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Democrats Nominate Slate With Gaps for 2019 Town Election

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The 2019 Democratic Caucus recently endorsed a slate of five candidates already approved by the Democratic Town Committee, and declined to offer opposition to various other candidates endorsed by the Republican Caucus.

Barring defeat in a primary, the Democratic candidates on this November's ballot includes Board of Education Chair Tara Ochman; Board of Selectmen candidates Sarah Neumann and David Martin; Board of Finance candidate Dan Bumgardner; and Planning & Zoning Commission candidate George Reilly.

No candidates were nominated and none were endorsed for town clerk, tax collector, treasurer, constables or the Board of Assessment Appeals.

See also:

- [GOP Caucus Ratifies Republican Town Committee's Slate of Candidates for Town Offices](#) (July 22)

Rob Werner nominated Chris Noe for first selectman, but in an overwhelming vote, about three dozen caucus members endorsed David Bayne, instead. Noe received only two votes.

Bayne will not be running for first selectman and his name was entered only as a placeholder, according to Frank Adelman, the Democratic Town Committee vice chair and moderator of the caucus.

The town committee is still searching for a candidate for first selectman, and sometime in September Bayne expects to remove his name from consideration by voters. Bayne wasn't present at the caucus.

Werner, previously a candidate for first selectman and for state representative, recently wrote in [a letter to the editor](#) of the Darien Times: "The placeholder strategy allows the DTC to control the nomination after the withdrawal of the placeholder in lieu of the more democratic caucus process. [...] The DTC has circumvented rules designed to give power to voters and hoarded it for itself. It's un-democratic."

Descriptions of the Candidates

[Leadership in Action 2019](#), *A joint campaign organization from the five active candidates on the ballot released this information on each of the candidates:*

"It is vital to elect leaders who will be deliberative and collaborative in their decision making, transparent in their process and include valuable public input as they guide our town," said a news release from Leadership in Action 2019. "That's why Sarah, David, Tara, Dan and George are running to serve Darien."

Sarah Neumann: Board of Selectmen

Bio

During the 15 years Sarah and her family have been Darien residents, Sarah's volunteer experience includes serving the Darien Community as co-chair of the Hindley and Darien High School PTOs.

She is past president of the Stamford-Norwalk Junior League and is currently a member of the Representative Town Meeting.

Nomination Acceptance Comments

Thank you. I am honored to accept the nomination to run for a Democratic seat on Board of Selectmen. I look forward to working with Darien residents and members of our Town Government as they serve in various capacities on Boards and Commissions.

Working together, being transparent, and including public input in my decision making are the strengths I bring to the Board of Selectmen. I believe there is nothing more important than engaging our community in a productive and meaningful way as we meet the challenges of the future.

Volunteering in our outstanding schools taught me this and so much more. My focus will be to improve the quality of life for all Darien residents, from improving our roads, to expanding our sidewalks to voting on a responsible town budget.

Thank you again for this honor to serve the residents of Darien.

David Martin: Board of Selectmen

Bio

David and his family are 20 year Darien residents. David currently serves as a member of the Representative Town Meeting and is a member of the Finance and Budget Committee. He is retired from JP Morgan Asset Management.

Nomination Acceptance Comments

Thank you and I accept the nomination to run for a Democratic seat on Board of Selectmen. I look forward to working with the Darien Community, and all elected and appointed members of our Town Government to make Darien an even better place to live.

I will work in a collaborative, transparent and deliberative manner to ensure we reach the best decisions for our town. Public input, will be an integral part of my decisions.

Looking ahead, we will be challenged to manage development in a way that preserves our small town feel while promoting a business -friendly environment to help build the commercial tax base.

I expect that my 30 plus years as an investment analyst will add an important perspective to these deliberations. There are a number of opportunities to enhance and improve the efficiency of town government operations and services while simultaneously improving the “consumer” experience.

I will look for ways to harness technology and evaluate systems and methods to make our town run better and more efficiently for our community. I will work to manage expense growth and minimizing taxes. We need to ensure that all expenses are thoroughly vetted and properly justified to minimize the tax burden.

My experience on the RTM F&B has provided me with a strong and solid understanding of the town budget.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize, as a member of the Darien Board of Selectmen, I will work with the Darien Community in a collaborative and transparent manner to deliver the results that will make Darien thrive today and tomorrow. Thank you.

Tara Ochman: Board of Education

Bio

Tara is the Chair of the Darien Board of Education. Since moving to Darien in 2007, Tara has been a member of a number of boards and community organizations including serving as co-chair of the Ox Ridge PTO and the Council of Darien School Parents.

She has worked in the financial division of political campaigns as well as in the non-profit sector.

Nomination Acceptance Comments

I am honored to accept this nomination to the BOE. I believe in this essential work because education is the key to unlocking the future for all children; allowing them to achieve their dreams, and supporting their foundation as our future leaders.

Darien's continued support of public education unites us as a community. This is important, careful and thoughtful work; and those elected take on great responsibility. I am ready to continue to move our district forward with children and their needs always at the forefront of our decision making.

Dan Bumgardner: Board of Finance

Bio

Dan and his family are 20 year residents of Darien. Dan retired in 2016 after working in the financial services sector for 35 years. He has been an active Darien volunteer, as a coach, board member of various organization both in Darien and across Fairfield County.

Nomination Acceptance Comments

Susan, thank you for those most gracious remarks. We are all fortunate to have someone like you so active in our town's affairs. I'd also like to thank David Bayne, chairman of the DTC; all the members of the DTC for putting forward my candidacy; all of those contributing time and treasure to our campaign; my family for their loving support; all of you attending this evening; and finally my fellow candidates with whom it is a privilege to run.

It is also a privilege to live in a community such as Darien. It is the hometown to our kids, both proud graduates of the Darien public schools. It is here that they laughed and cried on the ball fields, put pencil to paper in the class rooms, found friendships that will last a lifetime.

Those of us seeking public office have an obligation, a duty, to insure that this community continues to serve all its residents as well as it has served ourselves. I'm running for Board of Finance because I believe it's my turn to serve, to contribute my time and abilities to this community.

Leadership is about serving others. And in Darien it's time that those of us in leadership strive to serve all of our residents. It requires hard work, a willingness to listen, building consensus through informed advocacy and strong partnerships.

That is the approach I have taken throughout my career and the one I will bring to this office. Thank you.

George Reilly: Planning & Zoning Commission

Bio

George is a native of Darien and has served the town in a number of capacities including as a member of both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education. He has practiced law in and around Darien for 35 years focusing on family law, real estate, estate planning and small business issues.

Nomination Acceptance Comments

Thank you for this nomination which I accept with great enthusiasm. I have long had an interest in serving on the Planning & Zoning Commission. The Commission's work is at the heart of our town's intelligent and responsible growth.

P&Z has recently approved applications that will have dramatic impact on downtown and Noroton Heights which I expect will provide new attractions for young professionals, families, empty-nesters and new businesses.

For the future we must continue to balance the benefits of growth with concern about pedestrian safety, traffic congestion and the impact on town services. Property owners have a right to expect transparency and compliance with state statutes, town Zoning Regulations and the Town Plan of Conservation and Development.

The challenge will be keeping our small town feel while being a thriving 21st century community that supports the quality of life we all enjoy in Darien.

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I look forward to adding my perspective to the review of future plans as a lawyer and a native of Darien.
Thank you.

Correction: This article originally said there was no candidate for the Planning & Zoning Commission, but George Reilly is the caucus-endorsed candidate.