

League of Women Voters of Teaneck Voters' Guide Town Council, 2026

Our VOTERS GUIDE questionnaire and letter of invitation to the Candidates' Forum was mailed and emailed to each of the candidates for Teaneck Town Council on August 30th. In addition to asking them about their Teaneck residency, occupation, education, family & community involvement, we asked each candidate to answer the following questions and to limit answers to a total of 500 words or less:

- 1. What do you consider two important challenges facing our community, and how would you recommend the council address them?**
- 2. What is your position on the current Crossroads plan for the Beverly Road/S&S development? How does this plan address the state-required affordable housing mandate?**
- 3. What actions, if any, would you support to reduce the negative effects of climate change affecting Teaneck, e.g. local drainage systems and other environmental hazards?**

The candidates' responses follow unedited, and are in the order received:

Howard Rose, 575 Northumberland Road

Years residing in Teaneck: 46 years

Occupation: Bookseller (Brier Rose Books); 25 yrs Director of Financial Aid
@ Pratt Institute, FDU, DeVry Tech, Columbia/School of Nursing,
Yeshiva University/Cardoza School of Law

Education: Master's Degree

Family: Wife Lisa, two children, four grandchildren

Community Involvement:

- Teaneck Board of Education: Trustee 9 years
- Teaneck Planning Board: Member 17 years
- Teaneck Financial Advisory Board: Member 2 years
- *Teaneck Comes Together*: Trustee 2 years
- Cedar Lane Special Improvement District: Chair 4 years
- Cedar Lane Management Group: Member 2 years

1. Teaneck's "Single Family Residence" ambiance is being threatened by overdevelopment. Better planning and adherence to the Teaneck Master Plan will preserve what we have as future goals are met through a more thoughtful review.

Teaneck taxes seem to be based on increasing rates, increasing borrowing and then presenting the budget close to the eleventh hour. Multi-year planning/projection and timely presentation

will help. The council should perform an annual review of non-mandated community services to determine if they are excessive. Research and determine if new county, state, federal or private funds have become available.

2. The current Crossroads plan should not go forward. Years in the making despite strong negative community feedback. *Areas in Need of Redevelopment* is a legal tool to circumvent normal building regulations for areas that are blighted such as Camden, Trenton and Patterson. Teaneck's "blight" was bogus and based in part on a "crack in the sidewalk" on one property and a "dead squirrel" found on another. It was a gimmick used to enable large scale development which included "PILOT" financial incentives and an unfortunate break from Teaneck's traditional housing requirements. It does not fully meet affordable housing requirements and has generated many lawsuits against the township.

3. Better planning is required for Belle Avenue/Beverly Road drainage problem than the insufficient bioswales, detention and diversion systems installed to date. The old adage "measure twice, cut once" would help as "100-year storms" come much more frequently. The Teaneck website should include a column for "Better Practices" that would list ways to reduce automobile gasoline usage, economical home heating/cooling practices, appliance electrical conservancy, timing and amounts of water and fertilizer for lawn care and other individually controlled activities. Air, water, energy, toxic chemicals, it all ties together and has a combined direct and indirect environmental and climate impact.

Denise Belcher, 39 Bogert Street

Years residing in Teaneck: 40+ years

Occupation: Real Estate Broker and Educator

Education: Bachelor of Science Degree – Morgan State University;
Project Management Professional (PMP)

Family: Two daughters; Widow

Community Involvement:

- Current Deputy Mayor & Elected Member of the Teaneck Township Council
- Council Liaison/Teaneck Planning Board
- Council Liaison/Teaneck Historic Preservation Commission
- Championed the council's "Know Your Rights" initiative, advocating for civil rights & voting rights
- Created Teaneck's first Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance
- Contributed to the development of Teaneck's updated Master Plan
- Spearheaded Teaneck's Film Ready initiative in collaboration with the NJ Motion Picture and Television Commission
- Founding member of the Teaneck Road Business Community Alliance
- Founder & Director of the School of Real Estate Studies, 2008-present
- Broker/Owner of XCEED Realty LLP
- Past President of the Teaneck Chamber of Commerce
- Co-host of the Teaneck in Focus Podcast
- Member of the NCBW Bergen/Passaic Chapter

