

## Already young District 15 school board will see more newcomers

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Posted Tuesday, February 06, 2007

Two years after voters ousted three of four incumbents from the Palatine-Township Elementary District 15 school board, residents will see another group of newcomers take a seat at the table.

A host of parents and former educators — none of them incumbents — have thrown their hats in the ring for seats on the seven-member board.

The April 17 ballot will include Richard L. Bokor, James Ekeberg, Sue Quinn and Mary E. Vanek of Palatine; Lisa Neal of Rolling Meadows; and Gerald Chapman of Inverness. Chapman is the retired Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 superintendent.

All six said they entered the race with hopes of restoring community trust in the board after two years that saw a tax-rate increase rejected by voters and a bitter teacher's contract negotiation.

Quinn has been attending school board meetings for the past two years and said there is a feeling the board is not being open and honest.

"That really affects the trust the community has in our school board," Quinn said.

Ekeberg, running as a team with Bokor and Chapman, said the clear divisiveness on the board isn't good.

"I just think it has become a contentious atmosphere," Ekeberg said. "The board definitely has to be united."

Superintendent Robert McKanna, who will retire at the end of next year, said he wasn't surprised to see so many interested candidates. Over the next four years, board members will have to find a new superintendent and go through more employee contract negotiations.

"We are pleased to see so many people running," McKanna said. "Certainly, we need a lot of things to get accomplished."

Making sure the district is sound financially is also a reason some candidates said they were running.

Vanek thinks the district's finances need to be studied to see where costs can be cut and if any district services, like transportation, can be outsourced to save money.

"Someone needs to take a closer look at those things," Vanek said.

Neal said she also wants to ensure the district's money is spent wisely, to avoid another tax-rate increase request.

"I think the amount of money we put forth in our property taxes is ample enough," Neal said.

Even board members not up for re-election saw the strong interest in serving as a promising thing for the district.

"I'm pleased that people are willing to step forward," said Nancy Lee Carlson, who will be the longest-serving board member in April.

"I think it is always hard to come on to a board of education if you have no knowledge of education," Carlson said. "But several of our candidates have extensive backgrounds in education."

Fellow board member Tim Millar believes the retirement of so many longtime incumbents increases the chances of the district making a fresh start.

"I'm hoping it will have more of a calming effect, because you don't have all the baggage of the past as you're moving forward," Millar said. "We really need some new blood that isn't entrenched in the system."