

On board

Inch, Webb: 2 proven leaders

Jack Inch and Cathy Webb have shown the leadership and commitment needed to serve as trustees of the Farmington Public School District. Voters should re-elect both incumbents on Monday, June 8.

As the two longest serving board members, Inch and Webb offer a combined 28 years of knowledge and understanding of board issues and history. That experience will continue to serve the community well in the future, as it has in the past.

The district has a number of points of pride in recent years, and many of those issues involve listening to the community. A few years back, the district began putting an emphasis on offering middle school youngsters something to do in those critical after-school-but-before-the-folks-get-home hours of 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Now, it has four after-school teen drop-in sites with busing provided.

At the same time, district students maintained relatively steady test scores, moved toward inclusion and expanded choice options. The district has also tried to ensure equity and access for all students, cultivated a broader acceptance of all cultures and races, and expanded the role that the business community plays in education. Ask Realtors, this is a district people want.

If anyone deserves credit for these efforts and accomplishments, it's the school board. And that includes Inch and Webb.

It's easy to nitpick people who have been unabashed advocates of education and leaders



Inch



Webb

on the board. This newspaper hasn't always agreed with every decision or vote of both incumbents. Most recently, we differed with Webb — and agreed with Inch — on the decision by the board to spend about 20 percent of the Durant lawsuit money that was returned to the district, and only give 80 percent of the money back to voters as a tax reduction.

On the other hand, we supported the district's bond issue drives of last year. And we credit the board members — including Inch and Webb — with listening to the voters' rejection of the first \$110 million request by trimming the total size and offering two choices for voters the second time the issue was put on the ballot. Voters agreed too.

Inch and Webb offer different styles and specialties. Neither one, however, has been afraid to vote against the rest of the board or take a stand.

Inch brings a cut-through-the-crap style that many say helps frame debates and issues. He's an educator who defends an educational bureaucracy that some critics find an easy target. Why so defensive? Ask questions later, he says, so as not to embarrass or find a scapegoat in public. He's also dead-set against board micromanagement. Mostly, those are admirable qualities.

Webb is well-respected both in the educational community and beyond. She's very accessible and strongly touts the district's role in developing responsible citizens as well as academic achievers.

Credit the other three candidates with a clean, honest presentation of issues. We especially encourage more open debate and explanation of votes by board members and even more initiatives by the board for inclusion — of the public.

In the end, it's the experience and leadership provided by Jack Inch and Cathy Webb that cinch their value on the board.

Our picks in Clarenceville, WL

Time is nearing for this year's school elections throughout Michigan, with election day scheduled for this Monday, June 8. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

For the three seats open in the Clarenceville school district, which includes residents in southeast Farmington Hills, we recommend incumbent Gary Garrison and challenger John Shaw for four-year terms and newcomer Crystal Wanack for the two-year term.

Lifelong district resident Garrison currently serves as vice president of the Clarenceville board and president of the Alumni and Friends Foundation. With the changes occurring this year on the board, Garrison's re-election will lend a sense of continuity to the board; as a four-year veteran, he will be the trustee with the most experience.

We are also impressed with newcomers Shaw, a Walled Lake educator who has lived in the district since 1985 and Wanack, a licensed nursing home administrator who has daughters in the district.

These candidates offer a thoughtful, level-

headed viewpoint, something that's needed today in public education.

For residents in northwest Farmington Hills, in the Walled Lake Consolidated School District, we endorse incumbents Thomas McConnell and Randolph G. Ston.

Incumbents Ston and McConnell not only have experience with redistricting as board members, both voted down the current redistricting plan because they believed it could have been done better.

They also have offered some unique suggestions on growth, showing a strong desire to involve the community in various issues.

McConnell suggested building elementary schools for lower grades instead of redistricting. And both candidates support constant study of the rising population, involving residents, to make well-informed decisions about where children will be sent to school.

All of the candidates are qualified and have children in the district. But we believe the incumbents, McConnell and Ston, have demonstrated their ability to act in the best interests of the district.

Find ways to hike voter turnouts

Any day now, state representatives will take up a package of bills designed — so some say — to encourage higher turnouts in school elections. Western Wayne County's Sen. Loren Bennett, R-Canton, is sponsor of part of the package.

We see flaws in the package and warn the House to make key amendments.

The idea of higher turnouts is laudable. We have seen some turnouts in June elections as low as 3 percent; it's so bad that anything over 10 percent is considered great; and a turnout of 25 percent is volcanic.

A low turnout allows special interest groups to tilt the results. It's not necessary to name particular ideologies or unions.

The Senate bills would schedule school elections in November of even-numbered years. That would be bad. That ballot already is too long, with congressional, state, legislative, counties, townships, trial judges, appellate judges, State Board of Education, state university boards and state ballot proposals.

School board elections would wind up at the bottom of the nonpartisan ballot, utterly lost. The Senate bills, if adopted, would assure us of higher turnouts but at the terrible cost of loss of voter interest due to "ballot fatigue."

Here's what we see as an ideal school election law:

■ Lump all education elections into one ballot — State Board, three universities, community colleges and local school boards — perhaps

in May. Education would be the sole focus. School people dislike the idea of mixing partisan state with nonpartisan local elections. That concern is without merit. Much more would be gained through making education the sole focus.

