

To the Town of Charlotte Selectboard:

I am writing to express my interest in volunteering for the Town of Charlotte. I believe my skills and interests would best align with the Planning Commission (PC), but I would also be willing to serve on the Development Review Board if there is an open seat.

It has been a while since I last threw my hat into the ring, so I wanted to provide a bit of background as a refresher. My wife Maggie and I moved to Charlotte in 2021 from South Burlington – we currently live on Church Hill Road next to Glory Flower Farm with our two dogs and cat. We are also currently expecting our first child in May of next year and have planted some firm roots in the community. I feel it is vital to have the perspective of young families on the PC and would be happy to provide that viewpoint.

With regards to my experience, I did both my master's and PhD at the University of Florida in computational biology and neurogenomics. My record within academia speaks for itself, with multiple publications in the journal Nature. These days I work in technology. I am the Chief Technology Officer of Guidepad, Inc., where I design software for the autonomous management of distributed systems. A good part of my career has been spent understanding and explaining complex systems to both technical and lay audiences – skills that could be put to excellent use in defining and interpreting the effects of Land Use Regulations.

I would like to take a moment to discuss some issues before the PC that I am particularly interested in. Obviously, of concern are the challenges of adapting to the effects of climate change and the need for affordable housing. With the upcoming expiration of our current Town Plan, the PC will need to begin the process of community outreach to capture the vision of our town's residents. I strongly feel, however, that outreach from the PC should be a continuous effort and not something that only occurs during a large project. The PC can be proactive in fostering a culture of collaboration with town residents.

Developing such a culture is crucial when viewed in the context of another challenge our town will face in the decades to come, demographic changes. There have been at least four pieces of research published in the last year, including an article in Nature and an advisory from Vermont's Joint Fiscal Office, that suggest sometime in the next 30 years Vermont's population will level off and then begin to decline. If you examine Charlotte's population pyramid (a graph used by demographers to display population distributions), it is an hourglass with a base smaller than the top. This means that we have more older people, a decent number of very young people, and not as many in the 20-40 years old range. Our median age in town as of the 2020 census was 50.1, compared to 42.9 for all of Vermont.

These data taken together suggest that we may feel the effects of an aging and shrinking population sooner than the rest of the state, namely increased usage of public services and a decreased base of working-age townspeople paying in to those services. There are things we can do to mitigate those effects, but this is something the town should be preparing for now. We need to come together as a community to discuss these challenges and decide a path forward together. Should I be appointed to the PC, I would use my research and data skills to help the town stay aware of and ahead of these issues.

Thank you for your consideration,
Mathew Citarella