

# Ethan Lawrence Wins Hard-Fought SB Race

by Irene Wrenner

In a classic David vs Goliath matchup, first-time candidate Ethan Lawrence bested write-in candidate Brian Shelden by 474 votes.

At stake in the election on March 1st was a one-year seat on the Town Selectboard, the remainder of Vince Franco's unexpired term.

Sue Cook was appointed to fill the vacancy in October, but she did not re-apply for the seat this winter.

Lawrence, a 26-year-old father and farmer, ran a grassroots campaign on a shoestring budget. His run for office

sharply contrasted with the high-profile, deep-pocketed effort from Shelden, a 51-year-old software engineer. [See funding article, page 2.]

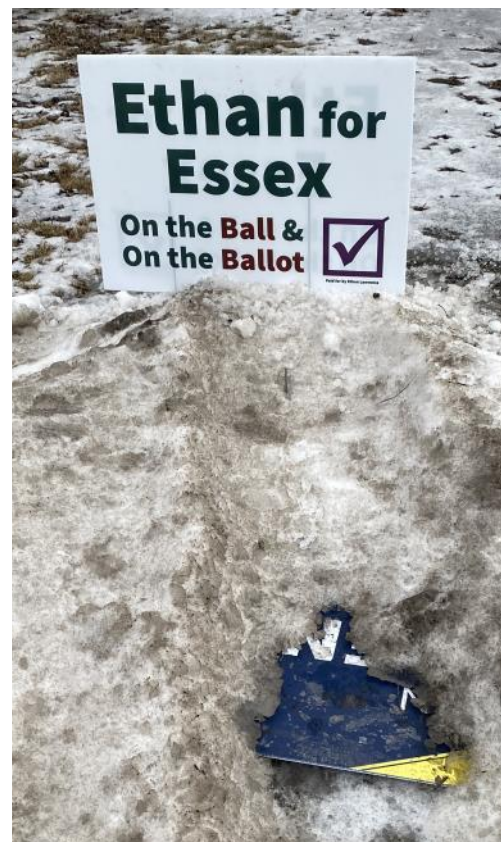
Selectboard seats are, by definition, nonpartisan.

That didn't stop Shelden, chair of the local Democratic caucus, from running at the request of friends who wanted to see a contested race.

His campaign paid to use several Democratic tools to assist with mailing and payment processing.

Shelden netted a significant number of write-in votes,

*(Continues on page 4)*



*Only some lawn signs withstood February's high winds, frigid temperatures, snow and rain*



*Essex Parks and Recreation's Foster Road Ice Rink is a popular spot for a variety of skaters. Video available on the Essex Retorter [Facebook page](#).*

## Village Trustees: Put ARPA Funds toward Budget & Renovations

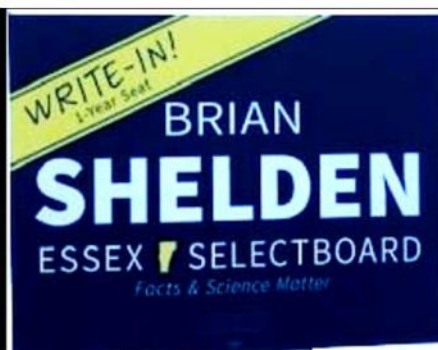
by Irene Wrenner

The Village Trustees adopted a \$6.3 million [FYE23 Budget](#) on Feb. 22nd. They plan to spend \$375,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to minimize the overall municipal tax increase, including utility rate increases, which is expected to be about \$70 more annually on a property valued at \$280,000.

The Village budget vote is Tuesday, April 12th.

*(Continues on page 4)*

## 2022 Selectboard One-Year Seat Campaign Finance Reporting



**Ethan for Essex**  
On the Ball & On the Ballot 

Report Type	Report Due Date	Report Filed Date	Contributions including			Contributions including		
			Expenditures	Loans	# Unique Donors	Expenditures	Loans	# Unique Donors
Disclosure	Feb 25	Feb 25	\$ 1,575.49	\$ 899.20	2	\$165.56	\$198.00	6
Disclosure	Feb 19	Feb 20	\$ 6,797.76	\$ 7,376.74	56			
Disclosure	Feb 19	Feb 19				\$ 677.60	\$ 795.00	9
Mass Media	Feb 02	Feb 09	\$ 1,419.52					
Mass Media	Feb 01	Feb 09	\$ 770.75	\$ -				
	<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$ 8,373.25</b>	<b>\$ 8,275.94</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>\$ 843.16</b>	<b>\$ 993.00</b>	<b>15</b>

# SB Race Attracts Outsized Funding

by Noah Lafaso

Community News Service

Candidates for the one-year Selectboard seat – Ethan Lawrence and write-in contender Brian Shelden – have filed a number of campaign finance reports as of Feb. 25th.

Each has raised and spent more money than any of the candidates who are vying for the two three-year seats.

The cumulative reports revealed a large disparity in spending between the two candidates.

Shelden's total expenditures of \$8,373 are nearly 10 times that of Lawrence's \$844.

Lawrence spent about \$427 on miscellaneous printing and \$375 on yard signs.

Shelden's main expenditures were \$2,430 on postcards, \$1,920 on postage, \$1,220

on yard signs, and \$1,004 on brochures.

Campaign contributions differ greatly as well. Shelden has received \$8,276 in monetary contributions from 58 different donors. Lawrence, on the other hand, has received \$993 in total contributions from 15 donors. Only one (\$200) donation to Lawrence's campaign exceeded \$100.

