

Morrow County School Board Candidate Forum

Fifteen people are running for the Morrow County School Board. Each candidate was asked to answer six questions regarding challenges and events happening in with the school board. Ballots have been mailed out and the election will be held May 20. All ballots must be returned by 8 p.m., on May 20.

The six questions asked were: Q1- Why would a voter select you over your opponent? Q2- If elected, what is the biggest challenge facing you? Q3- What is your position regarding Ione's secession from the Morrow County School District? Q4- How would you deal with budget constraints and what are some solutions you feel would help resolve the budget crisis. Q5- Currently funds are distributed to each school by the amount they bring in. Is this fair and equitable, or should there be a different form of distribution? Q6- What is your opinion on moving the district office from Lexington to Irrigon?

Pos. 1 candidates:

Richard Rockwell,

27, lives with his wife Natasha and their three children, Hans, six, Aristotle, four, and Lily Ann, one, in Boardman. Rockwell graduated from Riverside High School in 1994.



Rockwell has been a part of the BMCC Diversity Committee, the Wal-Mart ABC Committee, and a volunteer at Riverside High School and Hermiston High School, as well as a volunteer with the Boardman Youth Wrestling.

Working with a lot of the students in the school district and being on a first-name basis with many people in the north end of the county has also provided some experience for Rockwell.

Q1- "I will listen to everyone's needs and problems. Will represent every student in the district equally. Will look for funding methods outside of state that current members have failed to do. Will look to bring cut programs like vo-ag, back to the schools."

Q2- The biggest challenge is "getting to know people on the south end. If elected, my first order of business will be to get to know the south end better and listen to their ideas as well as others in the county. We need to get everyone in the county more involved."

Q3- "I think anytime you see a city pull together to help their children have a better education is great."

Q4- "Ask for more volunteer help. Apply for grants to help fund programs. Hold year-round fundraisers to also help with funding. Once that is complete, look to change our legislative problems."

Q5- "I do think this is fair to a certain degree. If one school makes all the money, should all schools get a fair share? No. Should some of that money go to help schools that are struggling? Yes. We are here to make sure all students get an equal education."

Q6- "Over 80 percent of the districts business is at the north end, so yes, it makes sense [to move the district office]. Once the school opens, should a new

district building be made? No, use the resources we have available at the time."

Craig Miles, 38,

lives in Heppner, with his wife, Tawny and their three children. Miles came to Morrow County in 1970 and graduated from Heppner High School. He also received a degree from Blue Mountain Community College in ag business management and production agriculture.



Miles served in the United States Marines both stateside and in Okinawa, Japan, and Korea from 1985-1989. He has also been actively involved in the Oregon Wheat Growers League, as Morrow County vice-president 1996, Morrow County president 1997 and chair of the Marketing Committee 1998-2000.

Q1- "I am dedicated and committed to better education in Morrow County. I am willing to learn what I don't know, and open minded enough to listen and make a decision based on facts."

Q2- "Backgrounding myself in education policy in Oregon."

Q3- "Ione citizens have decided to secede, and, in fact, are almost there. Their decision should be respected whether agreed with or not."

Q4- "There is no one easy solution to this problem, but there are some that stand out more than others. Schools need a stable revenue source. This doesn't have to mean more or higher taxes. PERS needs fixed. It needs to be fair but not excessively expensive like it is now. Most of all the economy needs to turn around, so people move back to Oregon."

Q5- "Funding should follow each school based on students. Additional money, such as ESL or special ed money, should be used for what it is intended, and not be used to fund things that don't pertain to the intended use."

Q6- "The decision to move the district office should have been made strictly on an economic basis. It obviously wasn't since the costs to move to Irrigon are unknown."

Position 1 candidates DeAnne L. Tolle, Jim Doherty and John Rietmann did not respond to the questionnaire.

Pos. 3 candidates:

John Kilkenny, 46, along

with wife, Diane, and three children ages 18, 15 and 13, are all Heppner residents. Kilkenny graduated from



Heppner High School and went on to the University of Oregon where he graduated with a degree in business. He has worked as a farmer/rancher for 20 years.

Kilkenny has also been involved in the community in activities such as the Morrow County Rodeo Board and coach of both Little League and Colt basketball. He has also been on the Heppner High Site Council, Heppner-Lexington Advisory Committee, the ASCS County

committee and has been a Morrow County Planning director.

