

Selectman Susan Marks Says She's a Team Player on a Successful Board

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A large part of the job of any selectman working with a first selectman in her own party is working cooperatively on the board together, and while other candidates may indicate they want to do that, Selectman Susan Marks has already been doing it for more than 18 months.

A 26-year resident of the town, Marks says her strengths include being able to listen well and work cooperatively with others.

"I think this current Board of Selectmen has worked extremely well together," Marks said in a recent interview. "I think Jayme has done an excellent job as far as bringing the board together to get consensus."

Last winter, the board's first budget vote was 3 to 2, with Democrats on one side, the GOP members on the other, she said. Rather than just ramming the budget through, "We discussed it at length, came to a consensus, and it became a 5-0 vote. I think we all respect one another, and we have a good working relationship."

In this term of the board, Marks said, the old Allen-O'Neill affordable housing complex in town was replaced, the Mather Community Center opened in the Town Hall building, the board commissioned a downtown parking study and made some changes in downtown parking, and surveillance cameras have been installed at the Noroton Heights Railroad Station. Also, the Board of Selectmen set up the Pedestrian

Infrastructure Advisory Committee to come up with a system of prioritizing repairs and expansions of sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure.

A sewer project on and around Intervale Road is about to start, and the town is on the verge of demolishing the former site of the Darien Senior Activities Center, she said.

And the town has done all this while keeping spending under control, she said.

"When you join the Board of Selectmen, there's a learning curve," Marks said. "There is an advantage to having an incumbent re-elected. I know the processes; I know the procedures."

Marks, is one of four candidates running for the two seats on the Board (four seats plus the first selectman's seat are up for election, but the GOP can only win as many as two of the selectmen seats along with the first selectman's office for a 3-2 majority — the minority party must have two seats on the board).

As the other three candidates did, Marks said one of her major concerns is the string of attempts, some successful, by state officials to override local decisionmaking in areas like affordable housing and land use.

"We need to publicly hold elected officials accountable for what they're doing in Hartford," she said.

Over the next two years, Marks said, the town needs to keep looking for more opportunities to provide affordable housing, to continue working with other town boards and commissions, including the Board of Education, in finding areas where consolidating services would be more efficient.

Marks, 57, grew up in Pound Ridge, N.Y. and graduated from Plymouth State University in New Hampshire with a bachelor's degree in business. In the 1990s she was a director of logistics for Fisher Camuto, joining the company in 1981 when it only had 50 employees, and staying with the company until 1989.

As her children grew up in Darien, Marks became active in many school and volunteer groups in town and for a time was an office manager at the Methodist Family Center Preschool.

Marks sent [Darienite.com](https://darienite.com) this bullet list recounting her work with various volunteer groups in town and government positions:

- Over 20 years of community advocacy and volunteerism
- Co-chair, Darien High School referendum and elementary 5 school referendum
- Co-chair, Royle School PTO, Council of Darien School Parents (CDSP) and Windward School PTO
- Member, Darien Representative Town Meeting (RTM)
- Co-chair, Darien Fireworks Committee
- Member, Darien Senior Housing Initiative
- Allocations Panel Leader, The Community Fund of Darien
- Director, Darien High School Blue Wave Pride Club

- Board Member, Methodist Family Center Preschool
- Chair, 4 successful local election campaigns
- Co-chair, Darien Dance Center Committee
- Chair, Newfield Swim and Tennis Club tennis program
- Fleet captain, Noroton Yacht Club Junior Sailing Program

"I'm the kind of person who digs in and helps out," Marks said. "Nothing gets accomplished on your own. You need a town around you. My parents volunteered; I grew up learning that it was important to give back."

Marks and her husband, Kevin, have two children, a son and a daughter, both now in their mid-20s.

"I'm a very good listener," she said. "I think I have a proven track record."

Correction: Susan Marks worked for Fisher Camuto from 1981 to 1989 not Nine West Shoes from 1991 to 1999. Fisher Camuto sold Nine West shoes.