Bangor, Brewer, Old Town candidates vie for open council, committee seats in upcoming Nov. 3 election

Note: Bangor polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Cross Insurance Center. Brewer polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Brewer Auditorium, and Old Town polls are open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 5 Gilman Falls Ave.

Bangor City Council candidates

Gary Capehart, 66, is a retired school teacher who worked 38 years for the Bangor School Department, during which he served stints coaching track, basketball and football.

If elected, he says he will make it his top priority to address a growing crime problem in the city and bolster the local economy, saying the city is economically "at the end of a dead-end road."

To address crime, Capehart proposes putting more police officers on the streets, saying there are times when there are fewer police available to respond to emergencies than most residents believe.

Capehart says his own home on Essex Street has been burglarized, as have two of his neighbors' homes. As for the economy, he said he would focus on attracting jobs that pay well in order to attract younger workers.

Currently, he says the state's aging population presents a problem for economic growth.

Paul LeClair, 74, is a retired customer service representative for Digital Equipment Corp. in Massachusetts and a veteran of the U.S. Navy who served during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

As a Social Security recipient and an outspoken critic of the city's government who speaks out often during council meetings, LeClair's platform calls for cutting cityspending to reduce the burden on taxpayers.

He said the city's fire, police and public works departments all have "bloated budgets" and that if he is elected he will investigate the city's budgeting process to bring accountability and transparency to the process.

He also calls for more transparency and accountability in city finances.

In particular, he said there is not enough transparency in the city's budget and that it's too easy for city officials to transfer funds between the city's many financial accounts without the public's knowledge.

The public has no way to determine whether money borrowed via bond issues is actually spent on the project for which the city borrowed the money, he said.

David Nealley, 54, is the

only incumbent councilor to seek re-election this year after longtime Councilor Patricia Blanchette left her seat vacant and moved to Florida in July and first-term Councilor Pauline Civiello announced in September she would not seek a second term.

Nealley is a longtime Bangor businessman who serves currently as publisher of Maine Seniors Magazine. First elected in 2001, he has served three nonconsecutive terms on the council.

During his current and past terms, Nealley has brought a fiscally conservative voice to council discussions and votes.

Most recently, he opposed Councilor Joe Baldacci's proposed local minimum wage and pushed for rule changes to bar councilors from leaving their seats unattended without stepping down from office in response to the departure of Blanchette.

Nealley says he does not oppose a minimum wage hike at the state level, saying it's no secret that "wages in this region are pathetic," but that if every community implemented its own wage, "it would be chaotic doing business in Maine."

If re-elected, Nealley said this week he will push for continued improvements to sidewalks, streets, parks and neighborhoods, but that doing so while keeping taxes under control is "where the challenge lies."

He says his top priority will be to strategically position police resources to respond to crime across the city.

Sarah Nichols, 25, is a 2008 graduate of Bangor High School and a 2012 graduate of the University of Maine, where she earned a bachelor's degree in New Media. She serves currently as developmental coordinator for St. Joseph Healthcare.

Making her first run for political office, Nichols says her top priority if elected will be to make Bangor a place where people who want to stay in the city can afford to do so.

As part of her platform, Nichols supports raising the local minimum wage in order to make Bangor "a place where everyone can succeed."

Nichols cites Census Bureau records that indicate 24 percent of Bangor residents live in poverty, calling the statistic "unacceptable."

She said a single adult in Penobscot County who works 40 hours a week must earn at least \$10.32 per hour to survive, well above the current minimum wage of \$7.50 per hour, according to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's living wage calculator.

William Osmer, 35, is an instructor and adviser at the University of Maine.

Osmer says he is not a one-issue candidate, but he says his top priority if elected will be to work with fellow councilors to preserve the quality of life in Bangor and to promote policies that would stimulate sustainable growth in both employment and population.

His platform calls for supporting police and public health officials to find solutions for thecity's "growing opiate problem" in order to make the downtown area and Bangor neighborhoods safer.

He also says he will push policies that will bolster the city's tax base by attracting younger residents and jobs to the area, noting that the tax base — the largest single source of city revenue — becomes more fragile as it ages and more residents are forced to live on fixed incomes.

Other pieces of Osmer's platform call for expanding recreational opportunities, volunteer programs and public services for residents of all ages and continuing efforts to revitalize the downtown area as well as support for arts initiatives.

Touting his degrees in engineering, business and legal studies, Osmer says he is well qualified to make informed decisions on issues that come before the council.

Joe Perry, 49, served 14 years in the Maine Legislature. He says his late entry into the council race came after he decided other candidates did not have the level of experience the city needs.

If elected, he says his top priority would be to use that experience to help the council avoid the gridlock that is currently plaguing state and federal government.

In particular, Perry says municipalities across the state have adopted a "defensive mode" in response to budget cuts from Augusta that affect programs such as revenue sharing, which provides the city a share of state sales tax.

Those cuts, he said, force towns and cities to make the tough financial decisions so state politicians don't have to because the local tax base cannot offered the added burden.

not afford the added burden. Perry asserts that his experience in the state Legislature will help the city in that fight.

