

# Jane Gonsalves – Ward 5 City Council

I grew up in the west end of New Bedford in a family that was always interested in politics. Local affairs were a regular topic for discussion at our dinner table. My father served on the Redevelopment Authority in the 1960s, and so my siblings and I learned at an early age what was going on in our city. As a result, I have always had a keen interest in serving my community, although I never thought that I would run for office when I grew up!



I returned to New Bedford after graduating from Providence College with a B.A. in Economics. I was lucky to find a job locally in insurance and have worked in that industry until recently. Several of my friends were also living in New Bedford and over time, one by one, they seemed to gravitate toward public service. In 1992, I volunteered for Mark Montigny's first campaign for State Senate. I got very involved and spent most of my free time doing campaign work. I really enjoyed it and realized that I was learning valuable skills. The next year, in 1993, I ran for the Ward 5 City Council seat and was elected from a field of 5 candidates. It has been a wonderful experience, despite the stress that sometimes accompanies public service. I know that I have made a difference for people and neighborhoods during my tenure. I'm not afraid to say what I think and that sometimes results in criticism, but my constituents know that I will fight for them whenever they need me to. Residents who have contacted me by phone or email, or through my Facebook page or website, know that I am accessible and responsive. They also know that I'm relentless in seeking solutions and getting action on

their behalf. I get things done!

I have had the opportunity to do a lot of small things for a lot of residents in the time I have served as Ward 5 Councillor, like getting trees removed and planted, sidewalks repaired, and zoning issues resolved, to name a few. These may seem like small things, but have made a big difference to the people who needed my help. This is a big part of the role of City Councillor and I find it rewarding to act as a resident's champion in City Hall. Not only have I solved problems for individuals, I have also had the chance to vote on bigger issues as well that affect the entire city. First and foremost in my mind is always what is best for New Bedford.

I'm proud to say that I have practiced fiscal responsibility. I've chaired the Finance Committee for four years and requested that the meetings be televised so that city taxpayers would know how the city was spending its money. I've sponsored many budget cuts annually to ensure that our city departments are run efficiently. I've questioned spending requests made by the administration for things like capital improvements and pay raises. The Finance Committee is responsible for voting on bonding requests and I make sure that, before any vote is taken, the committee has all of the necessary information, including the reason the bonding is needed as well as the cost of that borrowing. These actions have contributed to the maintenance of the city's superior credit rating from Moody's.

I've always believed in the importance of New Bedford's unique neighborhoods and the necessity to maintain them by being vigilant on quality of life issues. I continue to advocate strongly for historic preservation in the city, and worked over several years to slow down the rush to demolish historic properties, through the passage of a demolition delay ordinance. The ordinance requires a public hearing, and a delay of several months before granting a demolition permit.

This has forced real estate developers to find alternatives to demolition. The property now owned by the Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE) at 38 So Sixth St is one of the properties saved from demolition by this process. I've also sponsored several other amendments to zoning ordinances to strengthen the integrity of our residential neighborhoods. Roadway improvements to Rockdale Ave, Hawthorn St and Brownell Ave were completed recently to improve traffic flow and public safety in that important travel corridor, a project that I lobbied strenuously for. I was also a driving force behind the extension of the walking path around Buttonwood Park, which is enjoyed by so many citizens on a daily basis. I have also supported the building of new schools, which will improve educational opportunities for our children, and will be reimbursed by the State at a substantial savings to the city. I have voted for funding for AHA night, the Zeiterion and other creative economy projects so that residents and visitors can enjoy arts and culture in local venues.

The proposed expansion of the Buttonwood Park Zoo is an issue that will affect the residents of Ward 5 and the city as a whole for a long time into the future. I've been vocal in calling for further study of the proposed expansion and chaired a task force made up of volunteers who developed a compromise plan for the Zoo. However I know the residents of Ward 5, and in particular, the neighbors of Buttonwood Park, want to be sure that we carefully consider the impact on the neighborhood, the park and the animals before any shovel is put into the ground and any more green space is taken. I continue to work with both the Zoological Society members and the Friends of Buttonwood Park to seek alternatives to expansion that will allow us to improve one of the best small zoos in the country, while maintaining green space for all of our residents to enjoy.

I believe a strong local economy needs strong small businesses. Therefore, I sponsored an effort to assist our

struggling fishing industry by requesting a summit with federal officials be held in New Bedford to address changes to the current fisheries management regulations. I also drafted an amendment to existing zoning ordinances to allow recreational facilities to locate in renovated mill buildings. I have supported tax increment financing agreements to encourage businesses to expand or relocate to New Bedford.

Looking forward, I know that my work to improve New Bedford, and in particular the neighborhoods that comprise Ward 5, is not done.

In the next term, I will work with the School Committee to improve educational opportunities for our children and to reduce the dropout rate. An educated workforce is central to attracting new businesses to New Bedford, which will provide job opportunities and expand our commercial tax base.

I will work on making New Bedford more attractive to businesses and aggressively pursue opportunities to get new businesses to locate here and existing businesses to thrive and expand.

I will work to finish the plans for a dog park in New Bedford.

I will also seek to use Community Development funds to work with the neighborhood on a plan to update the Hathaway Courts playground. I will encourage the completion of a request for proposal for the redevelopment of the parcel at 478 Union St, which has finally been cleared and is ready for sale.

I will continue to lobby for the re-establishment of Community Policing as a means of reducing crime in our neighborhoods.

I will work with City staff to develop a plan for regular maintenance and replacement of city trees and sidewalks in order to make our neighborhood beautiful and safe for pedestrians.

If you would like more information about my campaign, please visit [www.janegonsalves.com](http://www.janegonsalves.com).

I am running for re-election because I have a passion for New Bedford and for serving its citizens. I ask for your vote on November 8<sup>th</sup> for Ward 5 Councillor.

*All candidates running for office in New Bedford are provided the opportunity to submit articles for publication. Candidates should submit relevant articles to [info@newbedfordguide.com](mailto:info@newbedfordguide.com). The final municipal election election will be held on November 8th, 2011. Check out our 2011 New Bedford Elections Page for articles, interviews and other useful information.*