

# New board members will face full agendas

*Infrastructure, contract talks among issues that will keep those elected April 2 busy*

By Ken Knutson  
and Pamela Lannom

Voters will find three contested local races on the ballot Tuesday, April 2. A total of 18 candidates are seeking 10 open spots on the Hinsdale Village Board, Community Consolidated Elementary District 181 Board and Hinsdale High School District 86 Board.

As readers consider who will best serve the community in those positions, a review of the issues that will be on the table over the next four years might prove useful.

## Village of Hinsdale

Last summer's whirlwind of roadwork in Hinsdale made life inconvenient for the motoring public. That seasonal disruption, however, resulted in long-term benefits, according to village manager Kathleen Gargano.

"The unprecedented capital investment in the village's infrastructure has resulted in greatly improved roads throughout the community," Gargano said, also citing the resurfacing of downtown roads in 2017, including new brick crosswalk features.

She said Hinsdale is also profiting from a healthy local business environment.

"There has been an increase in occupancy in the retail and restaurant offerings in the village. A vibrant retail and restaurant market positively impacts residents who expect

such amenities in their community," she said.

The village has seen reinvestment in the community, Gargano pointed out, with the redevelopment of the former GM Training facility on Ogden Avenue to become the new home for a Land Rover/Jaguar dealership to bring additional sales tax revenue to the community while improving the Ogden Corridor.

The age-targeted Hinsdale Meadows residential units at 55th and County Line Road and finding a solution to the long vacant Amlings property were also significant milestones, she added. The fate of the Institute in Basic Life Principles property at 707 W. Ogden Ave. has come up in board discussions periodically and may be among the next parcels attracting proposals.

The impending expansion of the Central Tri-State Tollway, and consequential loss of revenue with the elimination of the oasis overpass, will be on the board's radar for the near term and beyond.

"The village board will continue to advocate on behalf of residents as it relates to the impact that the tollway expansion will have on the community," Gargano said.

The village's financial position, especially with the unpredictability of decisions at the state level, will continue to command officials' attention, she stressed.

"The village, like all municipalities in the state of Illinois, is always monitoring the impact that state budget decisions

may have on our municipal resources," Gargano said. "The village board will continue its work to identify opportunities for efficiencies while maintaining the high service delivery level to its residents."

## District 181

The new Hinsdale Middle School, completed on time and under budget, is emblematic of Community Consolidated Elementary District 181 Board's commitment to fiscal responsibility, according to board President Jennifer Burns.

"This same level of commitment, leadership, knowledge and expertise is being applied behind the scenes to the district's curriculum," she said. "The clarity and focus that the administration is bringing to the district's academic work will enable our students to achieve even greater degrees of success."

Superintendent Hector Garcia said the district has been refocusing that work through the lens of a revamped district administrative team, while also reaching agreement on a new contract with district support staff.

"These efforts have ensured that our students don't experience interruptions to their academic work and establish the foundation to reach even greater levels of performance throughout the district," he said.

The path ahead, Burns said, will involve addressing

evolving school safety considerations, retooling facilities to serve academic offerings physically and technologically, and cultivating better collaboration organizationally and in the classroom.

Garcia said the feasibility of all-day kindergarten, contemplated by previous boards, will be back on the board's agenda.

"We will need to continue to evaluate options that increase educational opportunities and examine the feasibility of implementing a full-day kindergarten option," Garcia stated. "We will need to address the inherent financial, curricular, and staffing issues that go along with such an initiative."

All of those endeavors are carefully considered with a mindfulness for the tax burden on district residents.

"The school community and the board will continue to face financial challenges as the state resumes their focus on shifting limited resources away from some school districts," Garcia said.

Burns said being good stewards for taxpayers and students is a top priority and requires constant scrutiny.

"We live in a highly taxed community in a state which is among the most highly taxed in the country. This reality, along with limited and decreasing state funding, will continue to present financial challenges to the district," she said. "To continue to invest in the educational excellence of the district, spending priorities must be carefully weighed."



## District 86

Asking about the main issues new school board members in Hinsdale High School District 86 will face seems a bit unnecessary.

Voters' decision on the April 2 referendum will determine whether the board is tasked with overseeing almost \$140 million in construction projects at Hinsdale Central and Hinsdale South or implementing \$3.1 million in cuts to help pay for the most critical \$42 million worth of improvements.

"Obviously if the referendum fails, it's going to be not only following through with the cuts that were already voted on by the current board, but it would be finding cuts for additional years to get what needs to be done to the life safety and infrastructure," said board President Bill Carpenter, whose term ends in April. "That is going to be the harder of the two."

The new board also will be monitoring the three-year effort to provide curriculum equity at both high schools.

"I think the board's role is going to be basically holding the administration to the

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# NEWS

## Facilities talks have been ongoing for years

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• **Sept. 22** — board discusses options to deal with growing enrollment at Central in light of decision not to go to referendum

• **Dec. 12** — board members review \$40 million, \$50 million and \$60-\$65 million options for an April 4 referendum

### 2017

• **Jan. 9** — board votes 6-1 to put a \$76 million referendum on the April 4 ballot

• **April 4** — voters reject the referendum 9,107-3,171 (74-26 percent)

### 2018

• **Jan. 18** — strategic planning committee convenes

• **Feb. 21** — new facilities community task

force convenes

• **March 21** — task force approves list of projects totaling \$184 million to recommend to board

• **April 9** — task force reports to the board

• **May 21** — board votes 6-0 to approve strategic plan

• **June 18** — board votes 5-2 to eliminate buffer zone

• **Aug. 9** — board votes 6-0 to put \$166 million referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot

• **Sept. 17** — board votes 6-0 to draw boundary line that places 626 houses of the former buffer zone in the Central attendance area and 2,244 houses in the South attendance area

• **Nov. 6** — voters reject the referendum 17,461-14,731 (54-46 percent)

• **Dec. 17** — board votes 6-1 to put a \$130 million referendum on the April 2 ballot, with about half of the \$36 million in savings result-

ing from rebuilding the six-lane, 25-yard pool at Central in its current location rather than building a new 10-lane, 40-yard facility

• **Dec. 17** — board votes 6-1 to make \$3.6 million in budget cuts for the 2019-20 school year to pay for a projected \$42 million in needed life safety, security and accessibility projects over the next six years. The board has said the cuts will not be enacted if the referendum passes.

### 2019

• **Jan. 7** — the board votes 6-1 to keep the referendum at \$129.9 million and stick with its revised plan to rebuild the six-lane, 25-yard pool at Central in its current location

• **Jan. 12** — board votes 6-0 to increase the referendum amount to \$139.8 million, adding \$5.1 million to move Central's pool and about \$5.2 million to improve South's auditorium

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timeline and making sure the benchmark is being met," Carpenter said.

Preliminary conversations also are taking place about teacher contract negotiations. The current contract between the district and the Hinsdale High School Teachers Association expires in 2020.

Lawmakers in Springfield could make things even more interesting, Superintendent Bruce Law said.

"You never know what the legislature is going to do about pensions and cost shifting," he said, noting that the district contributes to teachers' pensions but the state handles and funds the pensions after teachers retire.

"It's always hanging over our head because the pension situation in Illinois is unsustainable," he said. "Something is going to have to give at some point."

Pensions aren't the only area where the state legislature could have an impact.

"Other threats the legislature might

pose to us financially — who knows?" Law asked.

Of course he and others watching Springfield know a property tax freeze lasting one to three years is another possibility that has come up for discussion.

"Financially that will be damaging for sure," Law said.

# HINSDALE RESTAURANT WEEK

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