

[Scott]

Welcome to the Better Brighton podcast! I'm Scott Fybush, and we are doing a series of interviews with all three candidates for the two seats that are open on the Brighton Town Council. Joining us this hour is one of the two incumbents who are running for those seats, Christine Corrado. Welcome.

[Christine]

Thank you, Scott.

[Scott]

A couple of ground rules, as we've been setting out with each of the candidates. No questions have been provided ahead of time. The conversation will go where it goes. We have, I think, a pretty general idea of what kind of topics we're likely to cover. We have some topics that have been submitted also by folks on the various Brighton Facebook groups, both moderated and unmoderated. There is no editing of content. If the dog barks, which she has been phenomenally good about so far -- here's hoping we can go three for three with Sadie. In full disclosure, the dog has been bribed with a treat in this case, so we will say thank you to Jan Miller, your campaign manager, for providing the dog treat, but those are basically the ground rules. So with that, we will note again, the election is coming up on the 24th of June, there is early voting that begins the 14th of June and runs till the 22nd. If you are a Brighton early voter accustomed to voting at Empire State College, it has moved. It'll be across the street on Westfall at the Winter Farmers Market space. And also, for those of us who are in electoral districts four or five, and I forget the other one that votes at town hall, but we're displaced from town hall, so check your card from the Board of Elections and vote accordingly. So, with that, Christine Corrado, welcome!

[Christine]

Well, thanks so much, Scott. I'm really glad to be here.

[Scott]

I am so glad that you are here with us. So let's begin. You are, as I mentioned, one of the two incumbents who is running for re-election. You have had a tenure now with several terms on the Brighton Town Council. You are endorsed by the Brighton Democratic committee, and we'll get into those endorsements as we go. Make the case for why you deserve re-election to another term.

[Christine]

Sure, thanks. In the first two terms that I've served, I've had the opportunity to dig into effecting the changes that so many of us in Brighton want to see. They're not quick changes. It's a matter of progressive iteration towards the perfect Better Brighton that we all talk about. The comprehensive plan gives us a great path forward, and we know that we're not done checking off everything on the list. So I want to continue the good work on behalf of my friends and neighbors and everyone in Brighton.

[Scott]

Let's give some examples. What do you point to as things that you can say, okay, these are concrete accomplishments and what comes up next in another term?

[Christine]

Sure. So most folks know that I'm very interested in ensuring that we're able to get around our community without the need for a personal car. For so many reasons, private auto is a barrier for some to get around. It is an expensive barrier for some to get around, or it's simply an unmanageable barrier for getting around. Plus, folks want to have some choices. We're a green community, and the fewer vehicle miles traveled, the better off we are. So I've been working towards calming our streets. I have achieved that through a number of things. We were able to reduce the speed limit on every neighborhood street in town to 25 miles an hour. As soon as the state finally said, oh, okay, towns. You do know what you're talking about when it comes to setting speed limits in your community, immediately jumped on that, got the process going, and we now have 25 miles an hour consistently across all neighborhood streets.

[Scott]

If only people respected it more.

[Christine]

No, I see the speeds coming down, and I'm glad for that. It's not, it'll never be 100 percent. But simply by setting

that number out there, it does embed in driver's minds, and eventually we will see that culture change. I've worked on getting us crosswalks and sidewalks. We've got crosswalks throughout town now that are on county roads, which requires a partnership with the county to get them to get the County DOT to agree that, indeed, the place where people want to cross is the place where we should put crosswalk infrastructure, and we've upped the game by getting RRFBs, the rapid rectangular flashing beacons. I may have the R's reversed, but RRFBs, the flashy lights. People are recognizing those and slowing for them, which is awesome.

[Scott]

And I know you live off of Edgewood. I grew up off of Edgewood, my mom just recently moved out of her house there, and I mean, when you're going from Westfall all the way down to the bridge over 590, there's what, one crosswalk there.

[Christine]

There's one crosswalk, and that crosswalk actually started my journey in understanding how town hall works, and how we as residents get what we need from our closest level of government. I could tell you the whole story, but we've only got what, an hour here, but that was what sparked understanding better how a local government works and why it works well for us, as folks who can walk right in the door and say, here's the need, here's the case that we can make for it, here's what neighbors want. What can we do to make it happen?

[Scott]

And this, again, in the interest of full disclosure, we have communicated a lot over the last couple of years. And sort of my journey into this came with the town pool, and in full disclosure, we had a conversation about the town pool over at Panera, what, a year and a half ago. And this kind of got me started, where you said, I don't know that you're going to be able to accomplish saving the pool. And you know, I'm pleased to say, and no hard feelings about it, we managed to get it done. Talk to me a little bit, I mean, I do want to hear a little bit about your journey because I think this is how a lot of us get started in town politics. How did that draw you into becoming a town council member?

