

Saugerties voters prepare to elect supervisor and town board members

[Crispin Kott](#)

Voters in the Town of Saugerties will have their say about their next supervisor and two open seats on the town board. All candidates for those positions responded to our questionnaire.

Incumbents Lisa Stanley (town clerk), Diane Friedmann (receiver of taxes) and Raymond Mayone (superintendent of highways) are running unopposed and did not respond to our questionnaire. All three are on the Republican and Conservative lines.

Town Supervisor



Fred Costello, Jr.

Incumbent (seeking fourth term)

Party endorsements: Democratic/Working Families

What do you see as the most pressing issues facing your community, and how, if elected, would you tackle those?

I think the most pressing issues facing our community over the next two years are land use, cell service and cost of government.

Similar to our own household budget, the town government has been impacted by inflation. We're working closely with our unions, insurance providers and other vendors to try to minimize the cost of government to taxpayers without compromising services. Implementing technology and further consolidation has been helpful over the past few years. We will continue to explore creative options in an effort to contain the increased cost of government.

Land-use is another issue at the forefront of our priorities. The cost of housing is challenging many residents' ability to find suitable housing opportunities. This trend has an impact across all demographics; from first time, renters, to seniors hoping to downsize. If I am fortunate enough to get reelected, I will prioritize zoning changes that are reflected in our comprehensive plan, our open space plan and our climate is smart plan that will hopefully expand housing opportunity's for our community.

Over the past few years, almost everyone has become dependent on cell phones in some capacity. The mobilization of shopping, banking, wellness, information and communication ensure that in the future, we will be more dependent on our mobile devices. Unfortunately, there are areas in Saugerties, where cell service does not exist. We have been working closely with developers to identify and encourage investment in those areas. I believe over

the next couple of years, a meaningful impact can be made in improving cell coverage for our community.



Gaetana Ciarlante

Challenger

Occupation: Licensed clinical social worker (retired); currently owner of Hudson Riverfront Preservation

Party endorsement: Conservative

Experience:

I have 20 years of experience as a team leader at Ulster County Mental Health Department: Also a founding member and director of Support Our Servicepeople Inc.

What do you see as the most pressing issue/issues facing your community, and how, if elected, would you tackle those?

1. The NYS Comptroller's office began to reveal some of the town supervisor's mismanagement of taxpayers' funds of close to \$100K over a two-year period.
2. Property taxes and private property regulations are squeezing the longtime residents out. Increases in taxes due to lack of oversight, incompetent spending (possibly criminal). Decisions made based on personal benefits as well as the desires of powerful individuals rather than existing laws.
3. Alleged acts of criminal sex offenses perpetrated by those in positions of authority;

Addressing those issues:

Bringing honesty and transparency to the citizens of Saugerties and following the law:

1. Improve transparency i.e. items on the agenda; following civil service laws thereby avoiding lawsuits which the town is currently facing.
2. Scrutinize all spending from all departments and reducing taxes wherever possible but at least staying under the 2% tax cap.
3. Protect private property rights and avoiding changing property laws to accommodate a few individuals.
4. Improving communication among the entire town board, keeping the public informed and involved in town business which is the business of the people.

Town Board



Zachery Horton

Incumbent (four years)

Occupation: Supervisory public safety grants representative

Party endorsements: Republican / Conservative

What do you see as the most pressing issue/issues facing your community, and how, if elected, would you tackle those?

The most pressing issues facing Saugerties are increasing budgets/affordability, development.

I would like to continue to eliminate wasteful spending, consolidate areas of the budget where possible and economically feasible. Growth and development needs to be strategic while doing our best to maintain the character of Saugerties. Likewise, I believe Saugerties may need to revisit the

local law regarding Airbnb to see if adjustments can be made to further promote affordable living costs and housing availability, ultimately allowing residents to remain in Saugerties.



Bill Barr

Challenger

Occupation: Retired federal civil service

Party endorsements: Democratic, endorsed by the Upper Hudson Central Labor Council and County Legislator Aaron Levine.

Prior experience: I am currently on the Saugerties village planning board and tree commission. I have been an officer of the Saugerties Democratic Committee for ten years.

What do you see as the most pressing issue/issues facing your

community, and how, if elected, would you tackle those?

I want to keep Saugerties safe for our children, elders and immigrant populations; protect its natural beauty and water supply by responsibly zoning Winston Farm to this while allowing for the development we need; to make Saugerties more affordable by containing short-term rentals in a way that won't ruin the long-term rental market, by controlling corporate real estate speculation, and encouraging new business development.



Stephanie Bassler

Challenger

Occupation: Architect

Party endorsements: Democratic

Prior experience: I have served on the Town Comprehensive Planning

Committee for the past year, working on Comprehensive Plan compliance and improving coordination and communication between boards and committees. With 20 years of experience as an architect in the Hudson Valley, I have led projects balancing land use, affordability, conservation and historic preservation, and I am well-prepared to provide leadership on these key issues.

What do you see as the most pressing issue/issues facing your community, and how, if elected, would you tackle those?

Affordable housing is the most pressing issue. We need updated zoning, renter protections and limits on short-term rentals. We can reduce municipal costs by sharing more services with village and county, pursuing grants for infrastructure improvements and improving budget accountability. With appropriate town board oversight, the Winston Farm project can model smart development that prioritizes conservation and open space.

Michael Sasso

Challenger

Occupation: Sr. director of service

Party endorsements: Republican/Conservative

What do you see as the most pressing issue/issues facing your community, and how, if elected, would you tackle those?

As I engage with residents across Saugerties, two consistent concerns emerge: affordability and accountability. The rising cost of housing, driven by increased demand, has made homeownership increasingly difficult for local families. This challenge is compounded by high property taxes, which often exceed \$1,000 per month — placing a significant burden on both new homeowners and seniors living on fixed incomes.

This is a twofold issue:

Employment opportunities must align with the cost of living in Saugerties.

Tax rates must be reviewed to ensure they are sustainable and equitable.

Reducing taxes to a more affordable level is achievable through a careful review of departmental spending and the elimination of non-essential expenditures. At the recent town budget meeting, it became clear that accountability in spending is a critical issue. Many budget line items lacked clarity and there was little understanding of what expenses were being charged or how funds were being used.

Saugerties generates substantial revenue — yet residents deserve transparency in how that money is allocated. Implementing a purchase order (PO) process would allow for monthly tracking of expenditures, ensuring that every dollar spent is accounted for and justified. Additionally, a regular review of revenue vs. expenses — especially for town-sponsored events — would help determine whether these activities are financially beneficial or burdensome to taxpayers.

A recent example is the reactivation of a resolution establishing stormwater districts, which now proposes an additional \$400 annual fee per home in the Glasco Ponds subdivision. This area includes ten Habitat for Humanity homes. We must ask: How does this fee impact affordability for these families? Can existing departments absorb these responsibilities without passing costs onto residents?

Before implementing new financial burdens, the town board must consider the broader impact on the community. Transparency, fiscal responsibility and common-sense decision-making are essential. Board members are entrusted with managing taxpayer funds and must act as stewards of the community's trust.