1. Two of the most urgent challenges facing Teaneck are affordability and public trust in local government. As a mother, widow, housing educator, and resident, I know affordability is not an abstract issue. It determines whether seniors can age in place, families can build stability, and young adults can make Teaneck their home. Rising property taxes and housing costs are making it harder for residents to remain in our community. The Council should expand affordable and diverse housing options, such as accessory dwelling units, while supporting responsible economic development, stronger business districts, and new revenue sources that reduce pressure on taxpayers. Development decisions must also consider traffic, parking, infrastructure, schools, and long-term financial impacts. Teaneck government must also strengthen public trust through transparency, inclusion, and meaningful community engagement. Residents should be heard before decisions are made, with earlier outreach, clear financial and impact information, accessible meetings, strong ethics and oversight, and appointments that reflect Teaneck's diversity. My standard is clear: thoughtful planning, fiscal discipline, transparent government, and measurable results. I will continue putting Teaneck First, protecting what makes our community special while building a future where every resident can belong and thrive.

2. I voted against Crossroads not because I oppose redevelopment or affordable housing, but because this plan does not deliver the balanced outcome Teaneck deserves. I support both affordable housing and responsible redevelopment. The current plan allows up to 318 rental apartments across three locations, along with parking, community space, stormwater improvements, and retention of the supermarket. However, concerns remain about its scale and density, rental-only approach, use of municipal property, traffic, parking, infrastructure, lack of homeownership opportunities, limited mixed-use economic development, and insufficient enforceable safeguards. The 48 affordable rental units, with 24 potential bonus credits, could provide 72 credits toward Teaneck's state-mandated obligation. It does not justify accepting every element of the proposal. My vote called for a better balance: affordable housing with less neighborhood impact, protected public assets, stronger mixed-use development on Cedar Lane, greater housing choice, and clear, enforceable safeguards and benefits for residents and true retail economic development. Teaneck can meet its legal obligations without surrendering its long-term interests. Responsible growth requires both housing progress and public accountability.

3. Climate resilience is a public-safety and affordability issue. Flooding, extreme heat, poor air quality, and prolonged outages can threaten residents' health, homes, and financial security. I support practical, locally focused action to protect Teaneck's residents, homes, businesses, and infrastructure from climate change. I support townshipwide drainage and flood-risk assessments, stormwater improvements, better catch basin maintenance, and expanded green infrastructure. Every major development should include credible environmental studies, pay their fair share of needed improvements, and not worsen neighborhood flooding. We must also strengthen hazardous weather preparedness, especially for seniors, people with disabilities, and medically vulnerable residents, while aggressively pursuing county and state grants. Using sound science, responsible planning, and enforceable requirements, Teaneck can build climate resilience into its Master Plan, infrastructure, redevelopment, and long-term budgets.

Duane Harley, 114 Bogert Street

Years residing in Teaneck: 44 years

Occupation: Attorney

Education: J.D. 1999 Quinnipiac University School of Law;
BA English 1992, Hampton University; Teaneck HS Class of 1988

Family: Married 17 years (wife also from Teaneck); Two boys attend Teaneck HS

Community Involvement:

- Trustee: First Baptist Church of Teaneck
- Vice President Male Usher Board: First Baptist Church of Teaneck
- Chair of Men's Ministry: First Baptist Church of Teaneck
- Advisor: Teaneck Youth Advisory Board
- Member: Teaneck Municipal Planning Board
- VP/ Board Member: Friends of Teaneck Community Charter School
- Coach: Teaneck Southern Baseball
- Coach: Teaneck Junior Soccer League
- Coach: Teaneck Junior Basketball League
- Co-Host, *Inaugural Community Table*

1. Two of the many important challenges are (1) Infrastructure and (2) Community Alignment. Unfortunately, Teaneck has significant needs concerning upgrades to our roads, drainage systems, equipment, municipal facilities and parks. As a member of the Council, I will develop a comprehensive plan that will identify the urgency of a particular matter then prioritize the undertaking. In that effort, I will introduce the plan to the public for full transparency. We will exhaust all available state and federal grants that are earmarked for such purpose. Consult professionals regarding the matter to engage in best practices on such projects.