■ Confine elections to four dates per year — say, a Tuesday in February, May, August and November. School boards seeking bond issue approval could pick from those four dates. No more odd dates to wear down the public.

■ Put cities and townships in charge of all elections, including schools. At present, Michigan has a hodge-podge system. The result is that some folks vote on school issues in their city or township precincts, while others vote in different school precincts. There is no excuse for requiring voters to remember two different voting precincts. This last proposal already is in the Senate package.

As a rule, Michiganders are peppered with special elections on special dates. Some school administrators and unions like it that way, because they can get "their people" out to vote. Where such an attitude exists, we deplore it.

Education is too important an issue to warrant a 3 percent turnout or to place at the bottom of a bedsheet ballot.

Say you oppose November elections for schools and prefer a single date for all state and local educational posts when you write to your state representative, State Capitol, P.O. Box 30014, Lansing 48909.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Tell us about your first car?



We asked this question at the classic car display Monday in downtown Farmington.

Dennis Koss
Farmington Hills



"A '66 Pontiac GTO. We dated it; got married with it; sold it. It took us (almost) 30 years to find another one."

Jim Crawford
Livonia



"An '85 Pontiac Fiero GT. My dad bought it for me as a graduation present."

Debbie Adkins
Livonia



"A '51 Ford. It was a stick shift. I got it home and couldn't drive it. My brother had to teach me."

Marcia Larabee
Farmington Hills

LETTERS

Jaske breaks status quo

Melody Jaske is an active citizen-parent who is ready and able to assume leadership on the Farmington school board. As a fellow OM coach, I've seen first-hand her ability and enthusiasm in cultivating young children's creative talents. She is well known and liked in community based groups. She is experienced in working constructively with parents, teachers, and administrators. As PTA Council Treasurer, she has skills sorely needed after the school bond passage.

Melody Jaske's presence on the board will add a breath of fresh air to a membership that has long relied on the status quo. She alone has had the courage to side with the parents on the discredited MEAP testing. This testing has proven of little value for Farmington students, serving only to hold back our most gifted and talented students. Melody Jaske has what it takes to transform our present school system into a world class institution. Only then will Farmington students have an equal opportunity to compete in the globalized job markets of the 21st century.

Melody may not have the best campaign taxpayers money can buy. She doesn't have a school board behind her passing out election day candy in the form of \$15 Durant decision rebates; money that rightfully belongs to Farmington's Special Education children. Melody does have the best wishes of many parents. They share her vision of schools that develop each student's individual gifts and talents, and doesn't just look at our children as faceless names in overcrowded rooms. I urge your vote of confidence for Melody Jaske on June 8.

Eric Borregard
Farmington Hills

Jaske's voice needed

From the candidates' debate for the Farmington school board, it is easy to see why a change is necessary and a new perspective is needed. When one incumbent member used the excuse for only returning 80 percent of the Durant lawsuit money to the taxpayers, (that incumbent said) that this money (the 20 percent of \$9.5 million) was needed to provide for the needs of handicapped students in the district. If this was so important, which it definitely is, why was \$700,000 spent first on lights for a football field? Let's get our priorities in order. That is why it is so clear that a new voice is needed to represent the students and taxpayers of the Farmington area and that person is Melody Jaske for the Farmington school board.

Bill Smith
Farmington Hills

Jaske concerned

I met Melody Jaske as she was going door-to-door and her concern that our students receive the best education possible convinced me she would be a wonderful addition to the Farmington school board. As a parent and involved community member, Melody Jaske believes every child needs to be challenged to reach his fullest potential to be a contributing member of our community and society. This is in line with the Farmington Public Schools mission statement that "each student become a thoughtful, contributing citizen" and I believe Melody Jaske is the best candidate to fulfill that mission.

Marian Jones
Farmington Hills

Inch has history, reason

Farmington voters should re-elect Jack Inch in Monday's school board election.

I served with Jack when we were both on the board. He was a voice of progress and reason; a man who was capable of succinctly encapsulating a debate and framing the key issues in a simple and understandable manner. Moreover, he is the only board member who has been around long enough to have known and lived through the history of the district. (The next most senior member has served only eight years.)

Jack Inch has been a fine board member and deserves re-election.

Michael R. Shpiece
Farmington Hills

Incumbents failed us

If your second grader can read and spell 24,000 words, re-elect the incumbents for school board. If your fourth grader knows all of his math facts and can calculate accurately, re-elect the incumbents. If your sixth grader writes legibly and can correctly use "they're, their and there" in his essays, re-elect the people who chose Farmington's curriculum.

However, if your child lacks these basic grade level skills or you've had to hire outside tutors, vote for somebody else!

You send your child to school for academic skills and knowledge in what should be a safe and disciplined environment. School board members make those decisions that determine the quality of your child's education. So, are you completely satisfied? Or are private schools and home schooling looking better and better? Vote June 8 for either, Jaske, Katz or Mahmood and let's revive academic standards in our public schools.

Patricia A. Alspach
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power