

Four face off in race for Pownal constable position

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POWNAL — Four men are in the running for the position of town constable in Pownal.

The incumbent, Albert LaFontaine, has been on the job for 10 months. He took over when Joel Howard stepped down to take a position with the Bennington County Sheriff's Department. LaFontaine was appointed by the Select Board until the coming election.

LaFontaine said he has been a certified police officer since 2003, and formerly worked for the county Sheriff's Department. He said he left the department to focus on his own consulting business, A&L Consulting, in which he is involved in ballistics tests conducted for the military.

He said that after some initial issues with dispatching, his time as constable has been good. "It's been really great," he said, adding that he tries to patrol as much of the town as possible, including back roads as well as Route 7.

LaFontaine said he works with the state police barracks in Shaftsbury to coordinate Route 7 patrols. He said much of his time as constable is spent dealing with complaints about ATVs, but he has been called out to domestic situations and sometimes assist state police with drug cases.

LaFontaine said that because he has already been through police training, his re-election would save the town money.

Andrew Weber also has prior law enforcement experience. After an honorable discharge from the Marine Corps in 2003, Weber held a job as an Armed Nuclear Security Officer at the now-closed Yankee Rowe (Mass.) nuclear power facility for four years until recently being laid off.

He said he has been trained in the use of handcuff techniques, the use of mace and personal and vehicle searches. Weber said he has also had firearms training, along with first responder/first aid training.

Weber was stationed in Japan from 2002 to 2003 where he was the primary marksman instructor for the base's rifle range.

A town native, Weber graduated from Mount Anthony Union High School in 1999. He joined the Marines shortly after and completed a 12-week training course at Parris Island, S.C.

"I have been fortunate to have lived most of my life in Pownal," Weber said. "I enjoy the small town community we have here." He added that he would like to use his skills to benefit the town and would like to learn more.

Jody Kocsis, a native of Williamstown, Mass., said Tuesday that while he has only lived in Pownal for the past six years he has been a volunteer on the Pownal Fire Protective Association, of which he is now president, for the past 10 years. He has also been on the Bennington Rescue Squad for seven years.

"I think I can bring a lot to the town," he said Tuesday.

Kocsis said if he is elected constable, he will have plenty of time to devote to the job. He said he works as a custodian at Williams College and his bosses there are supportive of him taking on the duty of constable.

Kocsis said his experience as a fireman and rescue squad member would serve to augment his duties as constable. "I've always been into helping people," Kocsis said. "I really enjoy it."

Kocsis said that as constable, he would spend time talking the people of Pownal to hear their concerns and address them. He said he would also like to get to know the youth population of Pownal as well, and work more with the school.

Dave A. Sorel said that as constable he would work to address the drug problem he said is facing Pownal. "That stuff didn't go on when I was a juvenile in Pownal," he said. "We've got to get Pownal back to Pownal."

Sorel is a native of town, but lived in Bennington for a short period of time before moving back to Center Street to help care for his mother. The father of three children, Sorel said he wants to make Pownal a safe place for young people.

He said one of the things that concerns him is traffic along Route 7. An employee of NSK in Bennington, Sorel said his Fridays and weekends are free to do patrol work, which he said is when the speeding along Route 7 and other parts of Pownal is at its worst. Sorel said he is also concerned about the misuse of ATVs, and the illegal dumping of trash off town roads.

Elections for town constable will be held March 3 at the Pownal Center Fire House. Polls will open at 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m. The deadline for voter registration at town meeting is Feb. 25 by 2 p.m. at the Town Office.

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