He says that being part of the Morrow County Grain Growers Board of Directors has helped prepare him for this possible position, as well as having a good relationship with teachers in the school and being able to communicate with everyone involved.

Q1- "I have been actively involved in school issues for years. I fully understand the importance of offering a quality education for all children. I will make rational decisions with facts on all issues."

Q2- "The shrinking funding from the state. We have to continue to offer a quality curriculum with flat or declining revenue."

Q3- "I feel that Ione should secede at this point. However, there must be a full and equitable division of the assets and liabilities involved in the separation."

Q4- "We must be more efficient in how we run our district. The staff must be flexible in how they are used. Classroom teachers must always be the last place to cut."

Q5- "The equity of curriculum in the district must be maintained. We have to realize that it is more expensive to operate smaller class sizes—that sometimes cannot be avoided."

Q6- "It should not be moved at this time. We do not know the costs involved with opening the office in Irrigon. This issue should be readdressed at the first school board meeting of the newly elected board."

Marc Rogelstad,

45, and wife Brenda live in Boardman. The couple have three children, Adam 20, Heather, 18, and



Cassandra, 12. The Rogelstads came to Morrow County in 1998. Rogelstad graduated from Fessenden High School, Fessenden, ND. He then joined the U.S. Air Force as a security police officer/law enforcement branch and attended numerous technical schools and academies through the years in the fields of law enforcement, fire technologies and management. He worked for 12 years with the Air Force and two sheriffs departments. Currently, he is employed by the Boardman Rural Fire Protection District as fire chief, a position held since January 1998.

Rogelstad is a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Boardman. He is also the current president of the Riverside High School Booster Club and a member of the Boardman Irrigon Advisory Board. He is a charter member and first president of the Boardman Kiwanis. Rogelstad also serves on the budget committee for the Morrow County School District, as well as serving on the budget committee for the city of Boardman. He is also the budget officer for the Boardman Rural Fire Protection District.

Q1- "Every candidate has his or her individual strengths. My strength is my commitment to providing for the best educational experience we can provide for our children. We cannot forget that what we teach our children today will become the mold for our leaders tomorrow."

Q2- "Our biggest challenge in the school currently is funding. We must be able to manage our system to get the most from every dollar received for education. We have to continue to provide every educational opportunity that our children need and desire so they may go forward in their continuing education and excel. We have to meet this challenge head on as a group rather than as individuals."

Q3- "I have no problem with Ione's desire to leave the school district. I do want the district and the community of Ione to work out an agreement that is satisfactory to both parties. I wish them the best of luck in the challenges they face."

Q4- "Our current budget constraints have not developed overnight. We have seen these problems coming for years, and we are not alone in the troubles they have created. This is an issue that has to be addressed by everyone. We must push the State Legislature to address this problem head on. They have danced around the issue too long. If they are not willing to face the problems but pass them on to the local districts, maybe it time to send them a message with new faces in Salem. I again emphasize that we must explore every avenue to get the most for every dollar we spend on education. I see programs being developed and implemented that are working to do that, and I will push for their continuation and success."

Q5- "Funds are currently going to the schools based upon the amounts they generate from state funding guidelines. I support this practice."

Q6- "There is much discussion about moving the district offices to Irrigon. I really do not care where the office is located. I do care about the costs of operation and the disruption they could possible impose on school facilities. We have just spent several million dollars on facilities throughout the district. Some of them we currently do not plan on using. We still have to maintain them and that will cost us valuable dollars. Again let us manage our dollars to get the maximum bang for the buck."

Position 3 candidate Debbie Radie did not respond to the questionnaire.

Pos. 4 candidates:

Kenneth Matlack,

54, lives in Irrigon with wife, Donna, and the couple has two grown daughters. Matlack lived in



Irrigon for four years from 1955-59, then moved with his family to Umatilla where he graduated from high school in 1967. He then went on to Eastern Oregon University where he graduated with a bachelor's of science degree in secondary education in 1971. Matlack moved back to Irrigon in 1999. Matlack is a retired Oregon State Police sergeant and currently a background investigator with the Department of Corrections at Two Rivers Correctional Institute and a licensed private investigator in Oregon and Washington.