[Christine]

Well, sure, and I appreciate the conversation that you and I and Lisa had back at Panera. It was a wide-ranging conversation. I learned so much about Brighton thanks to you because you've got deep, deep roots here. And I will tell you, that conversation was what sparked a change in the direction we were going to go with that pool. (I) came away from that, and at the time we didn't have the dollars in the town budget for it. It just simply was not achievable without either giving short shrift to something else that the community wants or raising taxes. So I walked away from that. I thought, we can do better. And was sitting down with our delegation in Albany very soon after that, and after hearing all the community input, I was able to take that to Jeremy Cooney and Sarah Clark and say, hey, Jeremy, I know you're supporting the splash pad, thank you so much. Are you good if we also make some repairs on the pool? I went to Sarah and said, I know you are a huge believer in the value of swimming and public pools and water safety, and all the good things that come out of a community pool. Is there something that you can do to help us with this? And I'm happy to say that -- while I acknowledge it's not just one voice going to them, it takes many voices -- that conversation that you and I had was a direct catalyst to the conversations that I had with Sarah and Jeremy, and I'm really grateful that you sparked that.

[Scott]

I mean, it wasn't just me. I want to give credit where it's due. We had a thousand-plus people signing a petition. Lauren Mesi was very involved in all of this, too. We had a lot of people coming out and speaking at town meetings, which kind of brings me to one of the big questions that has come up, and I'm sure you've seen the conversation on the various parents and neighbors groups, and moderated parents and neighbors groups. Let's talk a little bit about communication because this has been one of your priorities, I know, is trying to improve this level of communication. And there is a tremendous degree, I think, of frustration out there among people who want to know more about what's happening in the town. And just before we started talking, as I said, my mom was cleaning out our house. We found an old issue of the Brighton-Pittsford Post from 1987, and I mean, it's just amazing. You look at how much coverage was showing up every week on everybody's doorstep about everything that was happening in the town. How do we get back to...I mean, it's not something the town can do, obviously, entirely on its own. How do we get that level of communication improved so that people have a better sense that they know what's going on?

[Christine]

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you and I, Scott, we're Gen X. We grew up with a couple newspapers in town. I know

for my family, we had the morning paper, the evening paper, on the west side, and there was not any equivalent to the Brighton-Pittsford Post. There was the Gates-Chili News, which was hit or miss. But the media landscape has changed tremendously. People don't get their news in the same way. Listen, in 2025, we're not getting our news in the same way we got it in 2020. So 25 years, holy cow, 25 years, even 10 years ago, where we have social media that did not exist 10 years ago. It has taken over a lot of brain space.

We as a community, the town, we're learning that people don't all tune into the evening news anymore. We're learning that we have an array of preferences for how to communicate, how to receive information, and how to deliver information to town hall as well. And it's time for us to assess what we've got. We've got some great vehicles for getting information out with direct mail. The catalog, well, I guess it had been the catalog, the big, thick catalog, with additional important news from the town. Three times a year, we're now doing four times a year -- news from the town and links to our website for recreation. That's great. It hits every mailbox, but we know that millennials and Gen Z don't necessarily check their mailbox all the time, and if they do, they may or may not take the time to look through something in print. So we have other ways we can do that. We need to set the framework for it and put it in action.

[Scott]

So how do we do that? I mean, I know there's been some talk about hiring a communications director for the town. Where does that stand?

[Christine]

I would like to see us find the resources for a communications director. It's a profession. It is not, as you know very well, it's no longer, give the intern access to the Twitter account and let them go. It is a profession that has an understanding of how all of the tools work, how to ensure that the message is clear, and clear depending on the tool for delivery. It's a profession that has to take the big picture and boil it down into what can be digested at various levels of interest. So I am intent on us finding the resources to do that so that we can deliver the information that everyone needs in the way that works best.

[Scott]

So one of these areas that has popped up obviously with communication or lack thereof, and it came up in, when I put up, hey, what questions do you have, this assessment procedure that we went through. That, I mean, I don't think anybody can look at that and say, wow, that was a success. From your point of view, as somebody who was on the town board, what went wrong with it and how much, I guess one question a lot of people have, and I certainly do, how much is going to end up costing us to go through this procedure again? And it's my understanding also that there have been some staffing changes as a result of this. So kind of fill me in from your perspective of how this looks to you.

[Christine]

Sure. So, town court provides oversight on things like the assessment. We do not conduct the assessment ourselves. We can't put our hands in that. That is an independent examination of the properties in town and where the value is adjusted over time. Another profession, right? We want to rely on the professionals to do that. And to be fair, we need to do that.