The Shelden campaign received 14 donations over \$100, from the likes of Chittenden 8-2 District Representative Karen Dolan, former Chittenden 8-1 District Representative Marybeth Redmond, and SunCommon Founder and Waterbury resident Duane Peterson.

Half (7) of his highest contributors are Village residents, all of whom would be constituents of a newly-elected Selectboard for just three months. That is, their

residency would expire on July 1st, if the Separation Charter is signed into law this spring as expected. They've donated a total of \$2,376 thus far.

When asked about their disclosure reports, both candidates provided responses.

"I think it speaks to how strongly the Essex Community felt they needed a positive, civil, and engaged choice other than my opponent," Shelden said.

"I decided to run a grassroots campaign. I had a ton of supporters who wanted to donate a bunch of money. I only took the money that I needed," Lawrence said.

The Feb. 20th and 25th disclosure reports can be viewed here:

[Lawrence's Disclosure Reports](#)

[Shelden's Disclosure Reports](#)



# Hill-Fleury, Chamberlin Take 3-Year Seats

by Irene Wrenner

Selectboard incumbent Dawn Hill-Fleury (4280 votes) and first-time candidate Kendall Chamberlin (3250) finished ahead of Andrew Champagne (1890) to win the two 3-year seats.

None of these candidates filed campaign finance reports prior to the vote as little, if any money, was spent on their race.

There was minimal buzz on social media about them. No lawn signs were seen about town. Nor were any of them seen outside the polling places on Election Day.

All three candidates did take part, along with Ethan Lawrence, in the first Selectboard Candi-



date Debate hosted by the *Essex Retorter* and held at Uncommon Coffee on February 18th. The debate was livestreamed and may be watched on our [Facebook](#)

[page](#). Noah Lafaso of the Community News Service spoke to members of the public who attended. [His article](#) is posted on our website.

# Town Opts In to Sell Retail Cannabis

by Irene Wrenner

Voters spoke decisively on March 1st to allow cannabis to be sold in retail stores throughout town: 3589 to 2473.

Meredith Mann is part-owner of the Magic Mann cannabis confectionary in the Essex Experience. For her this outcome entailed many months of work, collecting signatures on a petition to request the vote, as well as educating the community about the benefits of regulated THC products.

Mann said, "We are thrilled and humbled that the Essex Community has voted yes to adult use sales. We look forward to engaging our community, and

intend to be exemplary responsible business owners and an asset to Essex."

The Village Trustees have talked about putting Retail Cannabis on their April ballot.

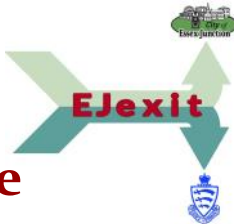
2022 Town Meeting Election		Town	Village	Total
Article 1: Pass the Budget	Yes	2656	2112	4768
	No	743	523	1266
Article 2: Retail Cannabis	Yes	1986	1603	3589
	No	1427	1046	2473
Selectboard 3-year Seat (2)				
Dawn Hill-Fleury		2505	1775	4280
Kendall Chamberlin		1903	1347	3250
Andy Champagne		961	929	1890
Selectboard 1-year Seat				
Ethan Lawrence		1898	1083	2981
Brian Shelden		1199	1308	2507
Moderator: Steven Eustis		2860	2285	5145
CWD Commissioner: Aaron Martin		2858	2249	5107



Bruce Post writes of his upcoming sabbatical, "I'll be taking a short breather ... to reflect on how I engage with the world."

The *Retorter* is grateful for Post's insightful columns that graced our back cover for the past year. They are archived at [our website](#) under "Opinion."

## Charter Moves to the Senate



The Separation Charter — to allow the Village to become its own City — has been passed by the Vermont House. It next moves to the Senate Government Operations Committee for consideration, after which the full Senate may vote on it.

## Town Budget Passes Easily

by Irene Wrenner

Voters approved the proposed FYE23 Town Budget of nearly \$16.7 million: 4768 to 1266.

They also re-elected Steven Eustis as Town Moderator and Aaron Martin as Champlain Water District Commissioner. Both men ran uncontested and received more than 5000 votes.

Eustis is a resident of Essex Junction. Should the Village's Charter for Separation pass the legislature this session, he would no longer be a resident of Essex Town, as of July 1st.

In that case, voters would need to select another Moderator for next year's Town Annual Meeting in a forthcoming election.

(Continued from page 1)

### Ethan

2507, but not enough to top Lawrence's 2981. The winner's post-election interview may be viewed on [Facebook](#).



*Disclosure:*

*The publisher endorsed Lawrence in an email sent to a personal mailing list, and two staff volunteered time toward his campaign. We did not financially support any candidate this cycle.*

(Continued from page 1)

### Village

In addition to their Budget, Trustee Seat, the EWSD budget, and School Board Seat, the Village's April ballot may include a **\$3 million bond** to finance the replacement of the Main Street waterline; a **1% local option tax** on sales, meals and rooms, and alcohol; a **5% increase in the financial reserve limit** (fund balance).

The bulk of the \$3 million in ARPA money will be used to ready Lincoln Hall to be the seat of a new City government. Renovations may include hard-surface floors, an elevator, and a good-sized meeting room.

Ideally, construction would begin next fall/winter. Targeted move-in date: July 2023.

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12 Main Street  
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[news@essexretorter.com](mailto:news@essexretorter.com)

[www.EssexRetorter.com](http://www.EssexRetorter.com)

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