

2017 VOTER GUIDE

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS DULUTH



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ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS:

The League of Women Voters is non-partisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE:

The LWV Duluth Voter Guide is a non-partisan and impartial guide that has been compiled and published following procedures established by the League of Women Voters of the United States and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota. The purpose of the Voter Guide is to give area voters the opportunity to understand candidate positions on issues of importance this election.

Every candidate in each race listed in this guide was invited to participate. In accordance with the empty-chair policy of the League of Women Voters, if an invited candidate did not respond or declined to participate, a notation has been made in the guide. Each candidate received the same set of questions and had a specified word limit of 250 words per response. Responses exceeding 250 words have been truncated. Candidate responses have not been edited for content or typographical error.

LWV DULUTH NON-PARTISAN POLICY:

The purpose of the League of Women Voters is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens of government. The non-partisanship of LWV is the basis of our public credibility and must be carefully maintained. LWV does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. It is political in that it takes position on selected governmental issues after member study and agreement.

QUESTIONS:

If you have questions about this Voter Guide or would like more information about the League of Women Voters Duluth, please email lwvduluth@lwvmn.org or call (218) 724-0132. Visit our website at: www.lwvduluth.org.

2017 VOTING INFORMATION

GENERAL ELECTION:

November 7, 2017

SAMPLE BALLOT

www.duluthmn.gov/cityclerk



Additional Dates to Remember:

September 22, 2017

October 17, 2017

Early Voting Begins

Last Day to Pre-Register

Where is my polling place?

Polling Place Finder - Secretary of State website

View your sample ballot

What's on my ballot - Secretary of State website

Election Day Voting Information

Election Day Voting - Secretary of State website

BALLOT QUESTION

In 2017, there will be one City Question on the Ballot.

Ballot language and instructions:

Voters will have the following ballot instructions and question on their ballot on November 7, 2017:

0.5% General Sales Tax for Street Maintenance

Should the city of Duluth request the Minnesota State legislature to authorize the city to enact a 0.5% general sales and use tax on sales and use of goods and services as currently applied within the city for a term of up to 25 years from the date of first collection thereof dedicated to funding implementation of the city's designated Street Improvement Program?

A "yes" vote means you favor the city of Duluth requesting authority to enact a 0.5% sales and use tax dedicated to fund the Street Improvement Program.

A "no" vote means you do not favor the city of Duluth requesting the authority to enact a 0.5% sales and use tax dedicated to funding the Street Improvement Program.

Yes

No

DULUTH CITY COUNCILOR AT-LARGE

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE ZACK FILIPOVICH:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for Duluth City Council.

I grew up in the East Hillside neighborhood next to Chester Creek. After graduating from Duluth Central High School I went on to earn my Bachelors of Accounting degree from the UMD. As an accountant at a small family accounting firm I help people and small businesses better understand their financial situation to make the best use of their resources.

I was elected as the youngest city councilor in our history in 2013, and last year as Council President. I brought forward the Earned Sick and Safe Time initiative and appointed the task force currently working to bring this important benefit to all workers. This year was my 6th year going to our State Capital as a part of Duluth & St. Louis County Days to lobby on behalf of our city and community projects. I have built solid working relationships with other public officials in the region on the County Board and with our state representatives. I am currently the Treasurer for the Duluth Economic Development Authority. Previously, I was the Treasurer to the Duluth 1200 Fund, where I voted to grant low interest loans to small businesses to hire additional workers with wage requirements.

I am running for re-election because everyone deserves to make a life here. My values come from my parents and grandparents who taught me to always stand up for working people, to protect our environment, and most importantly, to never forget where we come from. Those values still motivate me today.

CANDIDATE JANET KENNEDY:

My name is Janet Kennedy, and I am running for Duluth City Council At Large, because I believe a community can survive and prosper as a whole when we are all walking on even ground. Inequality hurts everyone. It's time to make a difference by voting for change to secure a more inclusive city leadership.

I am a mother of two and a grandmother of nine, and I have worked in the Physical Therapy field for twenty-five years. I am a senior at UWS Superior completing a bachelor's degree in health and human services. I am a homeowner, daughter of a veteran, motorcycle and bicycle enthusiast, dog owner, adult child caring for an aging parent, business owner, an organizer and an advocate. I am also a lifelong Duluthian that successfully utilized community services to get ahead and overcome as a single mother.

One of the things I have learned through church and my mother is to give back through community service. I have gained practical skills through volunteering and working with all types of people. My extensive expertise professionally and as a community leader will bring a unique perspective of life experience that would fill a gap on the city council. Policies affect everyone differently. The more diverse our policy-making table is, the better our solutions will be.

more equitable. I think one thing we can do is encourage city officials, organization board members, and all citizens of our city to take this agenda seriously as best practices in creating a growing, vibrant city.

One key factor in this document discusses the importance of representation in city government. One way to start dealing with racial inequities is immediately available in our current election: Vote for Kennedy!

CANDIDATE BARB RUSS:

Racial divides have long plagued Duluth. The Duluth Human Rights Commission should focus on discriminatory housing complaints, as well as other matters involving race. The DPD and other department employees should get regular training regarding race issues. The Commission and the Human Rights Office must be supported with staff and resources in order to be effective. The City of Duluth should be sure that hiring policies do not make it difficult for people of color to be eligible for job openings. The City should also work with other employers to be sure that policies are fair and do not make it difficult for applicants of color to be considered for job openings.

The city should work with community organizations to create opportunities for people of various cultures and races to meet and get to know each other. This can be difficult for some people but many people would appreciate the opportunity.

CANDIDATE RICH UPDEGROVE:

A clear racial and cultural divide in Duluth is the eleven-year difference in life-expectancy depending on what neighborhood you live in. Wealth and income inequality have reached a crisis level in our country and Duluth has not been spared. The vast majority of us do not have the protections and benefits that come with a union job. Without those workplace protections, 46% of workers in Duluth lack access to paid sick and safe time, women do not receive equal pay for equal work, and the minimum wage remains far below a living wage. We need city councilors who will take bold and courageous stances to address these disparities.

I have taught in a variety of schools over the past decade including private, charter, and public schools, schools that cost over \$10,000 a year to attend, and schools where over 90% of the students are on free/reduced lunch. We know as teachers that students are at a nearly insurmountable disadvantage when they are under-nourished, live in inadequate housing, and do not have access to healthcare. As a city councilor I plan on addressing those basic issues and expect to see great improvements as housing becomes more affordable, safe and sick time is available to all, and healthcare initiatives are put into place such as the neighborhood schools programs that are being developed. We also need to work cooperatively with the school board as city councilors to make it a mission to close the shameful gaps in educational success in our city.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE ZACK FILIPOVICH:

Duluth has been recognized nationally for its outdoor recreational opportunities. What can the City Council do to protect the regional environment, including Lake Superior?

Duluth must lead by example locally to sustain and preserve our environment for future generations. As someone who walks to work most days, I will continue to push for policies that promote walkability. I will continue to support Mayor Larson's initiative towards an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050. Duluth has fostered good partnerships to begin setting up the infrastructure needed for solar energy. Duluth has partnered with community organizations and local businesses to create an electric power vehicle solar charging station in Canal Park. I sponsored a resolution to create higher density zoning, to reduce reliance on fossil-fueled transportation and voted in favor of bike lane infrastructure. I also sponsored a resolution to increase our city's recycling rate in our public spaces.

A significant part of our ability to reach that 2050 goal is the Steam Plant Conversion project, which burns over \$2 million dollars in coal and runs warm wastewater into our lake. I am proud to have advocated for the conversion project since the publishing of the Duluth Steam Plant Master Plan in 2013. I have lobbied in St. Paul for Duluth & St. Louis County Days for the last 6 years, two of which were focused on this. We were successful at receiving partial funding and will continue to lobby for the full funding. I will continue to work on local environmental priorities like the Steam Plant Conversion Project, renovating our outdated and leaky utility systems, supporting community-wide recycling programs and stream restoration projects.

CANDIDATE JANET KENNEDY:

Water is one of our most valuable resources. Clean water is a quality of life and a healthy equity issue. Fishing and hanging out in and around Lake Superior and the St Louis River all of my life, I have enjoyed many days on the rivers and creeks swimming, boating, biking, and walking. I have been watching very closely and participating in many stakeholder and community meetings about the corridor habitat restoration projects and the Lake Superior watersheds. I have read and provided input as a Planning Commissioner regarding Environmental Worksheets (EAW) from the Pollution Control Agency as part of a review process to minimize negative environmental impacts for proposed developments. I am a stakeholder participant for the Brownfields Area-Wide Planning, and have weighed in on project planning for proposals like the Hartley Nature Center.

As a city councilor, I will be diligent in supporting resiliency and sustainability for all our neighborhoods. Revitalization is key to promoting economic growth while preserving the natural beauty of our open spaces. The DNR and the MPCA both play a critical role in setting standards for positive and negative health impacts for mining and the river corridor projects. It is important to continue efforts for educating our whole community for potential impacts to Lake Superior and our groundwater from mining, invasive species control, and pollution.

CANDIDATE BARB RUSS:

Duluth has a long history of not controlling runoff into Lake Superior, as well as issues with storm sewer overflow and sand/salt contamination from our winter snow removal programs. We must look at our own backyard and do the best we can to eliminate or alleviate these issues of water contamination.