Where we ran into a challenge this go-around was in the scheduling. The calendar up front, on paper, looked like we would have plenty of time to get everyone in who had any questions, who wanted that informal, informational meeting with the assessor's office. With...values haven't gone up as they did in the past eight years. There's sticker shock, right? And folks weren't prepared for that, that big number. You know, on the one hand, if you're trying to sell your house, oh yeah, that number looks awesome. If you are planning on how to pay your taxes before you get to the point where you see what the impact is on your tax liability, that number is shocking. So lots of folks had questions. We did not have enough time to give everyone that opportunity to ask those questions and to understand what that number really was going to mean.

And the minute we couldn't get one person in, when all those slots closed, it became an inequitable process. So we can't stop it as town board. The supervisor can't stop it as a supervisor. But the assessor, in taking into consideration all the elements, and the fact that there were still people who were wanting time, but the schedule that's set in part by the state would not allow that. We couldn't go forward.

So now we know a couple of things. We need a little more time, more slots for review, individual review. We need some advance education. So this is the teacher in me. I think, as a government, we might have been of the

mindset...oh, this happens periodically. Homeowners are adults. They should know the process. Basically, we'll just click along and we'll just give updates about the schedule. And that was done well. But what we didn't do was understand where the gap in information is. Where the gap in the comprehension of what interest rates have done. What inflation has done to the value of a dollar. I bought my house in 2007 for a particular price. If I pop that number into an inflation calculator, surprisingly or not, the assessment comes out pretty darn close. Hello, Miss Sadie, Gotta give a nod to the dog. She is so good.

[Scott]

She has been very cooperative. She's about to get a treat right behind you.

[Christine]

Excellent. She earned it. She really did. So we have some framing that is necessary before we go into the process all over again.

[Scott]

Could this have been anticipated better? Should it have been?

[Christine]

I don't think so. Some folks spend a great deal of time tracking the real estate market, and other folks are just clicking along with their life in general, and it actually comes back to, how do people get their information? What information is out there? What news are our neighbors following about real estate and about property taxes in any community in the region. We did learn a lot from this, and I think we will be able to frame it in a way that is much more comprehensible and a little less shocking.

[Scott]

Is there a number we can put on what it actually cost the town in the end?

[Christine]

At this time, no.

[Scott]

OK. Interested to find that out down the road. So, talking about, you know ultimately, this tax base feeds the services that we all want out of a town, and one of the things that I have been very adamant about online is my sense that, I think in a small-D democracy, that at this town level we should be picking our leaders based on how they handle things like trash pickup and potholes and crosswalks. And rec centers. Where are we now? I mean, we know now that there is the state funding that will eventually yield a new pool. I guess in summer '27, hopefully.

[Christine]

A refurbished pool.

[Scott]

Refurbished pool, summer of '27. We know that there will be a new playground behind the town hall. This larger question of getting recreational facilities. I mean, it's hard to argue that we're not behind some of our other neighboring towns in what we have for community center and recreational facilities. Where are we with that right now?

[Christine]

Sure. First of all, comparison is the thief of joy, Scott, come on. But no, we do have great examples in neighboring communities.

[Scott]

Go to a summer concert in Perinton in that in the amphitheater they have there. I mean, it's amazing.

[Christine]

And they also have a great landfill that provides a lot of revenue for the town. Our revenue structure is different. I am happy to say, the feasibility study that got under way just as we were all starting to hunker down into COVID world -- we were on track to present that until we discovered the HVAC, led to the asbestos, led to the whole redesign of town hall reconstruction -- make it the typical renovation project on any old building. We've all done it

in our homes. We are now far enough into the town hall project that we can bring our attention back to the recreation center and the feasibility study for that. So, I anticipate we'll be sharing the consultants' recommendations, their findings with the community very soon.

[Scott]

Brief break to close the window, we got the lawnmowers going here. What is the time frame like? I mean, are we looking now, 2030, potentially, to have something? Earlier, later?

[Christine]

I wouldn't want to project right now, until we know which of the options we select and how we determine to go forward funding it.

[Scott]

I'm assuming Buckland Park is probably the choice, largely for location.

[Christine]

We asked our consultants to look at three options. An existing building, because an existing building is the greenest building. Look at a partnership with an organization, and to look at building new, presumably in Buckland Park. Makes perfect sense, and it is part of what is indicated in the Buckland Park master plan. So the existing building is now owned by somebody else. The partnership with the J (Jewish Community Center) – we'll still be partnering with the J in some way. In many ways, we already do. And then all likelihood is that the decision will fall to Buckland Park.

[Scott]

Seems to be the logical space for that. Let's talk a little about budget priorities, because obviously, there is only a limited amount of money to go around for everything that the town wants to do. We talked about that in the context of the pool and finding state money for that. What is your sense, I mean, there is an argument out there that says that a lot of what we spend in tax money is going to a police department. Other areas around us, Pittsford, Henrietta, get by with the sheriff's department. Is the balance, right there? Are we giving enough to the BPD, not enough, too much? What's your sense?

