

Farmington School candidates meet in final debate

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"Being a training manager qualifies me as a good candidate," said Buck. "I offer a business balance to the board. I can help replace the business background lost by Mr. McGilley's departure."

"The board must have fiscal responsibility," Buck said. "We need to be sure we are providing a product that people want."

"We must involve 70 percent of the school-district population who don't have children in schools but who support the schools."

Fitzpatrick has been in the Farmington school district for five years. With three children in school, she would be the only board member with a child in elementary school.

"WE NEED to get back to the basics — reading, writing and arithmetic,"

Fitzpatrick said.

She would like to see the teachers stimulated more through in-service programs and pilot programs.

"I have been involved. I am very informed and I do care about the system," Fitzpatrick said.

Running for her third term on the school board, Pritow defended the school-district operation.

"I feel the accomplishments of the last eight years to be successful, especially the move into middle schools and the move of ninth graders into high school."

Excellence in education is a very big goal of the district, said Pritow.

"I do believe we can have excellence and equity in education and that is what we here in Farmington are concerned with," Pritow said.

Following their speeches, each candidate had a chance to field questions from the audience.

The Farmington Branch of American Association of University Women, who sponsored the event, required questions from the audience to be submitted for screening to avoid duplication.

One question asked the candidates about the use of buildings and personnel in the face of decreasing enrollment, and would enrollment increase in the future.

STARRETT said "It is very important not to allow someone way out of their field to teach subjects they aren't qualified to."

"Teacher training and retraining must be a bigger part of the school budget," said candidate Buck.

BOTH BUCK and Fitzgerald agreed that in order to minimize teacher displacement residents should write to their legislators and demand stronger teacher certification.

STARRETT SAID school building closings "should be done with the consensus and approval of people in the community. We should cut out program coordinators and administrative before cutting programs."

"It has to be a traumatic experience to close any school. The decision must be made on a one-by-one basis," said Buck who also feels enrollment will level off.

Fitzpatrick answered the same question saying "Districts should be sympathetic to parents and children during school closings. It is much harder on parents than it is on children."

Another question read: "What choice does the school board have on retraining displaced teachers and what can be done to minimize displacement?"

Pritow said the minimizing must be done by legislators at the state level.

"A good, solid, in-service program to help teachers would be a good idea. We have done some, but we need to do more," Pritow said.

"In-service should be mandatory," Abernathy agreed, "when a teacher is uncomfortable with a subject they are

Opinion was split among the candidates about whether the state should establish minimum graduation requirements.

"We should look at what we have now and how effective it is before we add more (requirements) to it," Abernathy responded.

Fitzpatrick said the state should not establish minimum graduation requirements.

"Work with your school board and your system — it would be much better that way," Fitzgerald said.

Fitzgerald said the state should establish minimum standards, but said they should begin much earlier, at the elementary school level.

Buck agreed.

"The school board and community should set a higher standard and demand excellence from students," he said.

Pritow said the present requirements were "OK," but she would like to see math, English and science requirements increased.

Walled Lake readies for election

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McMullen said that while unions may be prominent in Michigan, Williams International is a non-union company. "If cooperation is lost, strikes can be avoided," he said, but added that the right to strike is necessary as a last resort.

Wolfe said he understands the need for people to withhold services if they feel they have gone as far as they can through the negotiating process.

"Should the confidentiality of closed board sessions be maintained?" another audience member asked.

Breen and Wolfe both said the confidentiality of closed board sessions should be protected. "The Open Meetings Act specifically states what can be behind closed doors," Wolfe said, noting that where litigation or union negotiations are involved, the privacy of board discussions is needed.

"As a general rule, things should not be closed up," McMullen said. However, "at rare times" because of legal matters, for example, the confidentiality of closed meetings should be maintained.

"The confidentiality of closed sessions should not be protected," Scavold said. "Citizens deserve to know all the

facts involved in decision making... whatever stance the board has to take, it should be public."

STATE LAW requires that the board provide, upon an employee's request, a closed meeting when the employee is being considered for dismissal, suspension or disciplining. Students also are entitled under state law to a closed session with the school board when they are being considered for dismissal, suspension or disciplining.

The board is permitted, under the state's Open Meetings Act (Public Act 267, 1976), to hold closed meetings when considering buying property, when negotiating contracts, when discussing litigation or reviewing a job application which the candidate has requested remain confidential.

The four school board candidates also were asked whether revenue from the new tax rate, approved by district voters last December, is being spent properly.

"By and large the money is being appropriately spent," McMullen said. "But we need to look at the future." Some areas may need to be cut to maintain the educational program in the forefront of the district's priorities, he added.

Stating he believed the money is being spent properly, Scavold noted a projected \$3 million deficit in the district's general fund this year. (In fact, with passage of the December tax, the business office projects an approximate \$1.5 million surplus at the end of the 1983-84 fiscal year. Had the tax not passed, the district would have faced a deficit of approximately \$1.2 million this year.)

Wolfe agreed the money is being spent in areas the board said it would be, noting more specifically that new allocations for buses, textbooks and roof repairs have been approved. But he also noted that at the end of the five-year plan, the business office projects the district will be "back at a break-even point." For that reason, the board needs to find "innovative, imaginative ideas for increasing and maximizing the dollars," he said.

BREEN SAID that, as promised, the laid-off teachers were brought back, new allocations for libraries were made and other promised improvements are in the works. But he noted that maintaining a healthy savings may help secure fiscal stability for the future. "It makes a big difference if we, as a district, are earning interest or paying interest," he said. A minimum fund equity (savings) needs to be established and maintained to "help avoid a future crisis."

Breen, McMullen, Scavold and Wolfe all agreed communication between the board and the administration, the board and employees, and the board and the community needs to be improved. They recommended increased community involvement and a greater demonstration of respect for administrators.

Fireman helps kids

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GARR LIKES working with younger children because they are the next generation of adults.

"Fire fighters are trying to change from emphasizing fire suppression to fire prevention," Garr said. "I'm trying to raise a generation of fire-safe adults."

For the children at Fairview, the most exciting part of Garr's presentation came when he and his assistant, firefighter Kathleen McNamara, showed Squad No. 2 from the station.

The children patiently lined up alongside a fire hose outstretched on the ground and connected to the fire truck.

Under Garr's supervision, the children and their teachers held onto the hose as it became filled with water. Garr then demonstrated how far the water can reach and the different types of spray emitted from the hose.

In concluding his presentation, Garr showed how the emergency lights on the truck work, and, to the surprise of the children, gave a loud, sharp blast of the truck's siren.

"That is so if you can't see the fire truck coming down the road you can at least hear it."

Judging from the smiles and amazement on the children's faces, Garr made a very favorable impression on the children at Fairview.

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1. If elected to the Clarencerville Board of Education, what will be your top three priorities for public education for the school district?

1. To ensure that adequate programs exist to prepare students for life after school years. 2. To ensure that adequate programs exist to prepare grade school children for middle school. 3. Fiscal integrity and responsibility.

2. In view of the downsizing of enrollment in your district, what do you see as a future for the Clarencerville school system?

Downsizing will change the amounts of money available for the system and

those changes will have to be addressed as they occur.

3. Do you support the efforts in Congress for school prayer or tuition tax credit?

No.

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