

# School board candidates speak out on issues

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(F13A)

By MARY GNIEWEK  
Farmington School District voters will decide June 11 who will fill two seats up for grabs on their school board.

Incumbent board vice president Michael Shpiece appears to have the available four-year seat locked up. He is running unopposed.

But four candidates are battling for a one-year spot on the board, including incumbent James McGlinicy, who was appointed by the board last July

to fill the post vacated by trustee Dr. Mervyn Ross, who retired in the middle of his four-year term. The candidate elected will serve the final year of Ross's term.

The other challengers to McGlinicy are former school board trustee, William Gravius and newcomers Megan Saunders and Michael Breckenridge. The Farmington Observer interviewed all five candidates last week. Their responses appear below.

## Mike Breckenridge

Michael Breckenridge, 37, of Farmington Hills is a banker turned electrician who lives with his wife and two sons on Stockton Drive.

Breckenridge took finance classes through the Pittsburgh chapter of the American Institute of Banking where he served on the board of directors for one and a half years.

He's a stamp and coin collector, his favorite author is James Michener, and he prefers television to movies. "Sixty Minutes" and "Battlestar Galactica" are favorite programs.

Breckenridge currently is fundraising chairman for Boy Scout Troop 162 of Farmington.

How would you deal with declining enrollment, specifically the shift in population from the east to west end of the district?

I think the district should try to utilize its present facilities. As an area becomes stable, there may be need for a new school — not burning. I've always been for neighborhood schools.

What should be the priorities of the district regarding budget cuts?

I'm hoping there won't have to be cuts. But possibly, defer major improvements, utilize existing facilities.

What curriculum priorities would you most like to see in the future?

Help for gifted children to derive as much as possible, and to see that the slow learner isn't left behind. Also, see that the average student can cope with the world of business. I've talked with several businessmen and they say students can't even fill out job applications.

Regarding the conflict of interest policy now in debate in Lansing, do you think board members should divulge financial information?

It wouldn't bother me a bit. My record is open to all. I'll give my assets and debts. If a conflict of interest arises while on the board, I'd let the public know and wouldn't make a decision on the issue.

Why do you want to be on the board?

I live in Section 26. A good community presentation was made regarding relocation of students. The board didn't really consider it as an alternative to their proposed boundary changes.

Also, I think the board is not familiar with many practical applications. They get hoodwinked on maintenance matters. They need someone with other than a business background on the board.



MIKE BRECKENRIDGE

Are you in favor of the middle school format?

Yes, if it's done in the right manner. I think the study group is on the right track on this.

Why are you running for the one-year term, not the four-year term?

Michael Shpiece is doing a good job, so I felt I'd run for a one-year term. If I don't make it this year, I'll run next year.

## Megan Saunders

At 19, Megan Saunders is the youngest candidate vying for a seat on the board. The Farmington Hills resident is a sophomore at Wayne State University, working her way through school at Green's Farm Market where she is assistant manager.

Miss Saunders likes history (the last book she read was "With Malice Toward None" by Stephen Oates), sports (she plays first base on a softball team), reading, and television comedy.

In 1977, the year she graduated from North Farmington High, she was a member of the Round Table which met with the school board.

How would you deal with declining enrollment?

The district cannot build any more new buildings. The alternative is to bus students. Some people may not like it, but you can't make everyone happy.

What should the district's priorities be concerning budget cuts?

The main thing is education, the other things are secondary. Continue with well-rounded education, keeping as many classes as possible for everyone's interest.

What should curriculum priorities be in the future?

Computers are a thing of the future. They won't go away so the district might as well utilize them. I also liked the Child Find preschool program this year.

How do you feel about the conflict of interest policy?

At this level, I don't really see it. We're not politicians. I'm not here to make money. I make \$3.25 an hour and pay billions of dollars for school.

Why do you want to be on the board?

I can contribute a new point of view. I can give things a new perspective — the student angle. For example, parents don't recognize a drug problem in the schools. But it's there, it exists. Also, women's sports have progressed in recent years. I don't want to see that fail.

Why are you running for a one-year term, not a four-year term?

I feel a one-year term will give me a chance to get experience. If I make an error, voters won't be stuck with me for four years. Maybe my effectiveness will be over in one year.

I think I qualify on the basis of con-



MEGAN SAUNDERS

cern and interest. Is it better to have someone naive or someone experienced? I think I can see a broad viewpoint.

I know people in the schools. I'm painfully aware of the cost of education. I come from a family of teachers. I see their point of view, too.

Are you in favor of the middle school?

I think it is the most effective way to deal with the problem of declining enrollment.

## William Gravius

William Gravius of Farmington Hills served four years on the Farmington Board of Education, including terms as president, vice president and treasurer. He completed his four year stint last year.

He is a wholesale marketing representative for the Marathon Oil Co. and is a graduate of Ohio State University.

Gravius is a former president of the Kenbrook School PTA and representative on the Farmington PTA Council. He's lived in the district 17 years.