[Christine]

I think we've hit the sweet spot there. Brighton is in a geographic location that puts us up against a city with its own police department, and against the outer-ring suburbs that rely on the sheriff, as you pointed out. We are in a spot where if we didn't have the Brighton Police Department, we'd be relying on the sheriff's department, who have to cover incredible ground, to attend to our our legitimate needs. I think of things like the recent lockouts around FRES (French Road Elementary School). We have a Brighton Police Department that one, knows our community very well in a way that the sheriff's department simply can't -- they're covering so much ground -- and two, we have a police department that is seconds away from any location within town to be able to protect our most precious residents. As a parent, as a community member, I'm glad we've got the Brighton Police Department.

[Scott]

And as somebody whose priorities include road safety and highway safety, you know, we touched on this a little bit. We talked a little about crosswalks. This comes into a larger question, which we'll get to about Monroe Avenue redevelopment and about some of what's in in the works for that. We're sitting here, you know, I live on Bonnie Brae. We are right off of Elmwood. We got bike Lanes on Elmwood, we got the traffic diet that got it down to one lane each way, and I think sitting here looking out at the street, except for 20 minutes around rush hour every day, everything moves pretty smoothly there, and I think it has worked. Are those bike lanes safe enough, and I'm putting this in the context...we're seeing downtown Rochester is now putting those cement barriers in there concrete barriers in there that are keeping people away from moving traffic. Could we still get something like that on Elmwood? Is it enough what we have right now?

[Christine]

So, in getting the roads smorgasbord, something for everyone, right? We went from a road that was dieted only on the idea that gas-powered vehicles, or now electric vehicles, were going to be running at high speeds along there. We now accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians. We finished out sidewalk along Elmwood Avenue. Paint isn't, you know, let's be realistic. Paint is not a barrier, but the paint does guide. And drivers, the privilege of

holding that license, it includes understanding what the paint is telling you.

We are always looking for ways to make all of our roadways safer. Elmwood Avenue is a great example of partnership with the county DOT. Elmwood Avenue is a county road. The county has their complete street standards. We worked with them to make sure they enacted them, and they did. So for the time being, the county is not going to be doing any repaving of Elmwood Avenue for the next 20-odd years. But as other opportunities come up throughout town, absolutely. We're always looking for greater levels of separation of modes of transportation.

[Scott]

Which brings us over to Monroe Avenue, and this is another thing that has come up a few times, and it plays in also to this issue. As you mentioned, other communities have larger tax bases, whether it's landfill, whether it's having the amount of retail that Henrietta has, or that Greece has, that we simply just don't have in Brighton. But we have Monroe Avenue here. And I know there has been a lot of work that has been going on over the last few years to try to figure out ways in which we can get more businesses into Monroe Avenue. Maybe get more of a residential base there. Some more mixed use. Where do things stand right now from your perspective?

[Christine]

We have a really good conversation going with the New York State DOT, As Monroe Avenue is a state highway.

[Scott]

State Road 31.

[Christine]

And right now, it feels like a highway. We've had really good support from Reconnect Rochester. With their complete streets makeover contest every year, we have won two terrific opportunities. One gave us a design process and community engagement process, run by Design Connect of Cornell University. Students in civil engineering, and sociology, and urban planning, and you name (it), the professions came together like an actual design firm and did the work with the community and gave us guidance on what could transform Monroe Avenue from 12 Corners out to 590.

Another year, we earned a design treatment from Stantech for Highland to 12 Corners. The state has those in hand. So they're looking at something concrete, and they know that we want traffic humming along there. When we get that traffic calming, that changes the kind of business that wants to land on Monroe Avenue.

It's a complex ecosystem. And it's also chicken-and-egg as well, but the goal is to, as simultaneously as possible, reshape that roadway so that it flips the order of protection from vehicles protected at all cost and everyone else left to fend for themselves, to putting the most vulnerable uses of the roadway first. We do that, it becomes a more walkable area. When it's a more walkable area, the business mix will start to see things that are drop in, walk by, and check-it-out kind of businesses that you see in maybe Schoen Place or on Park Avenue, versus the terrific businesses that are primarily by appointment only. I love our spas, I love our nail salons, our dentists, and orthodontists. We should be the best looking in all of Monroe County based on what we have on Monroe Avenue. But there's space to add more. There's space to add more that in many ways requires rebuilding and reconfiguring. So we have the potential to consider rezoning, spot zoning, or rezoning town wide. It's a big lift, town wide. Pittsford will tell you that it was a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to improve their zoning to bring it up to what people want in their community now.

There is state funding available right now that I'm hoping that we can secure for a rezoning exercise on Monroe Avenue that will then help our property owners and business owners put in what we want. Mixed use. Multi-level buildings More things that look like the building that Lippmann's Market is in.