Next, community alignment. For too many constituents, Teaneck has become the identity of a bifurcated township. Many residents have expressed the view that Teaneck has become increasingly divided rather than united. Since I was born and raised here in Teaneck I am intimately aware of what a feeling of true community is like and what Teaneck residents deserve. As a Council member I will prioritize the concerns of all of the residents including the residents who live in areas that have been ignored. In that effort, each resident will begin to feel they have a stake in the township instead of feeling simply like a visitor. Therefore, behavior will begin to shift towards an aspiration for community instead of individualized concerns.

2. I do not support the Crossroads plan. The plan itself does not harmonize well with the look, feel and character of the neighborhood. This is a clear example of a municipality trying to fill a need but also utilizing the lowest bar to do so. The plan addresses a fraction of the mandated affordable housing because it only seeks the minimum amount of fair housing which is insufficient. I believe there could have been other plans that the municipality could have pursued that would have better aligned with the neighborhood standards and kept in line with the affordable housing mandate.

3. I would continue to support the stormwater tank construction by Sagamore Park, ensure all developers have adequate stormwater planning, and encourage green infrastructure, develop the green space in Argonne Park (the biggest park in Teaneck) in a way that will be more environmentally friendly. I will continue the fight to obtain the highest protections for our residents from trains traveling on our rail lines.

Amrit Ramjattan, 1577 Walden Street

Years residing in Teaneck: 25+ years

Occupation: Electrical Engineer

Education: BS Electrical Engineering, NJIT

Family: Single

Community Involvement:

* Board of Adjustment

1. Balancing the township's finances amidst rising fuel prices and tariff uncertainties. Is it possible to keep the current level of services with rising costs? Council will have to look into keeping our critical services running while cutting spending. Reducing Capital projects scope or canceling projects completely can help. Combining services with neighboring municipalities or the County for a shared cost can offer some savings. Even bulk purchasing options with neighboring municipalities might help somewhat with things like fuel, salt, and other consumables/supplies. Another challenge is trying to revitalize our business districts. With rising operating costs, rent, razor thin revenue and online/e-commerce competition running a brick-and-mortar store is quite the endeavor. Relieving some of the tax burden on a business via a Tax Holiday to allow higher revenue for a certain month can help and should incentivize modernizing and upgrading. Partnering and hosting a Sampling event may be a great way to let residents learn about and experience a new or existing business. This is probably best done in the Summer to get better foot traffic but can easily be spread to other months if done as an indoor event.

2. It's not perfect, but the Township had a deadline to meet for its 4th round affordable housing obligations and this was just one of many projects. It's obviously a divisive topic but the State imposed a deadline and Fair Share Housing and Developers were watching closely. Between Mount Laurel Doctrine and the State Fair Housing Act the Township could not push back in the short time frame we had. It was either fulfill the obligation or get sued and a determination would be made for the Township. I think the Council made the best call it could at the time to retain control of this project and other developments in the Township. If any one of these projects ended up going to a Builders Remedy lawsuit, all of the developments in the Township had the ability to sue and vastly increase their project scope in the name of profit and maximizing the amount of affordable units they could provide.

3. The Bergen County Master Plan has a Sustainability section that addresses some of this through Green Infrastructure. Personally, I have been pushing for the Township to include

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) criteria for any new large development. LEED provides a good outline for minimizing the environmental impact from planning, design, construction and operations of a new building. Between managing new construction properly and adhering to the County master plan we could reduce the impact of certain climate events. As far as flooding goes and local drainage systems goes, we would have to take proactive strides looking into this. First step would be a study for making sure we have up-to-date flood and drainage/sewer maps. After we see what areas would be most affected by flooding, the Township would need to coordinate with our Engineering department, neighboring municipalities, and the County for mitigations and funding.