Matlack is a member of the Irrigon Community Baptist Church and a volunteer kitchen worker at the Irrigon Senior/Community Center. He has been involved with the Gilliam County public safety

planning council and the budget committee. He has also been a part of the Arlington budget committee and Arlington planning commission, as well as being a part of the Arlington City Council and school board. He has also been elected to the Irrigon City Council and the Morrow County Health District. Along with community involvement, Matlack has also served as a teacher and substitute teacher throughout eastern Oregon.

Q1- "My long experience in law enforcement prepared me for working in fields that have strict rules, policies and regulations. I have had years of management experience working with labor contracts and labor relations. I have served on a variety of appointed positions as well as being elected to public office. I have served as a former school board member and have worked as a classroom teacher and coach. I currently serve as a member of the countywide Morrow County Health District."

Q2- "Morrow County has a large and very diverse school district. Each town and area within the county has its own unique and important needs. Trying to meet every area's needs and expectations is going to be a challenging task."

Q3- "I believe Ione, like other cities in Morrow County, has its own idea on what is best for their community and their children's education. I believe the group that supports self-determination has thought through the process and they believe creating their own school district is in the best interests of their children and their community. I believe their decision is strongly supported by a majority of Ione area residents. I support their decision to create their own school district. I also believe they agree to a fair and impartial arbitration process for distribution of assets."

Q4- "I feel working with the legislature and our local representatives is the best way legislatively to try to secure additional funding for schools. To keep as many classroom teachers as possible in the classroom, I would support fewer administrators and administrative assistant positions. While I am sure all the administrative duties are very important, I believe keeping good teachers in the classroom is more important. The use of computer classes and distance education opportunities via teleconferencing should be explored for enhancing educational opportunities."

Q5- "The current school board has adopted the policy of each school living with in its budget. I believe this is the goal for each school. I don't believe any school is taking in more money that they can use. It appears that money targeted for special programs like English as a Second Language may be diverted to pay for other programs other than the school where the money was intended. I believe the goal of living within your own budget is the direction the board is going and I support it."

Q6- "I believe the position Mr. Crippen has taken is that 80 percent of the district's children and the majority of the related administrative duties is in the north end. It makes sense to me that with his recommendation and the board's decision to make the move was the correct decision. The Irrigon location is temporary. While I know we need district office space, I don't believe a majority of the school district patrons would

support another building project for a new district office."

Mike Armato, 47,

along with wife, Kim, and two children ages 11 and nine, currently live in Heppner. Armato graduated from San



Rafael High and attended the University of California where he received a bachelor of arts degree. He has worked in banking and mortgage for over 20 years.

Armato is a member of the St. Patrick's Catholic Church where he is a member of the parish council, director of religious education and a second grade teacher for the church. He is also a seven-year member of the Morrow County Board of Property Tax Appeals and a current chairman of the Heppner Coordination Council. Armato is also a hospice volunteer. He is also a four-year member of the Heppner/Lexington Advisory Committee where he is currently serving as chairman. Armato is also a past member of the Morrow County School Budget Committee.

Q1- "I have vastly more experience and knowledge of the Morrow County School District. While my opponent has stated that his main interest and motivation for running for a school board directorship is to establish an Irrigon High School. I will represent the entire district in order to provide for the delivery of an excellent curriculum"

Q2- "The biggest challenge is the district's financial constraints as well as successfully addressing the fractionalizing of the district over the past three-plus years. The unification of the district's schools, employees and communities must become a reality."

Q3- "I believe that Ione should be aided in its search for autonomy. However, the district's responsibility is to ensure that an adequate and equitable financial settlement is reached. It is not reasonable for the surviving members of the Morrow County School District to subsidize any alien district in any form."

Q4- "We need to be creative in sharing district assets such as courses and teachers. We should use our technology to its full potential and seek partnerships with other area educators (i.e. BMCC). WE should further seek financial redress from the legislature by requesting that they fund education to their own recommended levels."

Q5- "First of all, the state district funding formula is just that, a district funding formula and not a spending formula. While there is a certain degree of logic in this plan, we have seen this first year of implementation bring us poor results. As a result of this idea, Ione has decided to divorce itself from the district. Furthermore, the district has already decided that an exception must be made in the formula for this next year. This idea must be revisited in order to mold it to fit the needs of the district. The final definition of equity must be that we determine the best way to deliver equal educational opportunity throughout the district."

Q6- "The reason the district decided to close the

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