

My name is **Ben Palleiko** and I am a candidate for the Board of Selectmen this year. I chose to run because I have a set of beliefs about what Hopkinton is, and should be, that I hope represent the views of a majority of the town. I have written this note in an effort to explain to you what those beliefs are, and to ask for your support in the May election.

Here, then, is what I believe:

I believe that we must **keep our schools strong**. We have invested many millions of dollars over the last 15 years to build a school system that is now among the best in the state. We need to be fiscally responsible and control costs where we can. But we cannot risk the long-term damage to our school system that excessive cutbacks can cause. Even though the pressure on the town will be high for several years to come, I will work to ensure that we do not ignore the critical requirement to protect what we have built.

I believe that there are **no easy solutions** to the financial challenges facing us for the foreseeable future. All governments, federal, state and local, have suffered significant declines in revenue that will not quickly recover. In Hopkinton in particular, our revenues have trailed expense growth for several years. Although the town has worked very hard to maintain services while cutting costs, we can all see that there has been a decline: in the classes and sports eliminated at the schools; in the new fees for town services; in the decaying roads and reduced hours at some town offices. Acknowledging this fact helps us to appreciate that the problem isn't merely cyclical and so won't cure itself - we may need to make difficult choices on an annual basis, and make adjustments regularly to address the areas of greatest need.

I believe that the only long-term way to work out of our situation will be to increase our revenues. However, this **can't be done only through residential tax increases**. Even during the strong times through the middle of the last decade, the town found that expense growth

regularly kept pace with, or exceeded, revenue growth. Although we all hope that the broader economic environment will improve over the next several years, we must continue to watch costs carefully and not simply accept high residential taxes as a given. It is our money, and we must not forget that for seniors and others living on fixed budgets, these tax increases can represent an intolerable burden.

That is why I endorse the idea of **smart growth**. Smart growth means accepting development as a necessary way to increase revenues, while placing strict controls over what that development entails. We must focus on growth that enhances the town, not detracts from it. That means primarily low impact, commercial growth that doesn't place further demands on our services. We are at a prime location, at the intersection of two of the busiest highways in the state, and we have office parks with easy highway access that can attract high quality businesses with a highly educated workforce that will find our town an attractive place to live. Such development can create a "virtuous cycle", where our commercial growth supports an even better community that can provide more opportunities and services for all our neighbors. But we need to foster an environment that encourages that growth, and proactively search for the kinds of businesses we want to attract to town.

I believe we must continue to **think about the long term**. Things are tight, and will be for a while. However, despite our fiscal pressures, it is important that the town not lose sight of the larger goal of continuing to be a desirable place to live. We should still work to support services that improve our quality of life. For example, I believe that Hopkinton needs to embrace the opportunity to grow and evolve our library. A library is one of the few resources in town that attracts all generations and truly serves everybody. For too long, we have accepted a library that has not kept pace with the growth of Hopkinton. It is time for us to recognize the potential value of this resource and to provide the town with a library that truly meets our needs and is something that we can take pride in.

Last, and this is why I chose to run this year, I believe my skills are a good fit with the town's current needs. I have spent most of my life working in challenging situations, ranging from the military to CFO of public companies, and **I am experienced** in dealing with the unique pressures that arise when times are tough. Our Selectmen will require an important set of skills in the next few years. They will need to be flexible, because the areas of greatest need will shift from one year to the next. They must have a balanced viewpoint, to be able to look beyond one's own interests to those that meet the needs of the greatest number. Perhaps most importantly, they must have integrity, because there will be no way to do this in a painless manner and it is critical that everything be recognized as fair and open.

What this means is that we will need our Selectmen to **work even harder** over the next several years. They must keep a close eye on the critical items that can't be allowed to deteriorate – like schools and public safety – while working to bring in new sources of revenue that enhance, not impair, the character of the town. They will constantly have to balance available resources against ever growing needs. And they must continue to look for other, longer term ways to make Hopkinton an even more wonderful place to live in the future. I believe I can fill those needs, and I hope you and the others in the town will support my effort.

Experience • Integrity • Balance

Please vote for Ben Palleiko for Selectman on May 17

For further information or to discuss anything more, I can be contacted at:

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(or just look for me on the baseball diamond/lacrosse field/soccer field)