[Scott]

I was just going to cite that as an example of it.

[Christine]

Yeah, and that that kind of configuration makes the most out of property. It makes property so much more valuable, and simultaneously less expensive, for property owners, business owners to support the tax base that they will contribute to, that then spreads to the rest of us. So it's the chicken and egg, but once that gets going, it cascades into revitalization along that corridor.

[Scott]

Can we, and I know this is not ultimately a town issue, but one time we had 15-minute bus service before the pandemic up and down Monroe Avenue.

[Christine]

As a regular bus rider, I can tell you, I was so excited about the 15-minute ride, and then, ugh, I was stabbed in the heart when they had to make changes. But we have 30-minute reliable transportation now.

[Scott]

Is there any hope with RTS, do you think? Again, recognizing it's not ultimately a town issue?

[Christine]

It is, and it isn't a town issue. We always have the opportunity to bring the community's desire for better transit throughout Brighton to RTS. We've got good relationships there. And again, this is part of that chicken and egg of Monroe Avenue. If we get the road configuration that is most supportive of multimodal transit, then RTS has a better incentive to run the buses more regularly, and when the buses run more regularly, people who have a choice, do I get in my car or do I get on the bus, will start to say, yeah, I'll get on the bus for this one. I still miss the

[Scott]

I still miss the 1819 that ran down Elmwood Avenue.

[Christine]

The 97 MAT as it exists now is...

[Scott]

Useless. Or nearly so.

[Christine]

I think all parties agree that it could be better. We'll work on that one, too.

[Scott]

We have hit the halfway point already of this hour with Christine Corrado, who again is one of three candidates running for the two spots on Brighton Town Council. Before we get off Monroe Avenue, one thing that that has come up again in a lot of these dialogues online is that there is this feeling, this perception at least, that the town historically has not been super friendly to businesses that are trying to do things. My canonical example is my friend Mark Kaidy, who put the Hi-Fi Lounge right over by us on Monroe Avenue. Which, by the way, three record stores in walking distance, How awesome is that?

[Christine]

I know, isn't that the coolest?

[Scott]

And he can't put a sign in his window that says that he sells records because that's not the name of his business. Or at least that's what I'm given to understand from him. And maybe I'm wrong about that. But can the town do more things to make things like this friendlier for businesses that obviously, especially in this day and age, really need to market themselves as well as they can.

[Christine]

Yeah. There are numerous ways we can help business owners navigate the process better. And I've seen it happening already. Some of the things that I appreciate about the professionals on our town staff, in the planning department, particularly -- shout out to all of the town staff, absolutely, but when it comes to getting your business up and running, you're talking to the planning department, and they have started to transform a lot of the permitting process from print out a page, fill it all out by hand, bring it in to have it then entered into a good computer system, and then pipe it through all of the various citizen boards to get your okay to go ahead and start your business. It is considerably more streamlined than it was even just four years ago. The online permitting process is, once you find it, and I will absolutely agree that it is sometimes hard to find one's way through the very full town website.

[Scott]

In the large filing cabinet in the disused stairwell.

[Christine]

But once you get started on that process, it is considerably more streamlined. It has triggers within it to get it to the right staff, to get it to the right boards, and the communication back has improved as well because staff have everything they need at their fingertips.

[Scott]

Give a shout out to, as long as we're shouting out staff, the town clerk's office. Daniel Aman. Not only is he a fellow Red Sox fan, which I greatly appreciate. And by the way, the invitation is open too, and I want to make this clear even for the candidates running unopposed, I would love to have Dan come sit down and chat, and I intend to invite him, to talk about what he does. I'd love to have Bill come over and chat too, and to talk about that, and we'll get into some of the town politics stuff.

I just want to stay on zoning for one more question, because another question that has come up is people are trying to figure out this issue of affordable housing as we're all trying to find room for our parents and our kids and everybody to have a future here. Where are we on trying to make things more streamlined to do things like auxiliary dwelling units, put an apartment over your garage. Things like this that make it possible to have multi-family housing and more affordable spaces for people to exist here.

[Christine]

Well, we recently became a New York State pro-housing community, and that puts us in a position...we are incentivized as a town to look at our zoning and our code and make adjustments. I often point out you live in the beautiful Roselawn neighborhood. Per current town code, your neighborhood could not be built as it is today, and it's a desirable neighborhood. It's over-the-top desirable. It's got beautiful shared green spaces. It's got homes that cover a good chunk of the lot with nice, accessibly, easily-managed-sized yards. Many have detached garages that could easily have a second level to function as an extension of housing.