CANDIDATE RICH UPDEGROVE:

Protecting Lake Superior and our regional environment is an essential duty in the job description for a Duluth City Councilor.

What would Duluth be if we did not live on the planet's largest body of fresh water? Lake Superior is central to our economic well-being, to the beauty of our natural environment, and to our identity as Duluthians. We must always stand up for our water and recognize that any threat to our lake is a threat to all of us. Our city councilors defend our livelihoods when they defend our lake, and we need to know we can count on them when our water needs protectors.

The St. Louis River Corridor, its watershed and wetlands are put directly in danger by irresponsible and impractical mining proposals. The environmental concerns alone should be enough to oppose copper-sulfide mining in the region, but the economic costs are also compelling when considering the funds that we have invested in the neighborhoods along the St. Louis River corridor in West Duluth.

I enthusiastically support Mayor Larson's environmental goals and her pledge for carbon reduction. Converting the city's steam plant to natural gas is a step in the right direction. I fully support the Duluth Energy Coalition's work and research toward further reducing carbon emissions in our city and their efforts to improve renewable energy production in Duluth—from using solar and wind, to biomass and wastewater energy capture. As a city councilor, I will enthusiastically work to make Duluth a 100% renewable energy city.

QUESTION 8:

The City has recently experienced several severe weather events, what actions should the City take, if any, to plan for these types of emergency events? Please address emergency response and potential budget impacts.

CANDIDATE ZACK FILIPOVICH:

The city must continue to foster good relationships with partners who are able to do the important safety work of clearing transportation routes, repairing water, gas and electrical grids and clearing and cleaning debris after major storms like we have seen. In the long term, we must do what we can to prevent and continue to prepare for these types of severe weather events.

There are local, tangible measures Duluth can implement to combat the negative effects of climate change and natural disasters. I will continue to focus on local environmental priorities like the Steam Plant Conversion Project, renovating our outdated and leaky utility systems and supporting stream restoration and preservation projects - all which have an impact on our streams and water. State funding, utility fees and allocation of reserve dollars for one time capital improvement projects is how we pay for them. This vision is important, as we have seen time again that when water and other utilities are broken, the health and safety of our most vulnerable are affected the most.

I am so proud to have supported the work to clean up the St. Louis River/Estuary that has been and is being done. In the St. Louis River Corridor there are 28 projects, \$18 million of which will be paid for to leverage more than \$32 million in grants. This is an excellent example of past progress, but we need to keep that momentum going.

CANDIDATE JANET KENNEDY:

Living in Duluth we experience severe weather every winter. The city's main job in this situation is to provide safety and mobility of its citizens. Currently we have a snow and ice policy that lays out a planned and orderly control of snow and ice coordinated by the street maintenance, park and traffic maintenance, and city staff. These work groups are carefully coordinated to ensure an effective cost benefit service.

Unplanned weather events and emergency response actions have an impact on our

services and our budget. When these events occur, we incur the costs to have services provided by our hard-working city employees. Over 83% of our general fund expenses pay for salaries, and benefits. With health care costs rising and local government aid not keeping pace with inflation this adds pressure to an already tight budget, and potentially raises property taxes.

CANDIDATE BARB RUSS:

The 2012 floods and the more recent windstorms were not anticipated and nor could we anticipate the same in the future. There are many streams that run underground and can pop up without warning, causing unexpected street or property damage. Annual review of Duluth and St Louis County's Emergency Management Plans are key in making sure we are all aware of what to do when an emergency arises.

CANDIDATE RICH UPDEGROVE:

As Mayor Larson noted in her 2017 State of the City address, "Let me state unequivocally, here in Duluth, we believe that climate change is real. We can't solve it alone. But we can begin mending the part of the world that we can reach." In recognition of that statement, the current budget proposal includes a long-term investment in solar energy production for the city of Duluth that will both reduce our city's contribution to global climate change and eventually generate revenue for the city. Noting that the flood of 2012 falls into the category of a once-every-hundred-years storm, it is important to realize that those phrases are no longer a reality. We will have traumatic floods of similar devastation in the future and we must be more prepared for them. Similarly, the wind storm of 2016 that left areas like Hunter's Park without electricity for nearly a week, also brought us perilously close to losing running water as pumping stations came within a half-hour of eclipsing back power generators. We could convert pumping stations, which make up a disproportionate percentage of our city's energy use, to renewable energy sources. This would make them both more reliable and provide an added layer of public safety during severe weather events.

QUESTION 9:

In your opinion, what are the three most important challenges facing the City and how do you propose to address these challenges?

CANDIDATE ZACK FILIPOVICH:

1. We have seen enormous growth in our city, but until our vast economic and social disparities are addressed, that growth will never be sustainable. Over 22% of our neighbors live in poverty, the majority of whom are people of color. We need to bring more living wage jobs into Duluth and support local businesses that put our workers first. Duluth must also focus on affordable housing.
2. Our local infrastructure, both streets and water systems are getting older. In some areas of Duluth we still have wood pipes. We need to continue to ensure the health and safety of our infrastructure network by continuing to invest in our streets and water systems. There are no easy answers, but growing our tax base will help with this issue long-term.
3. Public safety issues like our opioid crisis and housing crisis need to be tackled holistically. Support our community members and organizations on the front lines of our opioid epidemic is critical. Our city staff are all committed to their working both preventing and addressing these issues and Duluth is stronger and safer when our city's health and safety staff have the resources they need and should not have to rely on grants for our basic public safety equipment and training.

CANDIDATE JANET KENNEDY:

Health Equity

Duluth neighborhoods within five miles of each other have an 11-year difference in life expectancy. In my roles with Health in All Policies, Healthy Alliances Matter Consulting, and as a Parish Nurse, I have seen firsthand how all people need holistic approaches that nurture them physically, mentally, and spiritually in order to thrive. I pledge that I will be responsive to the concerns and needs of everyone in all Duluth neighborhoods.

Social Justice and Human Rights

Many individuals in our community face systemic barriers, unintentional consequences, and racial inequities that prevent them from getting ahead, which led me to co-found the Cross-Cultural Alliance of Duluth, an organization promoting justice, leadership, education, health and wellness for all. I will be a strong advocate for human rights so all citizens have equal opportunities.

Community Resiliency and Sustainability

Whether it's inadequate housing, allocation of resources, economic and job opportunities, transportation equity, fair food access, or environmental protections, Duluth faces many challenges. My work with the Mayor's Imagine Duluth 2035 Vision Committee and the City of Duluth Planning Commission has shown me that the best way to meet the needs of community members is to listen and value all concerns and practical solutions openly.

CANDIDATE BARB RUSS:

The three most important challenges facing Duluth are Opioid addiction, streets and infrastructure, and housing.

- a) Duluth PD must work with the Medical Community to reduce opioid use and treat this as a health issue, and not solely as a criminal justice issue (except for the dealers that are bringing opioids into the city.)
- b) If the mayor's plan for funding street repairs goes forward, we will be able to repair the streets. If not we will need to consider bonding for the cost to repair.
- c) I have discussed housing issues above. In addition to that discussion we need to focus on senior housing throughout the city.

CANDIDATE RICH UPDEGROVE:

Three important challenges facing Duluth are economic inequality, a decrease in Local Government Aid, and a failure to recognize the vital role that our city council plays in protecting the quality of life for all Duluthians.

I will work to foster a local economy that can sustain a city of nearly 90,000 people. That means implementing an Earned Sick and Safe Time ordinance that will improve the lives of nearly half of Duluthians. This basic quality of life issue will also help Duluth's businesses by ensuring a healthier and more productive workforce for a minimal cost.

Another challenge is the decrease in Local Government Aid, which accounts for about 1/3 of our city's budget. That is especially true if the 2018 election brings a state government that removes worker protections and dismantles the social safety net that keeps Duluth a vibrant and thriving city. This is one reason why paying an additional half-cent per one dollar spent is a sustainable way to address the perpetual issue of improving of our streets.

Lastly, it is the defining role of a city council to take political actions to protect our city, its natural resources, and its people. This is why “corporate interference” or preemption legislation has to be resisted. It is a sad state of affairs for the Duluth City Council that 59 other cities passed resolutions against preemption before Duluth even made an attempt. Passing by a 5-4 vote was likely a positive result of this contested At-Large city council election.

QUESTION 10: **CANDIDATE ZACK FILIPOVICH:**

If elected, what would your top three priorities be for the City, and how do you propose to implement them given budgetary constraints?

Economic Equity

I will continue to use my experience on the Council to drive progressive policy. As President of the City Council I was proud to create the Earned Safe and Sick Time taskforce. No one should have to choose between getting better and getting a paycheck. With stronger economic equity, Duluth has the resources needed to provide for public safety, infrastructure or our environment and open spaces.

Infrastructure

Duluth’s infrastructure needs work. We have over 400 miles of city streets and many more miles of sewer and water pipes. I will continue to look for innovative and equitable ways to coordinate with the County, and MnDOT and other partners to take advantage of existing projects - so we don’t do work twice. As the Secretary for the Duluth Economic Development Authority for the last two years, I am proud to have voted for project labor agreements and developments that will create jobs and housing for people in Duluth.

Public Health & Safety

I will continue to support building on our community-based public safety model to combat our opioid crisis and support our most vulnerable residents. It is important that we acknowledge that we can’t arrest our problems away and we need to work to provide the care those suffering from addiction. We need to work with the county to increase the capacity of our drug court so that we can ensure that those suffering from addiction are not receiving punitive action from our regular court systems.