Why are you running again, and why for a one year, and not a four year term?

A year ago, I decided not to run for my post because I was deeply involved in my business. Since then, I feel I have the time and dedication to give.

And of the two available terms, the one year was most attractive in my situation. I feel Mr. Shpiece has developed into a qualified and knowledgeable board member. Therefore, the only alternative I had was to run for the one year term and keep the board as stable as it presently is.

Why do you want to serve again? I ran the first time in 1973 and felt then as now I have a business background and interest in education to fulfill. I've lived in Farmington since 1962 so my children could be educated in the district.

I'm pleased with the administration and staff and want to help maintain the high quality.

How would you deal with declining enrollment?

I've been involved in the closing of five schools. I don't think building new schools is a good idea as long as we have building in the east end empty.

Busing students in units, so friends in neighborhoods stay together, is a good idea.

What should the district priorities be in the face of budget cuts?

My first and second year on the board, we had to face drastic cuts. I believe they should come in all categories. I'm a strong believer in total programming. A school should be a social learning experience, too. Learning to get along together with an emphasis on extracurricular activities: clubs, dances, forensics, athletics.

What curriculum priorities would you most like to see in the future?

Educational facilities must change with the times. Computer programs are a good idea. Preschool is important, but it's not high on my list of priorities.

How do you feel about the conflict of interest bill in debate in Lansing?

I believe anyone in public office doing business with the political area they are serving should declare any conflicts of interests.

At the level of the school board, I don't believe a person should declare personal financial income. If this was a fulltime endeavor or amounted to lots of money, then I wouldn't mind declaring it.

Are you in favor of the middle school format?

Yes, I had the opportunity to review, discuss and approve the middle school system. This is needed due to declining enrollment to better utilize the facilities in the district. It won't change the quality of education.

How was your attendance record as a board member?

I missed very few meetings. If I



WILLIAM GRAVIUS

missed a half dozen in total, I'd be surprised. My business gave me the flexibility to be in town for most meetings.

## James McGlinicy

James McGlinicy is the only board candidate who resides in the city of Farmington. He likes to bicycle around town — to the library or shopping — and enjoys the community atmosphere of the city.

A graduate of the University of Michigan, McGlinicy has 32 years experience in local administrative government. He is personnel-labor relations director at Wayne County General Hospital.

McGlinicy was appointed to the board last July, to fill the post vacated by Dr. Mervyn Ross.

How would you deal with declining enrollment?

The answer is to continue to bus and to utilize the facilities in the east end of the district. We must be careful in disposing of buildings we're closing to preserve some cushion in the event a

net loss becomes a net gain, we will have facilities.

I think the most important thing is to remember that declining enrollment does not mean declining quality of education. We will maintain our curriculum for education.

Where should the district's priorities be in the face of budget cuts?

The first concern of the board is concentration on the basic K-12 curriculum. Then as additional monies become available, expand to offer more electives.

What curriculum priorities would you most like to see in the future?

I have been particularly emphasizing the introduction of computers. Just the other night, we decided to purchase two microcomputers for each high school to be used for math and science.



JAMES MCGLINICY

This is just a beginning. I feel graduation requirements should be strengthened, too.

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## Mike Shpiece

Though he is running unopposed for another four-year term, Michael Shpiece was included in the interview to give voters a closer look at their school board vice president.

Shpiece, 22, is a graduate of Wayne State University's Monteith College and is employed as a trainee at the Institute of Gerontology.

He says his interests are school, work, and the board of education. But he also reads newspapers, plays piano, and likes television comedy.

The Harrison High graduate, a resident of Farmington Hills, formerly was a legislative aid to State Rep. Joe Forbes.

How would you deal with declining enrollment?

Embark on mandatory relocation. It would be ridiculous to build (schools) in the west while closing in the east. Projections indicate the short term boundaries will be able to handle any kind of potential growth in the next five years.

Where are your priorities, keeping budget cuts in mind?

We ought to start a systematic review of the budget. Try to take a look at programs the budget handles. Look at alternatives. Cut those things that don't affect instruction directly first. This should be done on a regular ongoing basis.

What curriculum priorities would you most like to see in the future?

The computer program — which will be an asset to the schools next year.

Another priority is the middle school. A task force must be set up to come up with curriculum to meet the needs of those sixth to eighth grade programs. The middle school has a spillover effect on the grade and high school formats. Graduation requirements should be increased. There should be more emphasis on math and science.

How do you feel about the conflict of interest policy?

I think it's important in terms of reassuring the public of the competence and honesty of politicians and in terms of setting guidelines ourselves. I testified in favor of it in Lansing.



MIKE SHPIECE

Why do you want to be on the board for another four years?

I think the last four years have been rewarding. I hope I've had some impact on the board. I feel prepared to make another four year commitment. I'd like to continue on if the voters support me.

How is your attendance record at board meetings?

Good question. I haven't missed a meeting in four years.

**Vote June 11  
for trustees**