We have the opportunity to really reconsider how our code evolved, and take it to the next evolution, and some of that evolution may be coming back to what we did in the past so that we can have more Roselawns. Some of it may be moving towards more multi-family mixed in with single family. Before I get too nerdy, there are just way too many options for how we can approach that.

I'm excited to say I am a member of the Strong Towns organization. It's a movement that's focused on unraveling some of the commonly held supposed truths about how our roads are shaped and how our communities are built, and it looks towards more efficient land use. It looks towards boosting economic development in communities through making good choices about land use. So I'm going to go gather with thousands of other people who are just as -- Jan's gonna give me the look, I'm going to say nerd. She doesn't like it, but in this sense it's the best sense of the term, in that we are deeply engaged in finding solutions to housing needs, finding solutions to that missing middle, finding a way to incorporate three-bedroom rentals in a town where people want to send their children to any one of the five excellent school districts here.

But when the rental stock is a lot of two bedrooms and the housing for purchase is five thousand square feet in some neighborhoods, we don't have what's right in between -- three-bedroom rental or three-bedroom starter homes. So in that setting, it will be exciting to walk away with with a tool kit, basically, that I can bring back to the town and say, how will this work well within Brighton's code? How do we need to change Brighton's code to make our desires for the changes in housing, changes in zoning, come to life?

[Scott]

Does it get frustrating to you the way that I think it sometimes does from the outside? I mean, these are all really good things, and these are things, you know, I'm delighted to live in a community where these are priorities because it's not everywhere, obviously. And yet it feels like we've been talking about these for a long time. Does it feel like to you that there's just something missing in terms of just being able to push a lot of this over the finish line, and to get to some of these points where we're not just sitting here talking about it?

[Christine]

Well, I think sometimes we get so in the weeds that we don't take a look back to see how much we have

accomplished. When I look at the Envision Brighton 2028 plan, I had the privilege of serving on the steering committee for that when I was still a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, where I got to see a whole lot of what Brightonians wanted. Because anytime you go to make an appeal to that zoning board, it's something that you can't do by right. You need an exception to the rule.

So sitting on the comprehensive plan committee, we were able to knit into those desires into that plan, and we produced that, wrote that path forward. And if I go back now and read through the plan, I'm able to say check, check, check, check, along the way. There's still more we want to see, come to life, which is again why I'm running for another term and want to keep checking off the boxes of that plan.

[Scott]

Turning a little bit. And you know I was going to get to this, obviously, because it has been kind of a small-D Democratic issue. And I've said this with everybody that we've interviewed. My bias, to the extent I have a bias, is in favor of a small-D democracy where we have a lot of choices on the ballot, not just for town council, but at every level of leadership in the town. You are running, obviously, as an endorsed candidate on the Brighton Democratic Committee slate, along with Clara Sanguinetti. We know, and, and I've had the conversation with Robin Wilt about this, about her not getting endorsed this year. What is your sense of sort of how that came about, and how does this process work for the good of the town in your mind?

[Christine]

It's a very good question. You framed it very well because it is very much little-D democracy in action. Our Brighton Democratic Committee is made up of 150 dedicated Democrats. They're our friends and neighbors. There are some 30-some districts in town, and the people representing those districts are folks you interact with all the time, and it's their job on that committee to be listening and representing. And that's an active committee.

So the process for running for office starts with announcing your intention to run and making the case to that committee, the committee of people who represent Brighton at large, Brighton Democrats at large, which? Is a large part of Brighton. So, you make that case, and that committee has the opportunity for a secret ballot to determine which candidates they feel will fill that role the best, and which candidates the committee will get behind because that's the mission of the committee. We work to elect Democrats to local office, the best candidates to local office, county, state, and beyond. So it's a really thoughtful vote. When we have an abundance of qualified people, it's a tough vote, too, and people really have to dig into what their preference is. The ballots were cast after all candidates made their case, and I came out with enough votes to be endorsed, Clara came out with enough votes to be endorsed. And since there are only two seats.

[Scott]

And I have said, and I will say it again, that regardless of what opinions I have expressed elsewhere, I am confident, not that my quote-endorsement-unquote means absolutely anything at all, and it shouldn't, we have three good candidates. And that is not always the case in elections like this. And I am grateful for that. We have seen in other elections where there have been people who have not necessarily had some of these same ideas. That brings me around, and obviously we were talking primarily about town issues, but the town functions now in the context of what is happening to our democracy on a larger scale. And all of the candidates that I've talked to have had some thoughts about this and about what's happening in Washington, about how it affects us here in Brighton, and about how we should think about our democracy. What are you seeing as you look right now, especially as we're sitting here recording this on Memorial Day, about where we as a nation and about how it affects us, and how the town needs to be responsive to that?

