you want voters to know about you? Here to serve the people of Norridgewock. Honest and up front. I do not put on airs 😊

Library Trustee – Five-year term, One Seat

Jean Lancaster

I have worked in an office setting for the past 46 years in various positions from administrative assistant to director of business operations, as well as co-owning a general contracting business for 12 years. I retired in September of 2022. I served on the original Oosoola Park Committee, was a member of Big Bats for about 4 years, and belonged to numerous sports booster organizations when my children were in high school.

Having recently retired from a not-for-profit, I understand the structure of working for a director who in turn answers to the board of directors. Being a bookkeeper for the past 46 years, I know the importance of fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets.

Norridgewock’s future growth relies on the benefits it has to offer both residents and businesses. The library serves as an important resource for young and old alike. Like most small towns in Maine, the more resources offered, the more the community thrives. Norridgewock is my home. I have lived here for 40 years. My husband and I raised our family here. Now that I am retired, I would like to become more active in the community.



**Norridgewock
Public Library**
634-2828

Find your next book at your local library!
Tuesday & Thursday 10am – 6pm
Wednesday & Saturday 10am – 2pm

Select Board Member & Overseer – One-year term, Five seats

Lindsey Lynch

Work Experience: Spent 7 years in pharmaceutical sales before coming to Frito Lay. I've been the district sales manager at Frito for over 7 years now.

Political/Civic Experience: I have been volunteering and coaching youth sports, I spent 4 years on the Recreation Committee (chaired it the last 2), served on the Budget Committee, and have been on the Board of Selectmen for the last 3 years. I am also an Advisor for the Olympia Snow Women's Leadership Institute..

Why are you running? I love the work I have been able to be a part of as a member of the Select Board. There is still so much more work to be done and so many opportunities to explore for the town. It has been a privilege to put my time and energy into shaping and bettering this town over the last three years and I want to continue to do so.



What qualifies you? My corporate background gives me a strong understanding of the fiscal and organizational responsibilities that face the municipality. Owning a business in Norridgewock gives me an additional perspective of how the decisions we make as a town impact the businesses here. Having now been on the Board of Selectmen for three years, I have learned so much from the other board members and have gained the real world experience of seeing the challenges that face the town and tackling them face on. I do believe that what qualifies me most to do this job is that this is my home and I'm proud of this town. I want to see it prosper and continue to be an amazing place to grow our business and raise a family.

What is the biggest challenge facing Norridgewock? The biggest challenge for the town is the same thing that is challenging most of us as individuals, inflation. The skyrocketing cost of materials, services and labor is having a huge impact on the budget.

How would you address that? We need to make sure that we are investing in the right things at the right time. Making sure that we lean on the expertise of our boards in letting us know which projects need to be done and which ones have time to be shopped around. We also need to cultivate new revenue streams for the town. We need to be proactive in recruiting new business to come to town. The addition of several new businesses in the downtown is exactly what we need, now the challenge comes in keeping that momentum of growth going so that we can continue to diversify our tax base thus reducing the tax payer burden over time.

Name two other priorities and what you propose to do about them: There has been a great start to the revitalization of the down town. We have seen new businesses join the downtown this year which is very exciting. Continuing our focus of making the downtown not only visually attractive but also a place people want to come to and a place where businesses can thrive is a top priority. We do this by continuing to work with the existing businesses and helping them to capitalize on funding that is available to them for improvements. We also continue to expand our regional network. Having a stronger presence online and within other chambers gives us additional exposure and allows us to highlight what our town has to offer.

The rail trail is probably the biggest economic opportunity on the horizon for the town. We took several steps this year to prepare us for the opening of the trail system, like working to ensure ease of travel to the trail for residents, the project at Ashley J. Wing Family Memorial Park and working with the sportsman's club to get them funding to better their map and trail system. We need to continue to think about ways to ensure that when people come through our town on this trail system that they stop and spend some time and money here

What's one thing you want voters to know about you? What you see is what you get. Whether the live stream is on or off, I am the same person. I say what I mean and I mean what I say. I am a straight shooter that values honesty and transparency at all times.



Town of Norridgewock

Town Meeting Municipal Election

March 6, 2023

Sample Ballot

Select Board Member & Overseer

One Year Term

Vote for no more than FIVE (5)

☐ Bickford, Kelsea J.☐ Blodgett, Ronnie L.☐ Curtis, Charlotte A.☐ Everett, Matthew J.☐ Lynch, Lindsey M.E.☐ Wentworth, Dylan G.☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____**Tax Assessor**

One Year Term

Vote for no more than THREE (3)

☐ Curtis, Charlotte A.☐ Frederick, Ronald E.☐ Lyman, James J.☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____**Budget Committee Member**

Three Year Term

Vote for no more than TWO (2)

☐ Wilder, Sara I.☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____**Sewer Commissioner**

Two Year Term

Vote for no more than ONE (1)

☐ (write in) _____**Sewer Commissioner**

One Year Term

Vote for no more than ONE (1)

☐ (write in) _____**MSAD 54 School Board Director**

Three Year Term

Vote for no more than TWO (2)

☐ Libby, Desiree A.☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____**SAD 54 School Board Director**

One Year Term

Vote for no more than ONE (1)

☐ (write in) _____**Library Trustee**

Five Year Term

Vote for no more than ONE (1)

☐ Lancaster, Jean L.☐ (write in) _____**Planning Board Member**

Three Year Term

Vote for no more than TWO (2)

☐ Farrand, Charles, A.☐ O'Connell, Margaret, J.☐ (write in) _____☐ (write in) _____**Planning Board Member**

Two Year Term

Vote for no more than ONE (1)

☐ Curtis, Charlotte A.☐ (write in) _____



**Town of Norridgewock
Town Meeting Municipal Election
March 6, 2023
Sample Ballot**

ARTICLE 2: RETAIL MEDICAL MARIJUANA ESTABLISHMENTS

Shall the Town vote to authorize within the municipality the operation of registered medical marijuana retail stores, provided they operate in compliance with all applicable state and local requirements?

(Submitted by citizen petition)

☐ **YES**

☐ **NO**

ARTICLE 3: RETAIL MEDICAL MARIJUANA MORATORIUM

Shall an ordinance entitled "*Town of Norridgewock Moratorium Ordinance on Medical Marijuana Caregiver Retail Stores*" be enacted?

☐ **YES**

☐ **NO**

ARTICLE 4: SITE PLAN REVIEW ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

Shall an ordinance entitled "*2023 Amendments to the Town of Norridgewock Site Plan Review Ordinance*" be enacted?

☐ **YES**

☐ **NO**