Avi Berliner, 625 Cumberland Road

Years residing in Teaneck: 13 years

Occupation: Data solution and information strategy leader

Education: BS Business & Technology Management; MS Financial Engineering

Family: Married with four children

Community Involvement:

- * Board Member, Teaneck Junior Soccer League
- * Chair, Municipal Open Space Trust (current)
- * Chair, Fields Advisory Board (current)
- * Member, Parks, Playgrounds and Recreation Advisory Board (current & former chair)

1. Teaneck faces two important challenges, maintaining long term fiscal stability and short term financial responsibility without overburdening residents and taxpayers, and effectively managing our maturing infrastructure and assets.

To address fiscal pressures, we must prioritize core services, such as public safety, public works, while protecting our quality of life programs, including recreation and senior initiatives. We will also need to optimize asset lifespans and explore options such as responsibly deferring nonessential capital projects until market conditions improve.

Regarding infrastructure and drainage, we must review required capital investments and coordinate, where appropriate, with residential and commercial development proposals. This will continue Teaneck's strategic remediative efforts to ensure residents and businesses are served by systems that can handle severe weather events without threatening neighborhoods or municipal services.

2. The Crossroads plan for the Beverly Road and S&S development highlights the delicate balance between adhering to the state mandated Mount Laurel affordable housing obligations and preserving Teaneck's charm and local character. Ignoring or failing to meet these strict legal requirements exposes Teaneck to punitive "builder's remedy" lawsuits, which have the potential to impose fines and remove our collective ability to influence development, design, and construction. We must approach this through smart growth, complying with legal obligations while ensuring that development aligns with Teaneck's shared community vision,

as captured in the master plan. Projects must provide affordable units and give back to our community while managing traffic, parking, utilities, and density concerns to protect surrounding neighborhoods.

3. To combat the escalating effects of climate change, I support proactive sound engineering backed investments in our local drainage systems and stormwater management infrastructure. Teaneck must continue to identify and aggressively pursue county, state, and federal grants to fund comprehensive stormwater upgrades and manage increasing local flooding. We must also safeguard our recreation and environmental treasures by implementing oversight on major redevelopment projects. This ensures they incorporate appropriate robust green infrastructure practices and modern design concepts that protect existing parks and greenspaces while preventing hazardous runoff near residential, transit, and commercial areas.

Hillary Goldberg, 1552 River Road

Years residing in Teaneck: 42 years

Occupation: Corporate Finance- FP&A Consulting and Writer

Education: B.A Law & Society, Ramapo College; Master of Public Administration, CUNY John Jay College; Master of Accounting, Ramapo College; Master of Business Administration, Ramapo College 4.0

Family: Husband - Jason Greenfest; Children (full and step-and in law) - Michael, Eden, Ian, Liron, and Hila; Parents- Abbe Reinert-Rosner & Yossi Rosner; Brother in Teaneck- Michael Rosner

Community Involvement:

- First editor in chief and publisher of *Teaneck Voices*.
- Owner and editor in chief of *Teaneck Tomorrow*
- Bergen Tech Paramus PTO Treasurer
- 2025 Municipal Environmental Leadership Award by ANJEC
- Board member of Hackensack River Nation
- Appointment to Stormwater Utility Education Board

1. You deserve an honest answer about why your taxes keep going up. Budgets are about priorities, and every year's budget must be built with the next one already in mind. In 2025 and 2026, Teaneck chose to move forward with 7% increases on the municipal side alone, adding \$642 to the average homeowner's tax bill, and not one dollar of it bought a new service or amenity. Instead, you are paying for yesterday's failure to plan. Over the last five years, the Township drained \$32.8 million of its savings and borrowed \$6.4 million more rather than tell you what things really cost. Now \$36 million in short-term loans is coming due, and the Township is gambling your money by refinancing them every year at rates as high as 5%. That's a credit card you never get out from under. In 2026 alone, the Township spent \$1.28 million on interest and just \$151,547 on principal, and every dollar of interest is stormwater upgrades or a safe, ADA-accessible pedestrian bridge you didn't get. While your taxes went up, the Township stopped sending more than \$1 million a year in commercial sewer bills our own ordinance requires. With a \$3.25 million deficit already waiting in 2027, I'll use my 17 years in corporate

finance to stop moving Teaneck's debt forward, collect what we're owed, pay down what we borrow, and show you the numbers all year.

