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School from A1

Among the South Lane School Board's responsibilities, the board establishes rules that govern schools in accordance with state and federal laws while authorizing, appropriating and approving the district's budget each year. The school board also hires the superintendent and is responsible for evaluating the superintendent's performance on an annual basis.

As elected members of the community, the school board's work is done in public and it serves as a communication body between the community and school district with board positions up for election every four years.

The *Sentinel* has asked members of the South Lane School Board to answer some questions, both personal and general, which will provide the community a snapshot of the people they've elected and a window into the volunteer work they do.

The following are answers provided by SLSD board members who were available to participate.

1. What inspired you to become a school board member?

Sherry Duerst-Higgins, chair —

I wanted to be involved and engaged in education in my community at the time my three children were attending schools in South Lane. I felt it was important to become a board member to serve my community and the students of South Lane. Our students are our future and our responsibility to educate and support in their efforts to succeed now and in the future. It has been my priv-

ilege serve my community and to make the decisions I can for our students' education.

Alan Baas, vice chair —

Most of my career has been in education-related work, from high school teaching to research analyses to career education to university publications and college scholarships. It was a no-brainer that I apply for the school board when I retired — I've seen too much of education not to want to keep supporting it however I can.

Jerry Settlemeyer —

I believe that kids deserve the very best education we can provide and with my pre-retirement experience I believe I can help "expect and provide" that standard through participation and encouragement as a School Board member.

Tammy Hodgkinson —

I have a sincere belief that government is a participatory activity and if we want government to work, then the best place to start (outside of voting) is at the local level. Plus, as a former kindergarten teacher, I have a passion for the fundamental significance of Preschool/Early Elementary education. It's a perspective that I think is critical to bring to the board. I also have family members who are disabled. Children (and their families) in the disability community face unique challenges in education. It can be overwhelming and isolating to navigate at times and one of my goals is to be an advocate for them.

Dustin Bengtson —

I've been involved in youth sports as the president of South Valley Athletics for a number of years

and was a member of the bond committee. And really it was my involvement in the bond committee that led me to want to figure out a different way to support the school district. In walking through the community and trying to articulate the need for that bond investment, it was interesting to see the wide difference in opinion of how the district was not only performing, but utilizing funds, which were really in conflict with my own. So I thought maybe I could help with that.

2. How important is community engagement and what does that look like?

Sherry Duerst-Higgins, chair —

Extremely important. I am involved in my community through service on several community boards, through my business connections and volunteering in nonprofits. I interact with members of my community on a daily basis. I listen and encourage interaction from my community members. I encourage feedback from parents, students and other community members on their thoughts and ideas in the direction of the school district. I am elected to hear from the community and make decisions that support our school district.

Alan Baas, vice chair —

We are elected by public vote. How can I not consider the community in everything I do as a board member? Particularly in these troubled times where globally, nationally, and locally folks are struggling with pretty big issues. We all have a responsibility to see to it that our children are equipped for the changes that accompany

these challenges.

More specifically, one of the characteristics we as a board expressed for applicants for the upcoming permanent superintendent position was an "ability to build and sustain strong, effective community/business partnerships that impact student success." Seems to me such partnering must include active board participation in understanding and building such relationships. Keeping in mind the board's role is at the policy level and often does not touch school operations, I don't want to presume to say what all this is going to look like.

Jerry Settlemeyer —

Very important, although we have not achieved that involvement, most likely developed through many years of not being engaged to function that way.

Dustin Bengtson —

That the community has an understanding of the decisions that the district makes. We have to be as transparent as we can on how we utilize public funds and managing the resources of the district. And that involves not only school board, but parents and teachers trying to articulate what we're doing and how we're doing the best we can with what we have available to us.

And I do believe that there's room for improvement in anything we do, but there's an awful lot of good things happening within South Lane School District, so we need to think of ways to involve people more consistently throughout our decision-making process.

A really good example of that recently is the work

See SLSD 10A

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