

—Slug:.....COMM-0867.bf.village\_election  
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—For section.....News  
—Format.....News - byline and dateline  
—Dateline.....Bellows Falls  
—Article Number:.....43668



**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Voters name newcomer as Bellows Falls' village  
2 president

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3 Wendy M. Levy pledges a 'spirit of collaboration';  
4 incumbents Masure and Pichette returned to the Village Trustees

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5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 At the Annual Village Election on May 19, newcomer  
7 Wendy M. Levy, running for her first major village position, beat  
8 out Deborah Wright for village president, winning a two-year  
9 term by a 2.5:1 margin, with 124 votes to Wright's 50 votes.  
10 Current Village President Paul Obuchowski decided not  
11 to seek re-election.

12 Levy, who came to Bellows Falls from Brattleboro in  
13 2022, had previously served as a Rockingham Free Public Library  
14 trustee.

15 Wright, a local business owner for over 20 years, served  
16 on the Bellows Falls Village Trustee Board, as both president and  
17 trustee; on the Rockingham Planning Commission, as both  
18 planning chair and commissioner, and in many appointments to  
19 committees and subcommittees since 2011.

20 In a three-way contest for two trustees' seats, incumbents  
21 prevailed.

22 Trustee Wade Masure was re-elected with 124 votes, as  
23 was Trustee Taylor Pichette, with 98 votes. Stefan Golec, a former  
24 longtime trustee, came in with 65 votes.

25 Masure said he is "pleased with the support shown to me  
26 from the citizens, I believe we have a well-rounded board that  
27 should be able to work together as we move forward, a good mix  
28 of new and a few [who] have some time under their belts."

29 Pichette said he was looking forward to working with the  
30 new board and new Town Manager Aaron Patt.

31 "With the new board and new manager, there is a lot of  
32 momentum going forward. Bellows Falls is on the right track, and  
33 we have some great opportunities to strengthen our community  
34 further," Pichette said.

35 He urged citizens to "help the new manager [...] get on  
36 board and then see how he thinks we can best support the  
37 Village."

38 "I'm excited about the idea of a Capital Improvement  
39 Plan so we can be forward looking with our planning and  
40 budget," Pichette added. "We should continue to pursue projects  
41 downtown and on the Island."

42 Former Trustee Jeff Dunbar ran unopposed for the  
43 remaining year of the late Susan MacNeil's seat, garnering 154  
44 votes.

## 45 'A little nervous'

46 Levy said that she believes her strong showing against an  
47 experienced opponent reflects "many of my neighbors' desire to  
48 keep Bellows Falls moving forward" in a spirit of cooperation,  
49 optimism, and generosity.

50 "I feel good about winning and honored that many of my  
51 neighbors believe in me," Levy said. "Of course, I'm a little  
52 nervous — it's a great responsibility and I have a lot to learn —  
53 but part of that nervousness is excitement. Thankfully, I'm  
54 collaborating with so many good and thoughtful people to keep  
55 Bellows Falls moving forward. I am not doing this alone! I  
56 couldn't, wouldn't, and shouldn't do this alone."

57 Among the main struggles she sees facing Bellows Falls  
58 are the same as those shared by "countless industrial towns in  
59 New England and beyond: affordability."

60 "How do we take care of each other and our commonly  
61 held structures during an era of extreme economic inequality,  
62 after decades of almost wholesale private-sector abandonment  
63 with diminishing federal support?" Levy said.

64 She said she feels that, for a long time, Bellows Falls has  
65 been a haven for those who need an affordable, welcoming place  
66 to live.

67 "That's why I moved here," Levy said.

68 "I don't want to pull the ladder up behind me," she  
69 continued. "I want to keep this village accessible, friendly, and  
70 unique, not only for people who grew up here, but for people  
71 who choose to live here."

72 Levy said she would try to address those issues by always  
73 asking "how our decisions affect those of us who are struggling  
74 the hardest and have the least to give."

75 She said she would be "working in a spirit of  
76 collaboration, and that means keeping an open mind and  
77 listening to the perspectives and counsel of all who live and

78 spend time here, including — maybe especially — people who  
79 didn't vote for me."

80 Levy said she asks herself how every resident can live "a  
81 dignified and connected life, what is needed to make that  
82 happen, and where will those resources come from."

83 "I have lived an interesting and varied life, and I plan on  
84 continuing that until they take me out feet-first," she said.

85 Levy added that she considers herself "part of the 'Weird  
86 America' contingent, which has a lot to do with being in love  
87 with the world and curious about everyone and everything in it.  
88 This really is my guiding star, and it will inform how I govern."

## 89 Concerns and priorities

90 The small voter turnout was a concern, Masure said,  
91 noting that with a turnout of 175 voters in a village with 2,700  
92 residents, "it would be better to see more participate in voting."

93 Masure said that there are several issues the Trustees are  
94 focusing on:

- 95 • Ramping up efforts in resolving the issue of unsightly  
96 debris that can be found at some properties around the village.
- 97 • Working with the Rockingham Selectboard to establish  
98 a transfer of the police/fire facility to the town, in a way that  
99 works for all.
- 100 • Doing more research to see what, if anything, can be  
101 done to better control the misuse of electric bikes and scooters  
102 on the sidewalks and streets within the village.
- 103 • Ongoing efforts to keep costs in check for the police,  
104 water, and wastewater departments, while establishing a sound  
105 longer-term capital improvement plan.

106 "I believe the issues stated above are best addressed by a  
107 team approach from the entire board and village president,"  
108 Masure said. "I'm looking forward to working with our new  
109 municipal manager as he comes on board next week."

110 Pichette said that supporting and growing the downtown  
111 and public infrastructure remain top priorities. "Looking at our

112 budget and streamlining some of our functions are also issues to  
113 address,” he said. “Helping the new manager settle in is the first  
114 step.”

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