2. The Mount Laurel doctrine requires every New Jersey town to provide a realistic opportunity for affordable housing, not a blank check for developers. Teaneck had more than a year to spread about 125 affordable homes across smaller sites. Instead, the Township made 58% of our obligation depend on Crossroads, one 318-unit project with only a 15% affordable set-aside. Over Christmas 2025, I rewrote the redevelopment plan to meet our obligation, avoid a builder's remedy, and require drainage fixes for Belle Avenue and American Legion Drive before any PILOT is negotiated. When the final plan didn't protect residents, I voted no. Teaneck holds all the cards, and handing a developer everything up front leaves residents to pay the price. Mount Laurel also means no community carries more than its fair share, so when the remaining units were once again placed in the northeast, I voted no on those too. You deserved the community forums I publicly requested in 2024 and 2025.

3. As George Santayana wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Teaneck learned that at Votee Park, where drainage work uncovered contaminated fill that closed fields and put us under state oversight through 2049. I support environmental testing before signing design contracts, plus simple fixes like clearing drainage swales and sweeping streets after leaf pickup. Due diligence doesn't stall progress, it prevents costly mistakes, and we protect our tax dollars and our environment by not being afraid of questions.

Sharon Kolb, 1369 Hudson Road

Years residing in Teaneck: 26 years

Occupation: Special Education Teacher & Administrator;
Special Events Consultant, Sharsheret

Education: Simmons College, Master of Arts in Teaching; Lesley College, Master of Education in Special Education

Family: Spouse Elliot Kolb; 4 children and 11 grandchildren

Community Involvement:

- Teaneck Chamber of Commerce, Board Member
- Teaneck Democratic Municipal Committee
- Bergen County Jewish Action Committee, Advisory Board Member
- Congregation Bnai Yeshurun; Community Volunteer & Chair
- Emunah Volunteer
- Ishine Volunteer

1. One important challenge is the cost of maintaining the services residents expect while keeping property taxes manageable. I understand that taxes had not been raised for eight years, and that the recent increase was significant. At the same time, residents do not want to sacrifice essential services or the quality of life in our community. I believe the Council needs to carefully review spending, ask whether we are using our resources as responsibly as possible, and look for ways to reduce unnecessary costs without compromising essential services.

Responsible development can also help broaden the tax base and bring additional revenue to the township. A second challenge is the divisiveness in our community. We don't have to agree on everything, but we do need to be able to disagree respectfully and work together on the issues that affect all of us. I would encourage opportunities for residents to come together, listen to one another and focus on what we share rather than what separates us.

2. I support the current Crossroads plan because I believe it addresses an important need for Teaneck while also providing an opportunity to strengthen the surrounding community. Teaneck has a state required affordable housing obligation, and this project would address a significant portion of that requirement. If municipalities do not meet their obligations, they can face litigation and potentially lose significant control over where and how development occurs. I believe it is better for Teaneck to meet its obligation through thoughtful planning, allowing the Township to have a voice in the location, design and impact of development.

3. I believe Teaneck should take practical steps to prepare for the effects of severe weather and other environmental challenges. That means maintaining and regularly assessing our drainage and stormwater systems, identifying areas where improvements may be needed, and planning rather than waiting for problems to become emergencies. When new development or redevelopment is proposed, the impact on drainage, runoff and surrounding properties should be considered carefully. I would rely on appropriate professional expertise and engineering information to help determine what measures are needed.

I would also look for state, county and federal resources that could help fund necessary infrastructure improvements. We need to balance preparation and long-term planning with responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

I believe good government starts with asking the right questions, listening to qualified professionals and residents, understanding the facts, and making practical decisions for Teaneck. As a Council member, I would bring that approach to issues like stormwater, infrastructure and other environmental challenges. I would look ahead, weighing the information carefully, and making responsible decisions for our community.