CANDIDATE JANET KENNEDY:

- Everyone in our city must do well to sustain Duluth’s progress. Historically and currently people of color, and indigenous communities face economic and social disparities affecting their life expectancies. Everyone needs access to the necessary means to get the basics in life. There is more than one way to get there and I am open to exploring diverse options.
- Much of our city development has been positive, but I have also witnessed the creation of policies that decrease the number of affordable housing opportunities. We need to be more discerning about our current housing and infrastructure resources and set policy priorities based on current and future needs. As a committee member of the Imagine Duluth 2035 Vision Committee and working on the Health in All Policies campaign, we added health and fairness language to the governing principles in the Comprehensive Plan to promote policies that invest, advance, and maximize equity in housing, transportation, economic development, open spaces, and energy.
- Living wage jobs and earned safe and sick time (ESST). Working families and individuals should have the ability to care for themselves and their family members. The well-being of employees and job satisfaction is directly tied to

productivity and retention. Everyone faces challenges in their lives when things don't go as planned. I look forward to learning more on how the task force is moving forward with the policy language and how to balance the needs of the workers and the sustainability of small businesses.

CANDIDATE BARB RUSS:

My top three priorities for Duluth are housing, streets and infrastructure, and the disparities in health and income. I want to live in a City that provides Opportunity For All.

CANDIDATE RICH UPDEGROVE:

My priorities are to advocate for the youth of Duluth, protect Lake Superior and its watershed, and improve the quality of life for those who struggle most in our city. I stressed these issues at our campaign's kickoff event at the Central Hillside Community Center, and continue to do so on our website at www.UpdegroveForDuluth.org. After the city council refused to stand up for our lake and our drinking water, and delayed the implementation of an earned sick and safe time ordinance, while the gap in quality of life for the people in our city continued to grow—I became convinced that a new voice was needed on our city's council.

Having worked with Duluth's homeless youth program and grown up in a trailer park where my parents still live, I am determined to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable in Duluth. For years the city council has struggled to turn a Homeless Persons' Bill of Rights resolution into an enforceable ordinance, but a commitment for funding is needed. It is a moral imperative that we dedicate city funds to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness in an environment that has freezing temperature more than six months of every year. One of the most likely ways to accomplish this is through reallocation of funding that already exists in the Parks and Recreation budget. I will work with the Duluth Police Department, the Human Rights Commission, the Homeless Coalition, and Mayor Larson to make this a reality.

DULUTH CITY COUNCILOR SECOND DISTRICT

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for Duluth City Council.

I came to Duluth nearly 25 years ago with my wife, Claire Kirch, to take a job teaching History at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, where I still work. We fell in love with Duluth – its strong sense of community, its vibrant cultural life, and the commitment of its residents to civic involvement. We put down roots, raised our daughter here, and became active in Duluth's community life. After living 17 years near the corner of 19th Ave E and 8th St., we moved down the hill to East 4th St – remaining within an easy walk of Chester Creek was a requirement.

For the past four years, I've had the opportunity to serve as 2nd District City Councilor. I've worked hard to make sure that people have a voice when decisions that affect their lives are made. Shortly after taking office, I brought together people who were barely willing to speak to each other to develop a plan to close the gap in the Lakewalk near Water St. I worked with neighbors to ensure that the Kenwood Village project addressed pedestrian and traffic safety issues. And I'm working hard to address the economic inequities in our community by advocating for earned sick and safe time for all Duluth workers. I am seeking re-election to continue this work.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

I'm Ryan Sistad, I was born in Fosston MN, went to high school in Northfield MN, studied Business Management at the University of North Dakota and I currently work in Estimating and Project Management for a Strong Local Union Contractor. I'm running for the Duluth City Council, because I love this city and I believe Duluth has a tremendous amount of potential.

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

Duluth Mayor Emily Larson has proposed a .05% increase in sales tax to fund street improvements. Please explain why you do or do not support the proposed sales tax increase.

I do support the Mayor's proposed half cent sales tax for streets and sidewalks. Ever since the city lost access to the casino revenues that had been funding our street maintenance, we have been struggling to find a new source of money for streets. I held out some hope that money for local streets might become available as part of comprehensive state infrastructure program, but it is clear that the political will for this does not exist at the state level. As everyone who drives on our streets knows, we can wait no longer.

There are two realistic sources of funding for a street maintenance program: 1) Property taxes; 2) The proposed sales tax. Of these two options, the sales tax is far preferable. With the proposed sales tax, those who visit our city, shop here, and work here will help cover the cost of the streets they drive on, thus limiting the financial impact on local residents. If approved, the proposed sales tax will be restricted by state law to streets and sidewalks. This guarantees that the funds will be used for the intended purpose and will not be diverted elsewhere.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

Certainly that is one way to help improve city streets, but I believe there can be other ways of increasing funds for our roads. We can all agree that Duluth is in desperate need of extra funding for street improvements, but I'm concerned with the odds of the state legislature approving Mayor Larson's proposal. It might be beneficial for Duluth to explore other alternatives that include pushing for an increase in Duluth's share of the Minnesota gas tax revenue at the state legislature and doing something similar to the new tourism tax the Mayor has been utilizing.

QUESTION 3:

What should the City do to address aging infrastructure (streets and utilities)? How would you implement those actions?

CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

If approved, the Mayor's proposed half cent sales tax will provide the city with the funds needed for a robust street maintenance program. I support the Mayor's proposal and am actively campaigning for it.

Although the deteriorating condition of the city's water system receives less attention than our crumbling streets, the water system is in many ways the more serious challenge. We are fortunate to live in a country where we take for granted that clean drinkable water will come out of our tap – something many around the world can't rely upon. Our water system is aging, however, and without a significant increase in our annual maintenance work, the system will continue to deteriorate. The result will be higher future costs and declining reliability. We cannot allow this to happen.

Because the water system is self-supporting, the only way to address its deteriorating condition is with higher rates. As a member of the Duluth Public Utilities Commission, I helped develop the recently adopted multi-year water rate increase plan. The plan provides the city with the funds needed to get the work done and is designed to limit the impact on those on fixed and limited incomes. The multi-year phase-in provides residents with time to adjust to the new rates, and the increase is structured so that those who use less water face a smaller percentage increase. When fully phased in, the typical senior living alone will see an increase in water rates of roughly \$2.25/month.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

The number one priority for all local governments is to be efficient in maintaining transportation while continually improving the infrastructure. Currently the model being used in Duluth's local government has been ineffective in doing so. The city council needs to look into maximizing resources at both the state and federal level. An increase in sales tax or an increased levy on our property owners shouldn't always be the solution in solving budgeting problems. Duluth has a lot of high quality union tradesman that can help in repairing our infrastructure and streets - let's put them to work without having to suffocate the local taxpayer.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

What are the top three things the City Council can do to improve Duluth's economy?

The most important things the City Council can do to support Duluth's economy are:

1. Maintain reliable local infrastructure and effective city services in a fiscally responsible manner.
2. Support the efforts of the city's business development staff to promote economic development while providing public accountability for the ways that economic development dollars are spent.
3. Support the community amenities (such as parks and libraries) that make Duluth a good place to live and work.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

Number 1 - We need to find ways to keep more of the young talent that is funneling through our local colleges and universities. Duluth's biggest export is the amount of bright young talent that leave every year for better opportunities.

Number 2 – Duluth needs to start recruiting companies who share local Duluth values and are growing rapidly across the U.S. - Examples include Tesla, Amazon, and Google. We need to take advantage of our exporting resources and find ways to increase jobs in manufacturing.

Number 3 – The City Council has to create a better environment for small businesses to thrive. Currently small businesses in Duluth are struggling to grow, because the incentives are low and the risk is too high for expansion.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

How can the City Council support the development of affordable and market-rate housing?

The City has been successful at promoting housing at the middle to higher end of the market. The Endi and Kenwood Village projects are examples of this. In contrast, we struggle to develop affordable housing. It is exceptionally difficult for lower wage workers to find a decent place to live in Duluth that they can afford. This is an extremely difficult problem to solve because the costs of new housing construction are such that the private housing market simply cannot produce new units that lower wage workers can actually afford. The truth is that providing quality affordable housing for working people has always required direct subsidies – be it in the form of the federal mortgage interest tax deduction, housing that is directly owned and managed by public entities, or support to private developers to construct housing that is affordable.

The City Council can and should require the inclusion of affordable units in development projects that receive public subsidies, and we can support the efforts of the City Administration to bring the various groups working on housing issues together to develop a common strategy for quality affordable rental housing. One promising strategy that has been pursued elsewhere is the creation of a local affordable housing trust fund. I support this concept in principle. The challenge is finding a sufficient local revenue source, particularly when we have competing needs for revenue to address our aging city infrastructure and to maintain vital city services.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

By creating tax incentives for builders and developers to expand and grow affordable market rate housing. Every year taxes go up on homeowners and as the value of their home goes up, taxes increase, naturally taking away incentive for homeowners to improve their house. Why would a homeowner want to invest in their home, when they know their return on investment will be less? High property taxes also cause many Duluthians to rent rather than buy. Renters are affected as well, as property taxes go up and the demand for rentals increase – so does rental pricing.

QUESTION 6:

How can the City, in collaboration with other regional governments, address racial and cultural divides in our community?

CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

The racial and cultural divides in our city are largely the result of invisible barriers – patterns that produce inequities without conscious intent or even awareness. To reduce those barriers, we need to identify them and work consciously to remove them. For example, does the city include requirements in job descriptions that are unnecessary (unnecessary requirements for drivers licenses, for instance) that have a disparate impact on the basis of race and income? The city has begun to evaluate its job descriptions, and I support that. But we must expand the focus and work with both public and private sector partners to identify similar barriers that produce disparate impacts across the range of policies and practices.

We also need to work together to make Duluth's rich and diverse cultural heritage more visible. As City Council Liaison to the city's Parks and Recreation Commission, for instance, I supported efforts to include indigenous language and historical interpretation on parks signage. I am currently working with the city's Indigenous Commission on a proposal to designate Lake Place as Gitchi 'Ode Akiing ("Grand Heart Place) –that will highlight Duluth indigenous culture and heritage.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

One of the best ways to solve the racial divide is by creating more opportunities for living wage jobs naturally through an expanding market. Duluth is currently struggling in growing the local economy, which only leaves room for further racial divide. Duluth does already have a human rights office that is dedicated to addressing these type of issues specifically and I will always express my support in their work.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

Duluth has been recognized nationally for its outdoor recreational opportunities. What can the City Council do to protect the regional environment, including Lake Superior?

The most important thing the city can do to protect the natural environment is to adopt planning policies that promote sustainable development. How we use land will largely determine the ecological impact of the city. Sustainable planning and development policies encourage investment in our core urban neighborhoods and discourage sprawl. Such policies minimize our ecological footprint, are pedestrian and transit friendly, and limit commuting times and distances for those who drive. The city must also continue efforts to reduce its own carbon footprint—something that the Mayor is committed to and that I fully support. I pushed to accelerate the city’s program to convert streetlights to LED bulbs and have advocated for the steam plant conversion project that will replace our aging and inefficient downtown steam heat system with a modern efficient closed loop hot water system. To protect the Lake, we must maintain and enhance our storm water system, continue with efforts to prevent sanitary sewer overflows, and pursue policies that limit the impact of storm water runoff from new development on our creeks and streams. And, as community leaders, city councilors must also be willing to speak out on broader threats to our water quality. I was proud to be a co-sponsor of a proposed City Council resolution calling on the Minnesota DNR to hold an evidentiary hearing (where evidence for and against could be objectively weighed) prior to making a decision on the permit to mine for the proposed Polymet copper-nickel project.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

By showing continual support in our current effective environmental laws and being open to the idea of raising permitting standards. Nobody protects the environment better than Minnesota and we should continue to hold that mantle as a city and state.

I want to also express my concern for the raw sewage that is entering Lake Superior whenever there’s high volumes of water moving through the area due to weather. Raw sewage is currently the number one pollutant in Lake Superior. The council should address this sooner rather than later for the sake of Duluth’s overall health.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

The City has recently experienced several severe weather events, what actions should the City take, if any, to plan for these types of emergency

Given the changing climate, the city is at risk of more frequent extreme weather events, and we must be prepared. The greatest threat are extreme water events, such as the 2012 flood. The most important steps we can take are to build resiliency into our storm water systems and to pursue planning and development policies that limit the impact of storm water runoff. Given the financial constraints that the city is under, though, we simply do not have the money to create the kind of resiliency in our storm water system that is necessary. Cities all over the country face this same challenge, and federal investment is needed. So long as we have a presidential administration that denies the reality of climate change, however, I am pessimistic that those resources will become available.

In recent years, the city has increased its emergency response planning and taken full advantage of training opportunities to do so. While there is always room for improvement, I believe that the city is taking the appropriate steps in this area. I was very impressed, for example, with the speed and effectiveness with which the City Administration and city staff responded to the windstorm of 2016.

events? Please address emergency response and potential budget impacts.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

Well, first off we can't be prepared for these types of events if we choose to cut our current budget for our local police and fire departments. Secondly, I believe Duluth's ability to handle severe weather events works hand and hand with our infrastructure. Duluth will never be prepared effectively for any type of severe weather if our current infrastructure continues to crumble.

QUESTION 9:

In your opinion, what are the three most important challenges facing the City and how do you propose to address these challenges?

CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

I believe that our three most important challenges are:

- Maintaining our aging infrastructure in a time of financial constraints – The recent adopted multi-year water rate plan and proposed half cent sales tax for streets will give the city the resources it needs to make progress on this challenge.
- Maintaining vital city services in the face of declining state support—Minnesota's local government aid program is the largest source of funds for general city operations, and the program has long been underfunded. Had local government aid kept pace with inflation, the city would not now be facing a budget shortfall. Increasingly, we are faced with a no- win choice between cutting vital city services and raising property taxes on already financially stressed residents. We've been cutting staff, and these cuts are starting to do serious damage to the services people need and expect. We have been looking for creative alternatives to property taxes (like the electrical franchise fee), but we are running out of options. There must be a change in priorities at the state level.
- Growing economic inequities—Many Duluthians are living on fixed incomes and more and more are trying to survive at low wage jobs. Whenever councilors make any policy decision, they must consider the impact on people who are on fixed and limited incomes. And we must look for ways we can ease the stress on low wage workers, such as the proposal to require that all workers in Duluth be provided access to earned sick and safe time.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

Duluth's 3 most important challenges moving forward is the Lack of Economic Growth, the current state of our infrastructure, and our inability to bring in new companies to the area. Duluth needs to start growing again, and have roads that we can be proud of without having to constantly increase taxes on our current residents. We can't afford to move forward as a city progressively without increasing economic growth that naturally provides living wage jobs.

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE JOEL SIPRESS:

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?

My top three priorities are to address the three challenges listed above:

- Maintaining our aging infrastructure in a time of financial constraints – I support the Mayor’s proposed half cent streets tax and I did support the recently adopted multi-year water rate plan. It is difficult for financially stressed residents to be asked to pay more, but the alternative is failure of our local infrastructure.
- Maintaining vital city services in the face of declining state support—There is no good answer for this. I will continue to look for alternatives to the property tax, such as increasing the share of tourism taxes that go to support general city operations. I am willing to support modest property tax increases to preserve vital services, but we must continue to look for savings within the city budget to limit those increases. And I will continue to advocate for new priorities at the state level.
- Growing economic inequities—I will continue to look for ways to limit the impact of the city’s financial policies on those on fixed and limited incomes. We are, for instance, phasing out the street light fee – a tax that falls most heavily on those of limited means. We also structured the multi-year water rate plan to make sure that small consumers of water faced a lower percentage increase than those who use more water. And I do favor the proposal to require that all workers in Duluth be provided access to earned sick and safe time.

CANDIDATE RYAN SISTAD:

This last questions correlates well with questions 4 and 9. My top three priorities are to focus on local issues rather than national issues, to help in creating more opportunities for young college graduates, and promote an economic market that naturally demands living wage jobs and benefits in Duluth. To implement these priorities starts with changing the overall approach of the council, working with local businesses to create ideas for growth, looking for ways to increase trade jobs, and recruiting new companies – specifically in the tech and manufacturing industries.

DULUTH CITY COUNCILOR FOURTH DISTRICT

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for Duluth City Council.

Simply said, I am running for re-election as Duluth's 4th District Duluth City Councilor to continue to fight against rising taxes and increasing fees in our city, which is not a sustainable community-partnering solution for nearly 60-percent of Duluth citizens who live below the federal poverty line. We must seek other funding solutions to balance the city budget and to continue to make necessary infrastructural improvements, such as replacing our agenda sewer and water lines and improving our streets.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

I am Renee Van Nett: a Native American single parent of two 11 year old 6th graders who attend Lincoln Park School, and a foster parent for 10+ years. I work at Community Action Duluth as an Employment Navigator for the Minnesota Families Investment Program, and I'm a homeowner in Duluth Heights.

"I believe that leadership is about submission to duty not elevation to power" (Gordon Tootosis-Stoney, Cree descent-Canada). This is the mission that drives my campaign. I believe a city councilor's job is listening to the people of the community they serve. I also think there is power in numbers, and if the community wants to change something, they can by working together.

The 4th District is a dynamic district, full of people from all walks of life, from extreme poverty to extreme wealth. I'm committed to ensuring the 4th District has a vibrant presence and voice on the City Council.

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

Duluth Mayor Emily Larson has proposed a .05% increase in sales tax to fund street improvements. Please explain why you do or do not support the proposed sales tax increase.

Residents in Duluth's 4th District – Duluth Heights, Piedmont Heights, Lincoln Park and eastern West Duluth are strongly against the proposed sales tax increase, and so am I. A better solution is to earmark monies captured by new growth for this purpose. The proposed sales tax increase will drive up costs at restaurants and stunt job growth in our community.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

I support Mayor Larson’s sales tax fund improvement plan. We must develop a sustainable, equitable way of maintaining our streets and infrastructure, without relying on the support of Local Government Aid. Without the sales tax, we would see our property taxes increase, and as I've heard in multiple conversations with citizens throughout the 4th District - nobody wants to see their property taxes increase or additional fees added on their utility bills.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

What should the City do to address aging infrastructure (streets and utilities)? How would you implement those actions?

Establish a dedicated street fund using new growth revenues, while continuing to pursue new business and encouraging more housing growth.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

The proposed sales tax, if passed, will go a long way to address the aging streets and infrastructure. However, we must also make sure we are looking at all options, such as bonding, in case the sales tax does not pass. The one thing we cannot do is continue to leave this unaddressed and continue to create significant burdens on our future generations.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

What are the top three things the City Council can do to improve Duluth’s economy?

