

VOTING MATTERS: Tools for Maximizing PTA Influence

A Presentation to PTA Council
October 6, 2023



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

- Founded in 1920 as part of the passage of the women's right to vote in the US Constitution.
- Exists to engage the public in the democratic process.
- **501(c)(3) IRS Tax Status – nonpartisan requirement.**
- Advocacy is permitted under the tax code, provided we do not spend more than 20% of our annual budget on it.

PTA

- Founded in 1897
- Exists to engage parents and the public in support of public education and the best interests of children.
- **501(c)(3) IRS Tax Status – nonpartisan requirement.**
- Advocacy is permitted under the tax code, provided you do not spend more than 20% of your annual budget on it.

The Role of the PTA

- Advocate for the interests of children
- Share information
- Encourage parent participation in voting
- Share what the important issues are that affect the schools and how their vote will make a difference
- Respect 501(c)(3) nonpartisan status, and
- Respect your very important ADVOCACY role
- You can and should speak out, loudly and often

GREENWICH BY THE NUMBERS

- 64,455 Greenwich residents
- 38,545 Registered Voters **This is DOWN by 5% from 2022.**
 - 92.6% of residents estimated to be registered
 - 39.2% Unaffiliated and Other Parties -- 15,800
 - 30.3% Democrat – 11,673
 - 28.7% Republican – 11,072
- Turnout in Presidential and Federal/State election years is high.
 - 79.8% in 2020
 - 71.25% in 2018
 - 76.94% in 2016
- Turnout in local municipal election years is very low.
 - 35% turnout in 2021
 - 33% turnout in 2019
 - 30% turnout in 2017
 - **This means that a small minority of energized voters – as low as 20% -- will determine what policies are made and passed. This can have an important effect on local services, like schools.**

Very close numbers

ELECTIONS IN
GREENWICH ARE
ALL ABOUT TURNOUT

GREENWICH BY THE NUMBERS

- **Registered Voters by Age**
 - 18-29 – 6141 or 15.9%
 - 30s – 4896 or 12.7%
 - 40s – 6196 or 16%
 - 50s – 7525 or 19.5%
 - Total 24,758 or 64% of Registered Voters
- **Average Age of Voters**
 - All Voters -- 52.6 years old
 - Republican – 56.76 years old
 - Democrat – 51.24 years old
 - Unaffiliated and Other Parties – 50.71 years old

Turnout is
notoriously poor

ELECTION RESULTS

REFLECT OLDER

AGE TURNOUT

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Held every odd-numbered year, every other year.

Every election affects YOU.

Take every opportunity to VOTE!

- Board of Selectmen (3) -- BOS
- Board of Estimate and Taxation (12) -- BET
- Board of Education (4) -- BOE
- Representative Town Meeting -- RTM
- Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Constables

Important Elections for the Greenwich Public Schools This Year: Board of Estimate and Taxation

- **12 Members**
 - 6 Democrats: Elliot Alchek, Matt DesChamps, Scott Kalb, Leslie Moriarty*, Stephen Selbst*, David Weisbrod*
 - 6 Republicans: David Alfano, Nisha Arora*, Karen Fassuliotis*, Harry Fisher*, Lucia Jansen, Leslie Tarkington*
- Voters do not control which individuals serve on the BET
- Voters control which party has the Chairman and his/her tie-breaking vote
- The party with the most collective votes elects the BET Chairman
- **HOW TO VOTE**
 - **Vote for ALL of the candidates from the political party you want to control the BET**
 - **Important to understand the differences between the party platforms**

VIDEO: HOW TO VOTE FOR THE BET

Important Elections for the Greenwich Public Schools This Year: Board of Estimate and Taxation

Some BET Responsibilities that Affect the Schools

- prepares the annual budget based on initial operating and capital budgets prepared by the First Selectman and the Board of Education
- determines each year's tax rate
- controls Town spending
- sets fiscal policy, approves interim appropriations
- oversees the Finance Department, the Assessor and the Tax Collector.

Important Elections for the Greenwich Public Schools This Year:

Representative Town Meeting (RTM)

- **Composition**
 - 230 Representatives from 12 Districts, according to population of District
 - Moderator
 - Elected every two years
 - By Town Charter, designed to be NONPARTISAN
 - Significantly more competition this year
 - 336 Candidates running for seats
- **Some RTM Responsibilities That Affect Schools**
 - Reviews, approves, decreases, or eliminates items in the BET-approved budget
 - Final authority on Municipal Improvements
 - Reviews and approves or rejects appointments to Town boards, commissions, and other nominated bodies

Important Elections for the Greenwich Public Schools This Year

RTM Election this year – 106 candidates will NOT be seated

District #	Location	# Seats	# Candidates
1	Julian Curtiss School	19	31
2	Greenwich Town Hall	14	24
3	Western MS	11	7
4	New Lebanon School (Byram)	17	22
5	Riverside School	19	30
6	Old Greenwich School	21	33
7	GHS	19	21
8	Cos Cob School	26	41
9	W Greenwich Civic Center (Glenville)	20	30
10	Glenville School (Backcountry)	20	21
11	North Street School	23	34
12	North Mianus, School	21	36
Total		230	336

Important Elections for the Greenwich Public Schools This Year

RTM'S NONPARTISAN STRUCTURE UNDER CHALLENGE

Ballot for the RTM is on the reverse side of the Ballot for Other Municipal offices and is easily overlooked.

Voters should know what RTM candidates in their District plan to do in office.