George Fernandez, 1658 Teaneck Rd

Years residing in Teaneck: 10 years

Occupation: NYS Public Employees Federation AFL-CIO Field Representative

Education: Masters of Social Work; Bachelor of Science and Human Services; Associate of Science and Human Services, Distinguished in Field Education; Magna Cum Laude; Licensed Chaplain; Certified Adult Mental Health Aid; Continuing Education at Rutgers University Advanced Grievance in Labor Arbitration; Cornell University School of Industrial & Labor Relations Advocate Certificate; Team Leader - PEF/AFTPEF mobilization & organization training

Family: Wife Liza, and my 5 Boys Jonathan, Justin, George, Gabriel and Gael

Community Involvement:

- Owner, The Well Purified Water - providing internships for Teaneck's young adults

- *Thirst No More*, providing clean drinking water program for newborns up to 1 year
- Member of the TRBCA advocated for small businesses

1. Closed session subcommittee meetings- I would move to expand committee members and open the meeting to the public for concerns, recommendations and proposals.

Invest in our local DPW by upgrading essential emergency equipment, including snow-removal trucks, to ensure the safety of all residents, especially seniors and individuals with disabilities, during severe winter storms.

2. I do not support the Crossroads project, as our community has serious concerns about the lack of transparency and the environmental impacts that are being overlooked. We cannot ignore the effects this project would have on Teaneck residents including shadow casting over homes, increased flooding risks, and added pressure on already limited parking. Our municipal lots should not be sold off to developers.

3. Implementing a scheduled maintenance program for catch basins that would clear all debris and avoid clogging of sewer drains. Monitor and prevent illegal dumping of chemicals and garbage in our waterways and sewer system, while expanding safe and accessible options for residents to properly discard medication. Grooming of trees to protect powerlines and reinforce all powerline poles.

Crystal Pressley, 65 State Street, Apt. 1A

Years residing in Teaneck: 31 years

Occupation: Health Insurance producer

Education: Bachelors in Political Science | Morgan State University

Family: This is Teaneck. We are all family!

Community Involvement:

1. Two of Teaneck's biggest challenges in my eyes come down to "Affordability and Accountability." Residents and business owners are weary of footing costs at every sign of progress while their taxes keep rising. Though some costs fall out of our control, Council can control how aggressively we look for alternative ways to bring money back to Teaneck versus placing burdens where they don't belong. Filling empty storefronts, helping existing businesses stay open, attracting businesses people actually benefit from, and ensuring future development adds value to our tax base.

Accountability is just as important because we cannot thrive as a township without transparency. When in question about how funds were exhausted, understanding pricing structures, or why a project is delayed, we need access to clear, concise and timely responses. Major Township spending and project expenses should be delivered in plain language and not political jargon.

2. Teaneck has a legal affordable housing obligation, and Crossroads is just one piece of the Township's plan to meet it. My greatest concern is using a state mandate as a reason to force resident acceptance for every part of development without the proper understanding. Prior to the general election, I will diligently review the actual redevelopment agreement as well as independent traffic and drainage reports. As I navigate through surrounding neighborhoods, I speak directly with residents and business owners that will live with the impact, and ask publicly how I can better understand their needs. If elected, I will use my vote to demand answers before approving future changes, agreements or public expenditures connected to the project. I will continue to deliberate on what is required by law, the route of Teaneck's strategy, and what can still be negotiated? My job would be making sure we do it without giving away more than the law actually requires.

3. Climate change becomes a local issue when residents deal with constant flooding, failing drainage, extreme heat and neglected green spaces. Kipp Street is personal to me because it was the street of my family's first home in Teaneck, which excites me to see its drainage improvement project moving forward. Certainly, Kipp Street cannot be the exception. I would push to complete projects already underway, use our Watershed Improvement Plan to identify the next problem areas, and make drainage, trees, green space and stormwater management priority regarding how we enhance neighborhoods and handle new development.

ELECTION DAY

Tuesday, November 3rd

Polls Open 6AM to 8PM

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!

This Voters Guide has been prepared by the League of Women Voters of Teaneck, a nonpartisan group of local residents, assuring that all eligible voters have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote. Our organization provides opportunities for voter registration each year; works to improve our government; studies local, state and national issues; and strives to engage all citizens in the civic decisions that could impact their lives.

**For information on all candidates, poll locations & registration information,
go to www.VOTE411.org**