Create more jobs, enhance tourism and market ourselves as a perfect off-campus work community (where Twin Cities area employees, in particular, can live and work away from the traditional office setting, which is a growing work option for many companies for its employees. Key to this would be establishing a stronger Internet presence in Duluth, utilizing the power and speed of fiber, to meet the Internet needs of the new Duluth employees.)

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

We need to ensure that we have housing opportunities for all income levels - affordable housing goes a long way in attracting business to our community.

We need to partner with ISD 709 and work on selling the empty buildings to economic developers who will provide much needed economic equity to our community.

We need to continue capitalizing on our newly-developed Craft District, which will attract small business that supports the middle class, while being mindful of the needs of the West End and Lincoln Park neighborhoods.

QUESTION 5:

How can the City Council support the development of affordable and market-rate housing?

CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

Encourage new development by aggressively seeking out and working with experienced developers. Duluth is ripe for both affordable and market-rate housing, and developers know it. TIF financing should be used on a case-by-case basis.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

First, the City Council should pass the Homeless Bill of Rights. We need to have a strong foundation for those of us who have the least, and we can build on that going forward to address further housing issues.

Second, I strongly advocate for the Landlord Incentive Program. This program would incentivize landlords to rent to people who would otherwise struggle to find a place to live - felons, new renters, and younger families.

Lastly, we need to better educate tenants on their rights with regards to the landlord-tenant relationship and enforce our rental ordinances. When rental properties are maintained and in good working order, property values surrounding them will increase. Too many Duluthians are not aware of their rights as renters and live in deplorable conditions and our enforcement officers are severely understaffed. These blighted rental properties (of which there are many in the 4th District) drag down property values in the neighborhood and developers stay away.

QUESTION 6:

CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

How can the City, in collaboration with other regional governments, address racial and cultural divides in our community?

Be inclusive, always.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

We are a community divided. We are also a community united against that divide.

We have a great community that really wants to have these discussions, we have an intentional City Hall with a Human Rights Commission and Office that is available to address issues of injustice. We have an Indigenous Commission to ensure that Native issues are being heard at our city's table. We have great nonprofits and coalitions around our town who are working every day to eliminate the inequities inherent in our community. We are working to repair our relationship with our local tribes and move forward in a positive way.

Yet, we still have much to do.

We need to continue to have conversations in our community about the disparities between and within the African American and Native American communities. We need to have deliberate conversations about how to have direct dialogue with people of color and hold them accountable for their words and actions in the public sphere, without being afraid of being called racist. We need to make sure that our children of color are not left behind in the school system and put safeguards in place for them after school.

We need to stop being afraid. We need to stop allowing the national dialogue drive our discourse here in Duluth - we have so much history of hatred here in Duluth and we have come so far, yet still have far to go.

QUESTION 7:

CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

Duluth has been recognized nationally for its outdoor recreational opportunities. What can the City Council do to protect the

Lake Superior is our greatest natural resource, and should be protected at all cost. Outdoor recreation is a booming tourism industry. I believe we're doing a good job balancing tourism and business growth with the utmost need to protect our watershed.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

Ojibwe prophecy speaks of a time during the seventh fire when our people will have a choice between two paths. The first path is well-worn and scorched. The second path is new and green. We must choose the new path - a new and green path that

regional environment, including Lake Superior?

continues to protect our earth while creating economic opportunities for all of us, here in Duluth and beyond.

While we look at the new path, however, we need to clear the old path - we need to look at what we are doing right here in Duluth to reduce contaminants into Lake Superior and ensure we are doing everything we can to minimize our own contributions into the pollution of the Lake - from salt/sand runoff to plastic particulate in our water supply to storm sewer overflow.

QUESTION 8:

CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

The City has recently experienced several severe weather events, what actions should the City take, if any, to plan for these types of emergency events? Please address emergency response and potential budget impacts.

I'm proud to report that Duluth is acutely prepared to manage future emergency events. The Mayor Emily Larson administration and city police and fire, in particular, have worked hard to establish strong and effective response measures to emergency events.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

We know that extreme weather events will continue to happen as our communities feel the impact of climate change. The science cannot be disputed nor can the anecdotal data that Duluth has seen an increase in major weather events in the past few years.

We need to make sure that our individual neighborhoods have disaster preparedness plans. In 2012, my house in Lincoln Park flooded, as did many of my neighbors. From that extreme weather event, our neighborhood came together and came up with a survival plan - from who lived where to who had resources to share to who knew where to get resources needed for our survival. We can do this through our local community clubs and through our wildly successful "National Night Out." We need to have conversations as a community about taking care of each other in times of need.

We need to make sure our emergency service providers are given the tools, training, and funding they need to continue to ensure our citizens remain safe during dangerous weather. This has an economic impact to our community, but during a crisis, we want to manage our emergency response, not regret that we did not fund it.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

In your opinion, what are the three most important challenges facing the City and how do you propose to address these challenges?

- Rising taxes and fees. Continue to fight to remove these financial burdens on Duluth taxpayers, while working hard to improve our local tax base by creating new growth in business and tourism.
- Streets (infrastructure): Establish dedicated street fund, again without increased taxation and fees on local home owners and business owners.
- Local businesses and attractions: Local businesses are at risk due to ESST and, ultimately, by a proposed \$15 an hour minimum wage, which I expect will be approved by the Duluth City Council later this year or early in 2018. I am strongly against both jobs-killing measures. Local attractions are also at great risk, and drawing support from an established tourism fund is not a long-term solution for attractions to continue to offset widening budgetary gaps.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

Duluth is a complex city full of challenges, many of which I addressed earlier in this questionnaire.

We must advocate for and develop safe and affordable housing developments. We must ensure sustainable funding for our infrastructure.

We must address the heroin epidemic in our community - from working with our first responders to ensure they have the training and tools they need to help our citizens at their most vulnerable to partnering organizations providing relief to them and adopting best practices from communities who are going through this same issue.

I am a huge believer in community power and coalitions pulling together to make differences in their lives. That power has a ripple effect throughout the community. A councilor cannot address these challenges alone. They require all of us to work together to make all of Duluth a better place to live.

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE HOWIE HANSON:

If elected, what would your top three priorities be for the City, and how do you propose to implement them given budgetary constraints?

- Reduce taxes and fees. Grow local economy by attracting new businesses, by enticing business expansion to utilize our experienced work force and enjoying our many recreational opportunities.
- Continue to repair our aged infrastructure, utilizing funding sources other than taxes and fees. Dedicating increased revenues from new development is a solid first dedicated funding source.
- Public Safety. Create safer neighborhoods by building on our strong Citizen's Patrols volunteer groups. Establish a neighborhood eyes-and-ears hotline, outside of the 9-1-1, where citizens will report any suspicious activity in their neighborhood, however seemingly trivial. Our police are over-stretched with calls for service, and a new model for reporting and addressing crime in our community is needed.

CANDIDATE RENEE K VAN NETT:

As stated above, developing safe and affordable housing, sustainable infrastructure funding, and addressing the heroin epidemic must be our top priorities as councilors.

We all know budgets are a necessary evil. We need to look carefully at the budget proposed by the Mayor and make sure that our needs are addressed so that we can all lead fulfilling lives as citizens. We need to do this, not through slick powerpoints and graphs, but by having plainspoken conversations throughout our community about what issues are important to them and how the budget addresses their needs.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER AT-LARGE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #709

QUESTION 1: **CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:**

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for School Board?

I am a father of three who are currently and who will be attending Duluth Public Schools. As a public health nurse, I have worked in partnership with our schools for the last four years, and recognize that the public school system is foundational to the strength of our community in the future. I am a servant leader; meaning I am motivated to serve on the school board first and foremost because I want to serve and give back to the community.

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

I am a strong independent candidate. I am mother of two and care deeply about schools in Duluth. I have been doing research in Johns Hopkins University and UMD, so I possess strong analytical abilities and solid background in statistics and decision-making. I have outstanding diplomatic skills and will listen to all sides. While teaching first year college students, I first handedly was able to observe the problems facing recent high school graduates.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

I was born, raised and educated in the great city of Duluth, Minnesota; I am a proud graduate of Duluth Central High School. The passion and dedication of the teachers and leaders in the Duluth school district set me on an incredibly fulfilling journey; my success is inextricably linked to the work that the Duluth School Board conducts. Our family is now raising a child in the Duluth Public School District, and we are deeply interested in ensuring that our son, Noah, and his classmates have opportunities and support across the district and the community.

I have spent the last decade of my career working nationally, regionally, and locally with health care networks and collaboratives to achieve strong outcomes for the communities served by those health care entities. None of us is an island onto ourselves, and by collaborating and partnering we can foster creativity and achieve stronger outcomes. Currently, I serve as the Executive Director of the Northern Minnesota Network (NMN). The NMN is a health center controlled network comprised of Federally Qualified Health Centers and Migrant Health Centers. The network serves clinics across four states and more than 22, 000 square miles. Through my work I have brought seemingly fractured parties to the table in search of solutions; I am a nationally-recognized expert in the area of building and sustaining those coalitions, and look forward to translating that work as a member of the Duluth School Board. I am proud to have received the endorsements of the Duluth DFL, the Duluth Federation of Teachers (DFT), AFSCME, the North East Area Labor Council, and womenwinning.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

My long leadership in the School District which began as a substitute teacher in 1980 and resumed as a twelve-year School Board member in 1996 has made me extremely familiar with state education law, school finance, and the direction public education is taking. This is exactly the resume a board member facing the annual loss of \$11.5 million local dollars to the classroom needs to have to bring stability to our public schools.