Party Affiliation	% of Total RTM Candidates	% of Total Registered Voters
Unaffiliated or Independent	15%	41%
Democrat	30%	30%
Republican	55%	29%

Important Elections for the Greenwich Public Schools This Year: Board of Selectmen

- **Composition of BOS**
 - 3 Selectmen
 - First Selectman candidate with highest number of votes will be elected.
 - Elected every two years.
 - Highest vote totals of remaining candidates will seat 2 Selectmen
- **Some BOS Responsibilities That Affect Schools**
 - Prepares Annual Town Budget proposal for BET including the Town's Capital budget
 - Forms special committees to explore Town issues
 - Now must approve applications for Municipal Improvements (MI) to Planning and Zoning.
 - Initiates changes in Town Charter
 - Appoints Town officials and committee members

Important Elections for the Greenwich Public Schools This Year: Board of Education

- **Composition of Board of Ed**
 - 4 Democrats
 - 4 Republicans
 - Staggered 4-year terms
 - 2 Republicans and 2 Democrats elected every two years.
- **Board Chairman**
 - Elected by the Board of Education
 - Does NOT have a tie-breaking vote
 - Board must work cooperatively to reach decisions
 - Collegiality is important to the functionality of the Board of Education
 - Partisan wrangling can be and has been deeply damaging to the schools.
- **2 Democratic candidates**
 - Karen Hirsh*, Sophie Koven
 - Two seats
 - Both will be elected
- **2 Republican candidates**
 - Karen Kowalski*, Wendy Vizzo Walsh
 - Two seats
 - Both will be elected

Important Elections for the Greenwich Public Schools This Year: Board of Education

Some BOE Responsibilities that Affect the Schools

- sets policy
- approves annual budgets (subject to BET and RTM approval)
- hires and oversees the Superintendent of Schools
- sets standards for hiring teachers
- negotiates teachers' contracts
- decides grade organization of schools
- approves curricula
- manages school property
- handles school redistricting

WHAT'S AT STAKE: The Issues

- **CAPITAL PROJECTS FUNDING**
- **TAXES**
- **VOTING BALANCE IN THE RTM**
- **TOWN SERVICES**
- **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**
- **ECONOMIC GROWTH**
- **ELECTIONS ACCESSIBILITY**
- **CLIMATE CHANGE**

UNDERSTANDING THE CANDIDATES

Attend Debates

www.VOTE411.org

www.lwvgreenwich.org

GETTING READY TO VOTE

DO!

- Go to <http://www.vote411.org/>:
 - Be sure you are registered to vote.
 - Know what District you are in
 - Know where to vote.
 - Understand what the candidates think.
 - Vote for people who will do what you want them to do.
- Absentee voting
 - Complete an absentee ballot application.
 - Print it out and take it to the Town Clerk for verification.
 - Request a ballot right there and fill it out.
 - Submit your vote– and you are done.

DON'T!

- Sit at home on Election Day unless you are voting absentee or voted early. Every vote counts in Greenwich.
- Vote for your friends unless you know they support your values.
- Leave town service to others and think they will do the right thing.

WHAT CAN YOUR PTA DO?

- **HOLD A REGISTRATION EVENT**

- Must be done outside of school hours in cooperation with the school principal.
- LWV Greenwich can provide one “captain” to join a PTA volunteer “captain” and a couple of volunteers. We will bring registration materials.
- You provide the date and place, table, and anything you think will help promote voting (signs, etc.).
- Make sure the time and place will be seen by lots of voting parents.
- You provide advance PR to inform parents about the opportunity.
- Email me if interested [http://president@lwvgreenwich.org](mailto:president@lwvgreenwich.org)

- **DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** – to inform parents regularly, maybe through the Homeroom Parent network email system?

- Week #1: [Register to Vote](#)
- Week #2: [Know the Candidates](#)
- Week #3: [How to Vote for the BET](#)
- Week #4: [How to Vote for the RTM](#)

- **PUT UP A NONPARTISAN ELECTION SIGN** – here’s what the sign looks like....



**VO
TE**

**access all
voter
info here**



LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS'
OF GREENWICH

**every
election counts.**



VOTE411.org

for all

**Candidate & Election
Information**

**please VOTE
every election counts.**

LEAGUE RESOURCES – LET US HELP YOU

- Create a buzz about the elections. It's important to vote. It's important to understand what candidates think.
- Here's how:
 - [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) – Follow us, Share our Posts, Tell Your Friends
 - [Candidate Information](#) on our website
 - [Vote411.org](#)
 - [Debates](#) – Attend in person or on Zoom.
 - Watch the [Videos](#) after the fact
 - [Subscribe](#) on our website and automatically receive all of the election information that we distribute. You can then pass it on to others.
- **LWV Greenwich never supports or opposes any candidate for public office. We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.**



LEAGUE RESOURCES – LET US HELP YOU

- Informational Reels or Videos
 - [How to Vote for the BET](#) – 3 minutes long. Distribute widely to your parent community. MOST young voters have no idea how the system works.
 - [Vote411.org](#) – enter your home address, [Register](#), [Check Registration](#), Polling Location, [What's On the Ballot](#), candidates' information. Will go live by October 12.
 - [Municipal Offices Explained](#) – a short reel outlining who does what
 - [Who's Running for What?](#) – a short reel outline the candidates for municipal office
 - [Register to Vote](#) – a short reel outlining the need to register.
 - This [PowerPoint](#) will be available online beginning at 2 pm today. A [Resources](#) handout is available now.