Perry owns Garland Street Market in Bangor. His run for council is his first bid for political office since he lost re-election to the Maine Senate in 2010. Megan "Meg" Shorette,

Megan "Meg" Shorette, 31, is making her second run for council after an unsuccessful bid in 2011. She currently serves as executive director for Launchpad, a nonprofit arts incubator in Bangor. She is also a small business owner at The BETA Agency, a local marketing firm.

A graduate of the University of Maine, she says her discussions with community members have identified a lack of employment opportunities, wage disparities and an ever increasing cost of living as top priorities for the council to work on.

She also cites aging infrastructure and abandoned properties as key problems facing thecity, saying that if elected she will work to remedy those issues. She further says she will work to maintain the city's status as a cultural center in the Northeast.

Bangor School Committee candidates

Jennifer DeGroff, 42, is a full-time community advocate and volunteer who graduated from Bangor High School in 1991.

A former teacher in Rhode Island and Florida, DeGroff says she wants to bring home economics and shop classes back to the middle school curriculum.

Those courses, she says, help ensure that all students -- whether they're destined for college or not -- are ready to become productive adults in modern society.

While she says the school system is very successful at preparing students for college, DeGroff maintains many students graduate without basic skills, like how to balance a checkbook.

Regarding school finances, DeGroff said she would cut expenses by asking Efficiency Maine to identify ways for the school system to reduce its utility costs, and to pursue grants for the school system in order to purchase equipment enabling it to take advantage of wind and solar power as well.

DeGroff is a disaster responder for the American Red Cross and a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. She also volunteers for the Community Partnership for Protecting Children and serves as a judge for the Bangor High School debate team.

Brian Doore, 46, is director of assessment for the University of Maine. He currently has five children in the Bangor school system and has 20 years experience as a K-12 policy adviser at the state and federal level.

If elected, Doore said his top priority would be to help ensure the school system stays the course and maintains its already successful education programs.

To accomplish his goal, Doore said the school board needs to make sure every change in educational programming and assessment is backed by research that is based on what has worked in other places.

According to Doore, many school systems in the nation introduce new programs, assessments and leaders every two or three years. He says research shows, though, that those educational interventions generally aren't successful for at least five to 10 years after implementation.

While Doore proposes few specific changes, he said he will work to make sure the school system's successes are better known in the community.

David Sturm, 50, serves as an instructional specialist in the UMaine Department of Physics and Astronomy. He is also a mathematics instructor at Beal College. His five children all attended Bangor city schools.

With degrees in business management, computer science and physics, he visits high schools throughout the state to promote science education through the Mainely Physics Roadshow in which he demonstrates science experiments, calling it "a cross between Bill Nye and Mr. Wizard."

If elected, Sturm said his top priorities will include maintaining school facilities and working to ensure school performance remains optimal while using cost-effective methods.

He proposes an analysis of existing school buildings to ensure that space is being used as efficiently as possible.

In order to maintain high levels of academic achievement, he said he would work to ensure teachers have enough instructional time, noting that non-instructional activities like school assemblies can take away from important classroom work.

Regarding school financ-

es, Sturm vows to question budget line items that do not appear to directly address the needs of students and teachers. Sturm has previously

Sturm has previously called for the expansion of existing Bangor school programs such as alternative education to keep students from dropping out.

Old Town city council and school board candidates

Old Town residents will decide on a proposed antinepotism charter amendment and select four of six candidates to serve on local boards during local elections on Nov. 3.

Incumbents David Mahan, who is chairman, and John Nuttall are running against resident Otis Butler II for two open City Council seats.

School board incumbents James Dill and Roxanne Dubey are up against resident Brooke Gardner for two open seats.

The referendum question asks residents if they want to add a second paragraph to thecity's charter that adds the anti-nepotism rule: "No person may quality or serve as a member of the Old Town city council if that person is currently married to a person who holds the position of Old Town City Manager or head of any City Department.".

Brewer City Council and school committee candidates

There are three candidates, including a pair of incumbents, running for three-year terms on the Brewer City Council. Matt Vachon, a carrier for the U.S. Postal Service and the city's mayor, is running for re-election. Jerry Goss, a two-time former mayor and former Brewer High School principal, also is running to retain his seat for a third term.

Adam Eldridge, a project engineer for Somatex Inc. and graduate of Brewer schools, has entered the race as an apparent newcomer to Brewer politics. He'll be trying to take a seat from one of the incumbents.

Two three-year posts are opening on the five-member Brewer School Committee. Both incumbents -- Dani O'Halloran and Kevin Forrest -- are running to retain their seats.

Trying to win a spot at the committee table are Michael Hutchins, Corey Bobb and Tammy Smith. Hutchins taught in Brewer schools for 25 years and works as a federal law enforcement officer and chaplain. Bobb is a realtor with ERA Dawson-Bradford and parent of three Brewer schoolkids. Smith is a free-lance court reporter with four children in the Brewer school system.

Two others, Michael Friel and Ashley Blanchard, will be vying for a one-year post on the school committee. That spot needs to be filled after Julie Milan resigned from the committee in September when she moved out of the district.

The committee has faced some criticism during the past year over its decision not to renew the contract of former Superintendent Jay McIntire. The school district has since hired Cheri Towle, who previously worked as principal of Wiscasset High School, to take over as superintendent.

Compiled from BDN articles by Evan Belanger, Nick McCrea and Nok-Noi Ricker.