QUESTION 2:

Please explain why you support public education?

CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

Duluth Public Schools are the only school system locally that actively receives and serves all students in our community. Public education is the foundation of our community. Our future mayors, teachers, nurses, etc are attending Duluth Public Schools. If we want to have a strong, healthy community in the future, we need a strong public school system.

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

I support public education because I believe that education is everything. I believe that education should be good and free to anybody seeking it.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

I believe that access to a strong, public education system is a right for all our citizens. I do not think that academic achievement and growth should be determined by household income, neighborhood of residence, or whether-or-not you “win” a lottery seat into a non-public school. Public schools are the foundation of our community in many ways and I see it as essential that we continue to support a strong, public education system to ensure success, long-term, for students, families, and citizens of our great community.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

Because it has been the foundation of our American Democracy since the Land Ordinance of 1787 which set aside land in every township for the use of public schools.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

In your opinion, what are the three most important challenges facing ISD 709 and how do you propose to address these challenges?

a. The achievement gap. We need to continue adopting and implementing programs in our schools that are a good fit for our district and have a track record of proven success.

i. I will continue to support the Full-Service Community School model at Denfeld High School, Lincoln Park Middle School, and Myers-Wilkins Elementary School. Furthermore, I will support this model being adopted and grown into other schools, especially those heavily impacted by poverty.

ii. The Multi-tiered Systems of Support model, that track and identify students falling behind in key skills areas (such as reading), has proven effective at improving test scores in schools where it has been implemented in Duluth Public Schools.

iii. Parent-teacher home visits. Parent engagement is incredibly important to student achievement. That is why I support the parent-teacher home visits program.

iv. Curriculum and staffing. Having a staff and curriculum that is representative of the communities and many cultural identities in our Public Schools.

b. The Sale of vacated buildings.

i. I will continue supporting dialogue between the City of Duluth, St. Louis County, and state leaders to support the sale of this property.

c. Attracting and retaining students to Duluth Public Schools.

i. Manage classroom sizes. I would have an independent party assist the district with drawing new boundaries for existing schools so that student populations between schools are equalized.

ii. Ensure equity between all Duluth Public Schools. I ask the question of our administration and community: What shoe fits your school?

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

Budget: This is the most pressing issue because ISD709 is in dire need of more responsible budget spending. Simply cutting essential personnel is no longer the answer on the long-term problem of the cash shortage. I will be hard pressing to make it number 1 priority and go over it line by line. Nearly every problem in the district can be tracked back to the budget.

Enrollment and overcrowding: Having a healthy budget would help dramatically, by allowing hiring additional help and support for teachers. Addition of 7th period would be an attractive option for parents to consider enrolling their kids in our schools. Adding alternative schedules is a possibility to finds budget savings. This topic requires deep investigation of urban population, development and dynamics. I am also planning to use resources available from two big Universities located conveniently in our city of Duluth: College of St. Scholastic and University of Minnesota – Duluth.

Achievement Gap: Removing system barriers, ensuring equitable representation in college bound courses and cultural opportunities to make our education system truly cultural center of acceptance. Creating a welcoming learning environment and creating opportunities for all students, including marginalized ones. Having an academic background, I will personally work on the creating bridges with trade unions and universities to allow students to explore all possibilities.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

The social determinants of education and education equity:

Social determinants of education include the structural determinants in which people are born and live; they include socioeconomic status, if they have a support structure, and education. We need to identify opportunities to work within the schools, as well as with community coalitions and students/families/citizens, to streamline access to services (e.g. mental health services) to ensure that students needs are supported.

Reducing the achievement and access gaps:

Whether a student graduates in Duluth should not be determined on where they live or go to school. A variety of national groups are creating roadmaps for reducing the achievement gap to include steps including: enhanced cultural competence, comprehensive support for students, engaging community groups, adequate resources and strong district support. Working in collaboration with schools, the Duluth School Board should be prioritizing the elimination of the achievement and access gaps for all students.

Funding challenges:

We need to make sure that we are a financially sustainable district which will require hard but necessary choices with selling buildings and properties that no longer benefit the district. The people who serve the great students of this district shouldn't be considered expendable when a building is not. We need to reexamine our priorities, explore unique funding opportunities, and develop a financial plan that will support excellent education for the children of Duluth.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

First – inadequate school finance leading to A. huge class sizes and B. a growing education gap. The only way to solve this problem is having a frank public conversation with the community.

Second - inequity between eastern and western schools due to an impossible division of the boundaries in the wake of the Red Plan. We must spend state revenues intended for poor children in the schools where the poor children are. We also need to magnetize western schools (perhaps with a seven-period day) to attract children from Eastern families. We should also consider making our two high schools one by putting ninth and tenth graders in one building and 11th and 12th graders in the other. This would require a long thoughtful community discussion before proceeding.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

How can the School Board best address racial and cultural divides in the community and in our schools?

The Voices for Racial Justice Duluth Report offers several suggestions for improving education equity. Equity, as defined in the aforementioned report, is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate the barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.” The school board would be wise to partner with the organizations and individuals who helped develop the report (not to suggest that they may not already be).

Distance from the issues related to race and culture as a school board is a potential barrier that we must proactively address through relationship building.

The board must make efforts to be present and close in proximity to the community who experiences racial and cultural inequity. As an example, in 2016 less than 50% of Native American students were graduating within 4 years compared to the 75% rate for all students in Duluth Public Schools.

Building cultural awareness and perspective on the school board should be done in partnership with individuals in the community who can best represent their own perspective so that existing barriers to success can be understood and addressed. This is not possible without partnership.

As a school board, you are supposed to be advocates for your community. We must be vocal and actively working with community partners to address issues related to race and culture.

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

We can address by racial and cultural divides for starters by listening and not discarding it as complains. As a school board member, I plan to go out in the community and start listening to groups and people and actually putting their concerns on the agenda. Current secret agenda meetings by the board need to stop. Full transparency with how and why we do things will build community trust. By putting kids future first, I believe, will bring us to the solution. I believe in putting our adult ambitions aside and striving to achieve a common ground.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

Our students are experiencing a significant achievement gap between races and socioeconomic classes. This challenge isn't going to be solved overnight, especially when our largest population of people living in poverty are children ages zero-to-five. This must be a discussion that's handled safely and honestly across our District. We need to strengthen the safety net for our families across the District so that outside barriers don't disproportionately impact students and families. It is vital as leaders in our community—and in our school district—that we take a stand for the rights of *all* our

students and community members by teaching respect, love, and understanding. I will continue to be honest when discrimination is occurring and will work to dismantle those institutions of privilege and power. I will continue to be a voice for our communities that have, for far too long, been silenced or dismissed. I will work to ensure that we have role models in our schools and across the community that all students can relate to. I will work to build on the successes the Duluth School Board has experienced. Finally, I will listen to and work with the all community leaders to develop solutions for challenges we face.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

In no particular order. Hire more minority teachers. Spend our Compensatory Ed money fairly. Bring in members of the community from minority communities as minority mentors *of students who have had too little contact with minorities*.

QUESTION 5:

How can the School Board ensure equal access to educational opportunities throughout ISD 709? Please address disparities in enrollment, funding, and course offerings.

CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

The genesis of this challenge lies within the fact that there is a geographic student density issue between our eastern and western schools. There are now nearly twice as many students attending East compared to Denfeld.

- a. Disparities in enrollment: This issue can be most immediately addressed by having school boundaries redrawn by an independent party to equalize student enrollment amongst schools.
- b. Funding: Funding is received via multiple streams. Each funding stream has different strings attached. Some of those funds come from the general fund, where 50% of funds can be spread across the district as needed. At present, the district prioritizes the use of general funds to keep class sizes small at the primary level (K-2) all across the district. Use of the other 50% of general funds is limited to the schools where they are generated, where the funds can be used in multiple ways. A recent resolution passed by the board will require that more of the general education funds be kept in schools where they are generated. The ripple effect may be that some schools have larger classroom sizes, while other schools have more money and program offerings. What I ultimately support is a budget committee that includes robust community engagement to strategically lay out a spending plan that is equitable.
- c. The disparity in course offerings is primarily a high school level issue, and is tied to the difference in number of students between East and Denfeld. It is difficult to offer two sections of an advanced class with half as many students.

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

We can create an equal access to educational opportunities by beginning to keep Compensatory education money in schools where they are generated and spending them on kids that need them the most. Also, we can start by offering 7th period in schools, which current board majority (School board members Kirby, Harala, Loeffler-Kemp, and Sandstad) voted against a year ago.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

As I have been meeting with voters, families and students I have heard a variety of ideas around how to work to ensure that all our students have equal access to educational opportunities. We need to take a hard look at the way schools and programs are funded. We need to be honest about why we are seeing enrollment disparities across the District. We need to implement solutions—such as tele-educational solutions—that allow all students, regardless of which school they attend, to have the same access to course offerings. We live in an age when education is available at the click of a mouse; it's vital that we connect those opportunities to our students.

