

CANDIDATES: Election for two positions set for May 21

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does not like the way school board elections are handled.

"I think this process is broken and it should be the first two past the post," he told *The Nugget*. And, he noted, "I don't think anybody should be on any election position unopposed."

King said, "I've been frustrated with the progress in my tenure on the board. You can get everybody to agree and it still doesn't happen. We have no excuses (not) to be a whole lot better than we are."

Smith, who serves as school board chairman, acknowledges that there is room for improvement in Sisters schools.

"I think we need to do better in math," he said, citing the upcoming implementation of new math curriculum.

He lauded what he described as "a shift to the social, emotional wellness of the child. I've long been an advocate of educating the whole child." He believes that Sisters does a good job with core instruction in reading, writing and math and "beyond that we have an extraordinary array of programs."

King thinks the district should aim higher in its aspirations.

"Why not continue to raise the bar and become one of the best school districts on the west coast of America?" he asks.

He believes that the district should broaden its curriculum by bringing in instruction from capable members of the Sisters community and work harder to "individuate" educational offerings.

"How do we help an individual child reach their potential, whatever that is?" he asks.

While metrics for determining what one of the best school districts on the west coast of America looks like remain largely undefined, King believes that the key to maximizing Sisters' advantages in socio-economic make-up, facilities and quality of teachers is more



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Stephen King.

training, longer school days and a longer school year.

"I think we have great teachers who need great training and (to be) in front of the kids for more time," he said.

"I think everyone would like to have more school days," Smith said. "They are expensive... It's a better investment to improve our quality of instruction."

Smith sees mostly positives in his assessment of Sisters School District.

"I clearly think we can be better," he said. "We have, I think, a very good school district. People move to Sisters to come to our school district, which, I think, is a pretty good indication that we're doing some good stuff."

King acknowledges that there are "practicalities" that make it difficult to implement some of his ideas — "and some of those are very real. But let's take steps in that direction."

For his part, Smith hopes to maintain the "unparalleled" level of community involvement in the schools.

"We're fortunate to have a community that values education," he said. "I've tried to create an environment... where folks in the community have trust in the district. I trust and respect people in the community. I listen carefully to what they have to say — and I think that's important."

Don Hedrick is tossing his hat back into a familiar ring. After serving on the school board from 2009 to 2017 — four of those as chairman, he found that he missed being on the school board.

Hedrick believes that Sisters' schools have improved in recent years



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Jeff Smith.

under the leadership of Superintendent Curt Scholl.

"One of the reasons that Curt was hired is that he is an expert in improving instruction, and I think he's done that," Hedrick said.

Success in that arena is hard to quantify, but Hedrick believes it is reflected in test scores and reports from graduates on their preparedness for post-high-school life — whether that is college or military service or moving directly into the work force.

Seeley, who works as an administrative assistant with the Sisters Park & Recreation District, told *The Nugget* that she is interested both in school board and in running for the Sisters City Council and would like to serve on both bodies.

"That's what I'm going for," she said.

Her children were home-schooled before coming to Sisters because Seeley had had bad previous experiences with public education. She and her husband found the public school environment in Sisters suitable and now their kids attend Sisters Elementary School.

Seeley would like to see the district focus on wellness and nature-based educational opportunities and offer more student-led activities. She also notes that,



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Don Hedrick.

"I've spent almost half of my residency here (three years) without any housing. So that shapes my perspective a little bit." She says she wants to make sure that "underprivileged kids are getting everything they need to succeed as much as everybody else."

Hedrick says that if he could add a dimension to Sisters' educational offerings, he would like to offer more vocational programming. He notes that, in a small district, scheduling conflicts make it difficult to meet all kids' needs effectively all the time.

Hedrick weighed in on the question of lengthening the school year, arguing that it's not currently feasible in terms of cost.

"We aren't ready yet to add school days," he said.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Mande Seeley.

He believes the district should focus on improvement through teacher training, in-service professional development opportunities and teacher evaluations. He is disinclined to concern himself with Sisters' standing among other schools.

"I'm not too worried about where the district ranks," he said. "I'm more concerned about are kids prepared and are we doing a good job giving them a solid, well-rounded education."

Seeley is pleased to have an opportunity to serve a community she has found to be a welcoming home. After traveling from Fort Myers, Florida, her family found itself here.

"We liked Sisters so much, we never left," she said. "Sisters gave that to us, so we want to give back."

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