

NEWS

D181 candidates share their views

Five seek election to three open seats on the elementary school board



Where do the candidates stand on the issues?

Ken Knutson compiled these responses from personal interviews and questionnaires.



Keith Bram



Sinead Duffy



Sarah Jakobsen



William Merchantz



Sheetal Rao

Role of a board member

Board members should enforce district policies, monitor the performance of the superintendent and oversee budgeting. They should cultivate an inspiring environment for students and a healthy relationship with the teachers union.

Board members should work with the community to improve student achievement in the schools while providing fiscal oversight and balancing district needs with responsiveness to all taxpayers and stakeholders.

Serve the community and act on the community's desires with the resources available, maintaining the standards of the district that the community has come to expect.

Board members should listen and ask questions to clearly understand the issues the district is facing and provide strategic oversight and guidance to determine and shape the best solutions to those issues.

A board member works to represent the community in helping to make thoughtful and responsible decisions, aided by information provided and resident comments, that promote the best possible education for students in a fiscally responsible manner.

Property tax levy

The district should ensure it is getting the return on its financial investment and try to eliminate unnecessary expenditures. If an increase in the levy will benefit students and enhance the educational experience, it should be supported.

The key to fiscal oversight is managing both sides of the cost/revenue equation and looking at the key variables and inputs that factor into that equation. The chief financial officer's recommendation should be considered as part of the discussion.

Staying closer to the maximum levy amount is prudent to make sure resources are available to provide top educational opportunities to students in a safe environment. Those opportunities are why so many families have moved into the district.

The levy amount should be enough to fund the operations and needs of the district, not too much or too little. The levy should not be maximized beyond the saturation point of district property taxpayers.

The district must make sure it has the necessary resources to furnish the learning tools and facilities conducive to success and should take steps to acquire the funding available to keep those elements in good condition.

School maintenance

The district does a good job communicating with families about adverse facility conditions that might affect operations.

The district has righted the ship in recent years in dedicating and directing money for school maintenance. With the strategic plan and newly hired administrators in place, the district can better manage its facilities.

District facilities should be maintained and improved through funding set aside annually for such work in order to provide students and staff with buildings and spaces as conducive to learning as possible.

The schedule that has been developed to help the district identify upcoming maintenance needs and the funds required should help avoid sudden referendums or significant budget cuts to address urgent fixes.

Facilities should be proactively and regularly evaluated for what needs they may have. Then cost estimates should be developed that allot for those projected wear and tear items, and those expenses incorporated into the annual budget.

Most important step

Listen to people and get information on their feelings about various issues. That will help him better represent their positions as a board member and advocate for their concerns.

Put in place good oversight of the district's fiscal management to avoid a cycle of referendums and budget cuts, so that short-term decisions are made with the long-term strategic vision in mind.

Have another district school be recognized for excellence by being named a Blue Ribbon school. The distinction is one all district schools should strive for.

The district should elevate its performance academically, organizationally, physically and financially over the next four years by focusing on the right projects.

Cultivate a climate in which the board and community are working together on a common vision that everyone believes includes their voice and their interests.

This and other election stories are posted online at thehinsdalean.com