The truth is that we need more children in the seats in our District. We need to do more work to celebrate the successes across our District. There are significant challenges that need to be addressed but we need to do that work in collaboration with community, District, and educational partners. That work needs to be transparent and respectful and it needs to include a variety of stakeholders who have been discouraged and/or not invited to participate in the past. We live in a community of highly-engaged individuals who are deeply passionate about our District—let's get folks around the table to develop community driven solutions to these challenges.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

By *not* pretending that this is not a problem. I have discussed the disparities in previous answers.

QUESTION 6:

Please explain how Charter schools in the region operate, how they may or may not impact a traditional school district

CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

(Source note: Information about Charter schools from the Research Department of the Minnesota State House of Representatives, a nonpartisan office, is quoted in italics.)

“ A charter school is a public school with a specialized purpose that is exempt from some statutes and rules applicable to other public schools.”

Charter schools are not held to the same standard as traditional public schools. We must be aware that the playing field between traditional public schools and charter schools is not on even ground. For example, charter schools may cap student numbers, allowing for smaller class size. Traditional public schools do not cap student

**like ISD 709,
and what ISD
709's
relationship
should be, if
any, with
Charter schools
in Duluth.**

number and may have larger class sizes.

"A charter school operator must incorporate as a nonprofit corporation. An initial board of directors must adopt articles and bylaws, and school staff and parents must elect an initial board of directors and an ongoing board within three years."

"A charter school receives general education and transportation revenue, special education and building lease aid, and other funds as though it were a school district."

Charter schools locally are not governed by a publicly elected board and receive taxpayer generated education funds.

The original goal of charter schools was to experiment with alternative teaching and learning styles, exempt from comprehensive regulation. The experimenting was meant to benefit the broader public education system by identifying best practices that could be implemented across the board. How are Duluth Public Schools benefiting from the charter schools?

In review of performance data from the MN Department of Education's website (Minnesota Report Card), it does not appear that local Charter Schools are outperforming Duluth Public Schools in any significant way. Deeper analysis would be appropriate to come to any stronger conclusions.

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

There are 165 Charter Schools in Minnesota (42 states have charter schools). Charter schools in Duluth, like other public schools, are non-profit schools and are part of the state's system of public education. They receive state funding, including general education, transportation, special education, and building lease aid funds. Such funds are generally on the level playing field between Charter and other public schools. One type of school is NOT subsidizing another. For example, ISD709 does NOT subsidize Special education at charter school. All employees (teachers, administration, staff) at Charter schools are public employees. All charter schools must accept all students who successfully apply, up to enrollment capacity, per state law. In Duluth, demographics of Charter schools are very compatible to the ISD709 demographics.

Charter schools are another option to the parents and we should build a relationship with them. It is not about PR, it is about Customer service.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

As a parent, I find it impossible to judge the decisions that other parents make around the education of their children/dependents/family members. Our family has been incredibly impressed by the education our son has received through the Duluth Public Schools; similar to my exceptional experience. I recognize that not all students and families have the same experience, so I promise to endeavor to continue to build upon the strong programs of the Duluth Public Schools to ensure a strong and positive

experience for all our students, families, and community members.

Charter schools in our area are seen as an option for a handful of students who choose to enter, and subsequently receive seats in those facilities. I think it's important that Duluth Public Schools have regular opportunities to meet with charter schools to discuss community challenges and opportunities. The bottom line is that we need to continue to be champions for the wonderful work that is occurring in our public schools. Charter schools drain taxpayer coffers while paying their teachers less and having less of an economic impact on our community. We need to promote our Duluth Public Schools for the great work we are doing, while addressing the challenges we face as a District and a system.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

Charter schools are a fact of life and a matter of state law. Our district should treat all public schools as friends not rivals. We should share programs and cooperate to the best of our ability. ISD 709 has followed a very different path making the charters out to be enemies. This has led to a self-defeating process which has hurt 709 far more than the charters.

QUESTION 7:

Please explain why ISD 709 should or should not sell vacant District-owned properties, such as the Central High School building or Cobb School building, to other educational entities.

CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

This question hinges on the nature of the other educational entity. If it is a charter school, the reasons related to education equity outlined in question number six have been addressed.

As for the sale of Central High School, I believe that this property is a gem for our entire community.

The reimbursement rate to the district for students attending public schools is \$6,000 per student. If even 200 students attended a charter high school, that is a deficit of 1.2 million dollars to the Duluth Public Schools. Any profits gleaned from selling to a charter school would be gone within ten years.

According to the City of Duluth Planning Department, we are about 3,700 housing units short (1,100 affordable housing units) of target for our community. The Central High School property is an ideal opportunity to grow the City of Duluth's tax base. By growing our tax base, we can bring more students into our schools, diminish the burden on current resident taxpayers, while benefiting the bottom line of our public schools, and city/county tax rolls. I hope to see these properties sold in the near future, and will support aggressive action by community partners to help achieve the sale of Central High School.

With regard to schools other than charters, such as Many Rivers Montessori, there may be some benefit to selling to such entities. However, they may opt to become a charter school in the future.

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

One cannot compare Central High School sale to Cobb sale. Cobb has been sold to The Hills outright, and thus sold their assets to Many Rivers Montessori – which is a PRIVATE school and daycare facility, with a vast majority of clients under the age of 3. Cobb is already sold (without resolution against sales to other educational institutions) so we have NO SAY in who the Many Rivers Montessori will sell their buildings to.

We do, however, have a say in selling Central. I believe it should be sold to the highest bidder, because we are missing on good income for the district (like 14.3 million dollars) because of the outdated resolution.

We should sell, because we are in a dire financial situation and we cannot pay for the upkeep of the building. We simply cannot afford it.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

ISD 709 needs to sell vacant properties. As a graduate of a school that is vacated (Duluth Central), this is a personal issue to me. While it is sad that my alma mater will be sold, we need to do what's best for the financial projections of the District. I do think that we need to be mindful and cognizant of the long-term implications of selling a vacated property. Selling to a "competitor" will not support the financial goals of the District that we need to realize to be financially solvent. I have already been working with leaders at the city, county, and state-levels to support strategies that provide market-driven financial compensation for those valuable properties. I will contribute an experienced business mind to those conversations that will support opportunities to provide strong revenue streams in support our goals for the Duluth Public School System.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

The infamous no sale policy was instituted long after Cobb school was sold to Woodland Hills. It was only adopted to prevent more recent charter schools from "competing" against 709 schools. However, this policy is not only unpopular it denies Duluth taxpayers who paid for the schools the chance to get back the full value out of the buildings and to help fund 709 schools. It also risks angering Charter School voters into voting against ISD 709 referendums to raise money for the Duluth Public Schools.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

How can the School Board and ISD 709 stay responsive to student and parent concerns? If elected, how would you engage with students and parents?

As a candidate, I can say for myself that I will be actively available to meet with people if/when they have concerns. I will ensure, through active listening and open communication that people feel they have been heard, and I will seek solutions and answers through the appropriate administrative channels. I will work with other board members to share what I have been hearing, and to evaluate outcomes to various issues that arise.

I will make myself present in our schools and will do everything I can to understand and know the unique school environments in each public school setting within the Duluth School District. People will see me present.

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

My first talking point in this campaign is Responsive and Transparent government. I believe it is the job that needs to be done 100% in the public eye and I will work my hardest to respond to all concerns addressed to me. It was disheartening to hear during door knocking that emails and concerns to the certain school board members where not answered.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

I have been so energized by the feedback I have received from students, parents, family members and community members while I have been door knocking, phone banking, and attending community events. People across our community are deeply committed to our school district, and I plan to continue to meet with people across the district after the election. I think it's important that we expand on the ways with which with interact with people who are interested in contributing to the success of our District. School Board meetings are incredibly important (and it's a blessing that they are replayed on YouTube for many who are unable to attend the meetings in-person) but we also need to make sure that members are out in the community, meeting people where they congregate. As previously stated, I have extensive experience in building collaborations and collaboratives, and I believe firmly that I will bring that experience to the Duluth School Board to continue to strengthen relationships between the Board and our community.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

By being more transparent than in the past.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

What are three positive things the District is doing now to support students and, if elected, how would you continue or expand on these support structures?

I have touched on these in previous questions, but in summary:

- 1) Full-service community schools: I will support the growth of this model into the schools where it has been adopted and will look for ways to grow this model into other schools who wish to pursue it.
- 2) Multi-tiered systems of support: This model has been implemented and evaluated at three elementary schools in Duluth Public Schools. It has proven very effective in bringing student's reading scores up. I will support administrative efforts to continue to build this system across the district and into other subject areas (science and math).
- 3) The grow your own program: This program is just beginning to take shape out of the Office of Education Equity in Duluth Public Schools. I will work with program staff to support, promote, and overcome barriers as an advocate for strong public schools.

The three positives that I have outlined are large systems level changes. Ultimately, for sustainability and for a better public education system, we will need to have advocates working at the state level to support future funding of these programs. As a leader who is adept at working with legislative leaders and organizing community for positive policy change, I will work in collaboration with fellow school board members, state legislators, and other community partners to ensure that our state legislature understands the positive steps that our district is taking and that their support is warranted.

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

Three (and more!) amazing things that our district is doing are Language immersion programs, Multi-tiered system of support, for staff, and work done by Office of Education Equity. Office of Education Equity is the reason why I would like to get budgeted spending under control. Once again, in order to make any suggestions on the budget, I would like to analyze and go over it first. That is why transparency is so important.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

It's difficult to identify just three!