[Christine]

Memorial Day is a pretty poignant day to be having this conversation. I look at what our nation did to protect democracy, both within our borders and protecting democracy around the world. And when I look at what's going on in Washington, DC right now with the very anti-democratic actions that the federal government is taking, it's pretty heavy. It weighs on you. That's what motivates me to stay close to local government because this is the government of the people. The closest to all of us. You can walk into town hall at any time and say, hey I need this or that. You can call any one of your elected representatives in Brighton government and get an answer. You can send an email you can, The connection is there. We, as your town elected officials, build relationships at the next level and the next level and the next level.

And I'm grateful that we have good relationships with good people representing us, people who are very pro-democracy, at all levels in the county, state, and federal government. And they're working pretty hard to protect

us, too. I don't envy them at all, but I know that what we have here in Brighton, because we've got those good relationships upstream, is that even if the worst starts coming down from from DC, we've got people there protecting us. We've got pipelines to resources. And we work here to protect our friends and neighbors. This is a community that knows one another, and we look out for each other.

[Scott]

It is a community too, that obviously is very engaged in international events. And this comes back again to my core principle, which is that I vote for my town officials based on potholes and crosswalks and road diets, and all of that. There is obviously a strain of thought also within a lot of voters in town that I think looks at international issues in this context, too, looks at Israel-Palestine. We've seen the controversy over the new ordinance regarding protests in town and the way that played out. How much should people be thinking about international events? How much do you as a town leader put that in the context, especially of all of the diverse communities that obviously are not always in agreement, and won't ever be in agreement on some of these issues? What's your message to voters about how we should be thinking about these things from your perspective?

[Christine]

Well, we should certainly be keeping our eyes open to what's going on in the world around us, but the top priority of local government is protecting our community. So every decision that we make as town board members is based on, how does this protect the most vulnerable in our community? How does this protect our community at large? We can't stop a war abroad. But we can protect folks right here. We've got the resources to do it, and that's our primary charge.

[Scott]

Is the town prepared for things like, if there are more ICE raids on people in town? Where is the town board on that right now?

[Christine]

The Brighton Police Department is not directed to participate in anything of that sort. They are not there to cooperate with ICE if they're present. If BPD is present at an ICE raid, it is about protecting folks. It is not about assisting ICE. I think as a community, we've always been good about looking out for one another. We have always been so good about, the Brighton food cupboard, for example, ensuring that people are getting their basic needs met. We are always looking out for protecting our children on the way to and from school. We are always linked to one another. I think the town board, across the board, is dedicated to that.

[Scott]

Down to about our last 10 minutes with Christine Corrado. We have a town supervisor who obviously has been very outspoken on a lot of these issues, and is very involved in these matters. There is also, and you and I know, because we have discussed it at length, there is a perception sometimes, as Lisa and I saw a little bit with the pool issue, of some hard-headedness there, and some unwillingness to listen to dissent. There is a perception, given who else has been involved in leadership of the Brighton Democratic Committee -- Barbara Moehle has been very involved in leadership there -- so kind of a threefold question. Is it inevitable that as long as he keeps running, he'll always have the town committee endorsement? Do you think that there is space for a challenger at some point, and for some new vision there, and I guess sort of the overarching question is, what is your assessment of how he's been as supervisor, and the pluses and the minuses?

[Christine]

I'm running for Town Board. I'm not representing my colleagues on the board, and I'm not representing my colleagues in the Brighton Democratic committee.

[Scott]

But you've worked with him for years.

[Christine]

I can work with just about anybody. And I think that's the foundation of being a council member. You're representing everybody, and you're working with the other people who've been selected to represent everybody. So you better find a way to collaborate. You don't have to be besties. It sure is nice when you get along well and you enjoy the work together. But there's no requirement in the role to be in lockstep and agreement with how each member of that board conducts their business and handles the business of the people.

[Scott]

There have been a lot of 4-1 votes historically on town council. Are there areas where you would vote in opposition to things that he's proposed?

[Christine]

There haven't been that many 4-1 votes. So this is one of the things that I appreciate about how the town of Brighton handles the business that ultimately comes before the board for official action. I know there are some towns in the region that do not have working committees. There are no committees of the board. What they see at their board meetings, it's often the very first time it has come across their desks, and so there's a lot of discussion, and pulling apart the details, and coming to a decision. To my mind, a very pressured setting. That's asking a lot of people, to make an informed decision. Brighton has four committees of the board. All the business that eventually comes before the board as a whole has worked its way through often two or three committees. We've got a Public Works Committee, Public Safety Committee, a Finance and Administrative Services Committee, and a Community Services Committee. That's where a lot of the, back and forth happens, the figuring out how to get the optimal solution to whatever is presented to us. And they're public meetings. Not always at the best time for everyone to attend, but there are minutes from them if you can't make it, and there's always a reporting out at the town board of the discussions in those committees. but we work it out so that by the time the solution, as best as we can frame it, gets to the town board, we know where we stand for the most part. We're not going to waste the board's time or the community's time fussing, debating, arguing, shifting, changing, trying to massage everything right there. So, the goal is five in favor. Sometimes it's four in favor.

