

Dear FBRA,

Twenty-seven years ago, my husband Bill and I chose Fairfield to raise our family. My husband grew up in a coastal community and he wanted our children to have the same wonderful experience. Our beaches are one of our community's greatest assets and must be protected. We respect those neighborhoods that abut our public beaches.

Across town, residents have shared concerns about traffic, safety, potential school redistricting, development and affordability.

Residents who live in the beach neighborhood echo these concerns, but are also worried about coastal resiliency, equitable tax revaluation, and the relationship our town has with the university and its students.

Concern about our infrastructure and capital planning first prompted me to run for the Board of Education six years ago, and is one the reasons I am running for a seat on the Board of Selectman. We need to ensure that our town infrastructure is properly maintained and that our capital plan is comprehensive.

After the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, many residents in the beach raised their homes, but as climate changes and sea levels continue to rise, concerns about coastal storms and rain events should not be minimized. The town is moving forward on the Penfield project without having completed a proper coastal resiliency study. We need to know the impact a building project will have on flooding before, not after, the project is completed. The Board of Selectman should receive a report from the Flood & Erosion Control Board prior to approving a building project in a flood zone. We need to be proactive and make sure that our storm drains in the beach area are well-maintained and cleared often so our roads don't flood during a significant rain event.

Having stable and predictable taxes is important. When the next revaluation is done, as a member of the Board of Selectman, I would encourage the administration to evaluate past methodologies to determine if the revaluation was fair and accurate.

As you know, living close to the beach comes with benefits, but also challenges. Speeding on Fairfield Beach, Beach, Reef, and South Benson roads is of particular concern. As a member of the Board of Selectman, I would support initiatives that make our streets safer for pedestrians and walkers; especially given the number of children who walk to and from Sherman Elementary School every day.

The number of college students living at the beach also presents some challenges. The town needs to be more proactive in ensuring that the rental occupancy limits are being maintained. Parties where hundreds of students are in attendance are going unchecked. Residents are concerned about litter, noise, and parking. As a member of the Board of Selectman, I would facilitate more meetings between beach area residents, the university, students and the police department to discuss ways students can be better neighbors to our Fairfield Beach residents.

Thank you for your consideration, please do not hesitate to reach out with any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Christine Vitale