

RJ Dourney announces candidacy for selectman

by Amy Comcowich

RJ Dourney will be a Republican candidate for selectman in the May 2008 election. If elected, he hopes to help restore Hopkinton's confidence in its leadership and encourage more residents to get involved with the community.

Dourney believes all town residents share a desire for great schools, taxes we can live with, affordable housing, and a town where businesses compliment the community. He also believes the Board of Selectmen "have a charge to understand the needs of the community and to move that forward," he said.

What concerns him is the current cash-flow problem Hopkinton is facing and a perceived "dig-in-your-heels" leadership approach in our government.

"The year 2008," he said, "needs to be the year of moving the economic development forward" and believes this is how he could best serve the town.

Dourney formed a belief in giving back to the community 30 years ago. As a college student at Villanova, he was given a hand up in the food industry when he began as a pot washer for \$1.65. He says he has been "paying it forward" ever since.

While holding high-level executive positions during his career, Dourney has maintained his belief in community involvement. At present, he serves on the Planning Board and Downtown Revitalization Committee. He is also a member of the Board of Directors for Frisch's Restaurants, Inc., the Archdiocese of Boston's Child Abuse Prevention Advisory Board, the Parish Pastoral Counsel at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, and the Artery Business Committee Board of Directors.

As a CEO, he looks out for his employees because he believes it's the "right thing to do" and encourages his employees to pay it forward as well.

He is the owner of Hearthstone Associates, a New England-based restaurant franchise he founded with partner Shawn Ryan. He believes it is his responsibility to ensure that employees understand their eligibility for benefits and what they can do to advance in the organization, and to give them time off to get involved with their communities.

Likewise, as selectman, he would help ensure that residents understand issues affecting the town and encourage them to get involved. "Figure out what you are good at and do it to make the town better," he said.

His candidacy promotes the belief that selectmen should "give direction then get out of the way," he says. Such an approach, he explains, also promotes the economic base the town needs. Attracting new business to Hopkinton depends on having strong schools, and on infrastructure and zoning to accommodate growth. To meet this end, the town leadership must move faster.

"We are competing as a community for great companies and we have to approach them like we want them," he said. As selectman, he would take initiatives to let companies know that Hopkinton appreciates their business.

One seat on the Board of Selectmen is up for election this spring. It is unknown whether or not Chairman Muriel Kramer, a democrat, will seek re-election to the three-year term.

RJ Dourney has lived in Hopkinton for seven years with his wife, Nancy, and their three daughters.