[Scott]

I agree with you that those committee meetings are so important. Is there a way to get some of them so that they're not at 9:30 in the morning on a work day?

[Christine]

Every year, we have an organizing meeting at the top of the year, and even before that organizing meeting, we go through the exercise of laying out the calendar for those committees for the year. And every year, I have suggested. That the committee that I chair -- this go-round it's, well, for the past term, it's been the Public Works Committee; prior, it was Public Safety -- you know, can we schedule even one a quarter, maybe one, maybe two a year, outside of nine-to-five hours. There are some good arguments for that, some really good ones. There are also some equally good arguments for keeping them at the same time every day, day in and out. Public Safety is a great example. We don't want to be pulling our police department, our fire department,

our ambulance folks, out too frequently from the realm of the work that we need them to be doing. They prefer that first thing in the morning on a Tuesday, the second Tuesday of every month at...Chris Werner says 0800 hours. They prefer that because they know they can get in, get out, and get back on the job.

[Scott]

One more nuts-and-bolts question because I promised I would ask every candidate this. So one of these things that ends up getting solved right now, sort of through Facebook postings, was this little saga that we all experienced about the tree growing up through the driveway. This feels like one of these, I sympathize with, this bureaucratic nightmare. He's got the tree. And it's pushing the pavement up and making it impossible, getting it out of his driveway. And I understand the frustration of, oh, it's got to go through this committee and that process, when the tree clearly just needs to be removed. Is there a way to streamline that and make things like that just happen faster when they need to?

[Christine]

Because of that particular situation and a couple others that were similar -- I should back up, so we have the conservation board and tree council, and that is a citizen board. I'm liaison to it. I don't have a vote there. It's just your friends and neighbors who have the votes on that committee. They see all of the town trees that have been assessed by our town arborist, and they give their professional thumbs up or thumbs down on whether or not a tree should be removed. We realized in the past, I'd say a year and a half, that there were some hiccups in the process flow there, and because we have really smart people serving on these boards, who can take a 3500 foot view and look at how a tree that is thought to be a risk gets from, oh, that needs some attention, gets from that point to that gets attention. They said, we've got a couple twists and turns, and it branches out a little too much, so to speak, haha.

[Scott]

You said, you were gonna do comedy.

[Christine]

Yeah, and I held off on all the puns I could, but sometimes, sometimes. So in any case they they saw that there were some branches in that flow and said, hey town staff, does this make sense if we take away some of those branches and just straightforward move these particular trees along. Town staff said, oh yes, absolutely, thank you very much for seeing that, we've seen it, too; now we have the directive to go ahead and do that. So I think the community will see a slightly less convoluted process from beginning, hey, that tree is doing damage, to hey, that tree needs to come down.

[Scott]

Excellent. We're down to our final couple of minutes, and I know that you have been out campaigning avidly. You've been knocking on doors and walking the streets. What else have we not touched on that people have brought up when you've come to their doors?

[Christine]

That's a really good question. We have 37,000 residents in Brighton, and I think I've had a different conversation at every single door. I think the through line through all of those conversations, though, is that people in Brighton are, on the whole, happy that they're living in Brighton. They see room for improvement because if you love something, you want it to be the best it can possibly be. And I take that in, try to deploy that as best we can, to make sure that we are the better Brighton that we want to be.

There's a similar thread of don't change too much because then we won't be Brighton. And I think that's the ultimate goal, is finding that sweet spot. Always staying true to what makes Brighton so special. I mean, it really is a special town, and still growing, moving forward, advancing. I'm a little envious that the University of Rochester grabbed the term meliora before Brighton could. But that idea of, we're really great, but we want to be ever better, always improving.

[Scott]

Which is going to be interesting, especially in the context of Monroe Avenue, with all the different visions and thoughts. Christine Corrado, thank you so much for spending an hour with us. Again, a reminder that all three of the candidates all have these podcasts available, and I hope everybody will listen to all three of them. You have a choice when you go to the polls. Again, it's early voting from June 14th to 22nd, locations across Monroe County, including at the Brighton Winter Farmers Market on Westfall, not at Empire State College this year. And then June 24th is the actual primary. And we should mention also the League of Women Voters Forum, if you catch this podcast early enough. That's taking place on June 2nd, by Zoom. So a lot of opportunities to hear from all of our candidates, and a lot of opportunities to make your choice when you go to the polls. Christine, thank you so much.

[Christine]

Thank you, Scott. I really appreciate you making this possible for all of us.

[Scott]

My pleasure

[Christine]

The community is pretty lucky to have you and your expertise

[Scott]

Thanks for listening.