

## District 15 candidates discuss their motivation

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Six candidates are running for three, 4-year terms on the Palatine Township Elementary District 15 school board. None of three incumbents, Scott Boucher, Paula Mikula and Linda Silverman, are seeking re-election.

Three candidates are running as a team:

- Richard Bokor, 59, of Palatine, a former District 15 teacher and part of the adjunct faculty at National-Louis University in Wheeling. Longtime member of the District 211 scholarship committee.
- Gerald Chapman, 63, of Inverness, former longtime superintendent in District 211, now an educational consultant; board member of Palatine Rural Fire Protection District, The Bridge and the Palatine chamber of commerce; former chairman of the Palatine Township ethics commission and the township cemetery committee.
- Family physician Dr. James Ekeberg, 58, of Palatine, in practice 30 years with Northwest Family Physicians in Arlington Heights; former chairman of the family medicine department and the quality assurance committee at Northwest Community Healthcare.

The other three candidates are running independently:

- Lisa Neal, 45 (as of March 25), of Rolling Meadows; employed to do research and expenses for Arlington Orthopedics and Hand Surgery Specialists; active in Hunting Ridge PTA and Northwest Suburban Council PTA and Palatine Gymnastics Parent Club.
- Sue Quinn, 41, of Palatine. Stay-at-home mom, who has had several leadership roles within the Pleasant Hill PTA and has been on District 15 committees for the district Web site, Out-of-Level Math and the Gifted program.
- Mary Vanek, 45, of Palatine; an attorney who presently is a stay-at-home mom; formerly a Sunday school teacher and a Girl Scout leader; most recently was Girl Scout organizer at Pleasant Hill School.

The candidates were asked to contain their answers to 150 words. Where they exceeded that, their answers were cut at the end of that sentence.

Q. Why are you running for this office? Is there a particular issue that motivates you, and if so, what? What will be your main priority in office?

Bokor: I am running for this office in partnership with Gerald (Jerry) Chapman and James (Jim) Ekeberg. We are running because we have a combined 125+ years of residence in the school district. We feel we have the time, the commitment, the passion and the experience that will enable us to listen to all viewpoints and to make decisions that will benefit the entire District 15 community.

I started my career as a junior high teacher in District 15 in 1969. I left District 15 in 1978 and spent 25 years as a social studies teacher at William Fremd High School until my retirement in 2003. Since my "retirement," I have served as an elementary education adjunct professor and supervisor of student teachers for National-Louis University.

I believe my experience at the elementary, the high school and the university level, will enable me to give of my time and talent to fulfill the responsibilities as a board member.

Chapman: I am one of three individuals who are running as a team; others are Richard (Rich) Bokor and James (Jim) Ekeberg. We are running because we believe our knowledge, interest and experience, along with our willingness to commit our time and energy to be positive contributors, will allow us to be effective board members.

In addition to 40 years of experience in education, including teaching and administration, I have degrees in education and school administration. More importantly, I and my colleagues are committed to decision-making in the best interests of our students and community.

Employment of a new superintendent is a critical issue to be faced in the near future. Developing an environment of teamwork and cooperation is another issue that requires immediate attention.

Ekeberg: I am one of three individuals running as a team; others are Richard (Rich) Bokor and Gerald (Jerry) Chapman. We are running because we believe our knowledge, interest, and experience, along with our willingness to commit our time and energy to be positive contributors, will allow us to be effective board members.

I have been a student, parent, volunteer and community member in this district. I believe I can add that experience to the board of education.

Developing a plan and criteria to hire a new superintendent is very important. The board must develop a level of trust and an attitude of team work.

Neal: My primary goal is to represent the children, the families and the taxpayers of District 15 to the best of my ability. I feel it is vitally important to do all that we can to further the education of the next generation. While this is a difficult task, it must be accomplished in order to prepare our children for the future challenges in an increasingly competitive world.

Quinn: I am running for school board to restore the community's trust in the school board. I will do this through sound fiscal management, open and improved communication, and a focus on working together to achieve educational excellence.

I think our district needs a fresh start — for two years, I have watched political infighting cripple the ability of our board to effectively govern. As a parent in the district, I see the direct impact the school board decisions have on our children, and I am invested in seeing our district move toward a more open and cooperative way of doing business.

My main priority in office will be working toward educational excellence for our children, making sure that all the decisions we make as a school board are focused on the best interests of the children.

Vanek: I am running for this position because our community needs school board members it can trust to be fiscally responsible and maintain a balanced budget, so that there are more resources available for our children in the classroom. We need board members who will act openly and ethically, and who understand that as elected officials, they represent the people of this district, and must be accountable to them.

Only a school board that is able to do these things will be able to deliver an excellent education to our children over the long term. These financial and ethical issues have motivated me to seek this office, and if I am elected I will focus on these issues.

Q. How will you improve the relationship between the teachers, administration and school board?

Bokor: I will act as a representative of the entire District 15 community, and my focal point in my decision making will be: "Is it good for kids?"

I will openly listen to the opinions of my colleagues on the board, and I will certainly understand that consensus can not be reached on ALL items.

The public judges board members on their demeanor, their comments on the issues, and finally the way in which they vote on the issues at hand. Board members must strive to develop and maintain an atmosphere of public respect between themselves, the administration and members of the community.

Chapman: Developing an atmosphere of teamwork and cooperation is an issue that needs immediate attention. School board members are the community's representatives in the making of decisions affecting schools. As such, board members should reflect community values, and, in addition, board members, collectively, should work to develop and maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect between all constituents including teachers and administrators.

One of my concerns is the loss of well-qualified administrators and staff to other school districts. I would recommend the review of policies and procedures affecting that exodus and make corrections so that all employees feel valued and are encouraged to make career commitments to District 15.

Ekeberg: The board must set the tone for the district and develop an attitude of respect and teamwork. The board represents the community and must work with administration, staff, teachers and each other for the best education for each student. Each individual working on behalf of this district should feel they are respected.

We have lost respected staff to other districts and must evaluate the reason for this loss of talented individuals.

Neal: I believe the most effective way to improve the relationship between the board of education, administration and teachers is open and honest communication punctuated with respect for the jobs that are well done.

Quinn: I am a consensus builder — I have volunteered extensively in District 15 schools and classrooms, on District 15 committees and PTA. This has given me an opportunity to connect with other parents, teachers and administrators around the district, as well as insight into many of the district's 20 schools.

Parents from 11 different school areas circulated my school board petitions to get me on this ballot. I have built many successful working relationships during my years of industry experience as an engineer, where I managed multimillion dollar projects while working with a wide range of people, including unionized professionals.

I know first hand, from my professional experience as a Ph.D. scientist, working in an academic environment, how the cultural tone is set at the top of the organization. I am committed to setting a tone that encourages open communication, a cooperative working style and a commitment to excellence in education.

Vanek: If there is room for improvement in the relationships between the parties, perhaps it is because of a distorted understanding of what their roles ought to be.

School board members should remember their primary responsibility is to represent the community as a whole, and not to fall under the sway of any particular organization or interest group, or group of district employees. A school board that truly represents the community can formulate policies that reflect community goals for the children, and effectively supervise the

superintendent's implementation of the policy.

It is the superintendent's job to ensure that the policy is implemented by the teachers and other district staff, and it is the school board's job to monitor the performance of the Superintendent and the District.

By having a clear understanding of my role as a board member, perhaps I can help others understand their roles as well, which could lead to better relations.

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