1. The Community School Collaborative. Our family has benefitted directly from this comprehensive approach to student and family support. As a professional who has deep experience with working across collaboratives that support the safety net, I will work hard to support the rollout of this model across the District.

2. The Science/Robotics work. Although the STEM program was removed from Myers Wilkins, there is still robust working happening across our Districts specific to science, technology, engineering and mathematics. These programs prepare our students for success and empower teachers to teach to the skills of our students. Supporting

STEM programs will put Duluth Public Schools on the map for addressing what we need for our students and our community to be successful.

3. The newly added Social-Emotional learning specialists. This program must be expanded. Children are coming into the classroom day-to-day with increasing challenges and it's our responsibility to support their individual strengths and challenges. The investment in these programs is a strong testament to the dedication to our students in the District who need additional support. I will work to continue to expand this program if elected to the Duluth School Board.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

There are 8000 positive things happening. Each of them is a student that we are trying to educate and raise to become a good citizen. The three things that we need to "expand" are these: 1. We need to be more student focused. 2. We need to give our teachers the time and tools to help their students. 3. We need to communicate openly with parents about their children.

QUESTION 10:

If elected, what would your top three priorities be for the District, and how do you propose to implement them given budgetary constraints?

CANDIDATE JOSH GORHAM:

- 1) Achievement gap is reduced and graduation rates improve. I think the growth of full-service community schools, multi-tiered systems of support, early childhood education are systemic programs that are in place that need continued support and advocacy from the school board. The movement to implement these programs is already in place. I would work on the board to ensure that budgets are set and prioritized so that these effective programs can grow and be fully implemented. We must also remember that some of this just takes time.
- 2) The sale of Central High School. Partnering with the City of Duluth, St. Louis County, and our state legislators will prove valuable in getting this sale done. School board members should be aware and educated by other entities about the potential uses for this property, and support a cross-sector vision for getting the property sold. As a school board member, I will remain informed, provide accurate information to the public, and will support the professionals responsible for executing the sale of the property.
- 3) Attract and retain students in Duluth Public Schools. Let's market and promote our public schools to our community. I will encourage partnership between the City of Duluth and realtors to make sure that they understand the positives and advantages offered by Duluth Public Schools. We have language immersion, community schools, teachers that visit families at

CANDIDATE BOGDANA (DANA) KRIVOGORSKY:

My top three priorities would be budget, achievement gap and graduation rate. I will absolutely push for 7th period. I think educational options are vital and should be available to everybody. Budget needs to be scrutinized and unfortunately, I don't have

an access to it to make a sound suggestion on how to act within its restraints.

CANDIDATE SALLY TRNKA:

The social determinants of education and education equity:

Social determinants of education include the structural determinants in which people are born and live. We need to work within the schools, across community groups, and students/families/citizens, to streamline access to services (e.g. mental health services) to ensure that we are supporting the whole student.

Reducing the achievement and access gaps

Whether a student graduates in Duluth should not be determined on where they live or go to school. A variety of national groups are creating roadmaps for reducing the achievement gap to include steps including: enhanced cultural competence, comprehensive support for students, engaging community groups, adequate resources and strong district support. Working in collaboration with schools, the Duluth School Board should be prioritizing the elimination of the achievement and access gaps for all students.

Funding challenges:

We need to make sure that we are a financially sustainable district which will require hard but necessary choices with selling buildings and properties that no longer benefit the district. We need to reexamine our priorities, explore unique funding opportunities, and develop a financial plan that will support excellent education for the children of Duluth.

We need to be transparent and honest about what the District receives from the state and how that compares to similarly-sized School Districts. What can we do better; for what do we require additional resources; what is the return-on-investment for taxpayers, etc. Developing a plan for communication and transparency for the District will be a strong priority when I'm elected.

CANDIDATE HARRY WELTY:

1. Transparency. It costs nothing.
2. Spending compensatory money on the students who generated it will not cost anything either although it will require a redistribution of money from richer to poorer schools.
3. We need more revenue. That means having an honest discussion with the public to explain why in 1997, twenty years ago, we spent \$14 million of \$23 million dollars for school operations whereas today, in 2017, we spend only \$2.5 million out of our \$31 million school levy. I trust that an honest discussion about this startling fact will open hearts and wallets more than pretending that nothing is wrong.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER DISTRICT 1 INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #709

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for School Board?

My name is Kurt Kuehn, and I believe passionately in the right of people to be fairly represented in government. I graduated from Two Harbors high school. After a tour in the Air Force as a Security Policeman, I returned to Duluth and continued that work at the 148th Air Guard base. I then accepted a job as a corrections officer with the St Louis county sheriff's department where I worked until my retirement. I have four grown daughters and 18 grandchildren. My family has been established in Lester Park for 75 years. I live in the house that belonged to my uncle Ray Kuehn and my aunt Roberta Holliday-Kuehn. The current board leadership have struggled to make significant progress on the issues challenging our district most. The board needs new direction, and that starts with new ideas. I will work together building consensus with all district staff, administration and board members. I will be an authentic representative for taxpayers and our community in board decisions.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

Current Duluth School Board member – District 1. I have been honored to serve the last 4 years and look forward to continuing to provide a positive, constructive, effective voice to discussions and decision making.

- Elected to serve in School Board leadership roles. Built respectful relationships with our School District staff, school board colleagues, community partners, parents, and area elected officials.

Current Parent: I have seen firsthand the strengths and the challenges of our District.

- 23 years of experience and knowledge as a highly involved parent that has seen 3 children recently graduate from the Duluth Public Schools and my 4th child is in 10th grade at Duluth East.
- My children have attended our early childhood programs, elementary, middle school and high school.

Education Background: Masters Social Work (2015), Bachelors of Science: Social Work (1984)

- Current work is with children in foster care and I am a local coordinator with an International High School exchange program.

Community Leader: My community involvement and leadership has given me a broad understanding of our community. Throughout my professional career and volunteer efforts I have worked alongside others to create positive change in Duluth.

My desire to run again is an extension of my continued desire to serve this

community. I want to continue to use my leadership skills to advocate for Duluth's schools and to ensure students reach their full potential, staff have a great work place and our public schools are the schools of choice for our families.

QUESTION 2:

Please explain why you support public education?

CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

We, as a community, have a legal responsibility to educate the children of our school district. More importantly, we have a moral obligation, and I don't believe this is a partisan issue. I have purposely not solicited or accepted any labor endorsements, as I want to represent all of my constituents. I pledge to be accessible and responsive whether you voted for me or not.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

I am committed to improving the quality of our public education system and realize that serving as a policy maker is one of the most direct ways to make a difference. A key role of a Board member is to be a champion for public education in the community one serves and to advocate at the state/ national level.

I believe that in a democratic society the single most important responsibility we have as adults is to educate the next generation.

Public schools are the only schools that must meet the needs of all students. They do not turn away children or families. They serve children with physical, emotional, and mental disabilities, those who are extremely gifted and those who are learning challenged. Public schools foster interaction & understanding among people of different ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

I believe each and every student equally deserves the access to the best possible opportunities and that public education is a worthy investment of public funds.

Public education is personal for me. I graduated from a rural school district in Northwest Minnesota- Hallock. Public schools were the focal point of our community. My parents did not graduate from high school but valued public education and supported my 9 siblings - all of us diverse learners. Graduation was the Expectation. I am a first generation college graduate.

As a Duluth Public Schools Board member, I will continue to maintain current programs and expand opportunities from early childhood education to community education.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

In your opinion, what are the three most important challenges facing ISD 709 and how do you propose to address these challenges?

I believe the district has three emergencies. They are the budget, inequity and the achievement gap. These are not new problems, but the current board leadership have struggled to make significant progress towards solving them. I propose an independent audit of the district's finances and selling our vacant buildings as a way to start us on the road to getting our fiscal house in order. These savings can help in addressing the inequities in course offerings and class sizes. It will also help in lowering the achievement gap by getting money to the students who need it most.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

1. Increasing Public Support for our Public Schools

Continue to work with District Staff and School Board to:

- **Lobby** at State & National level for increased funding.
- **Market to the community** all the educational opportunities, programs, services, we deliver.
- **Build partnerships** with community - businesses, unions, non – profits, youth serving agencies, community clubs etc.
- **Collaborate** with our City/County/ State/National elected representatives.

2. Closing opportunity gaps in education as a means to close the achievement gap & increase graduation rates of our students of color & low income students

Continue to:

- **Invest** in professional staff development specific to cultural understanding & awareness.
- **Support systematic changes** such as, recruiting, hiring, and retaining more staff of color, Ojibwe & Spanish Language Immersion programs, and Early Childhood Programs (Head Start, ECFE).
- **Support** ISD 709 Office of Education Equity.
- **Advocate** for more funding for Full Service Community Schools (Myers Wilkins, Lincoln Park Middle School, Denfeld) & **expand this model to other schools.**

3. Enhancing our Districtwide programs/services/educational offerings for all students

Continue to:

- **Invest \$\$\$ and Staff resources** in areas of transportation, class offerings, cultural support services, extracurricular activities.
- **Expand** career and tech education classes.

- **Provide** quality special education services.
- **Provide** quality educational services to our residential programs & transition programs.
- **Meet needs** of our high flying students.
- **Invest** more in Art, Music, and Phy Ed for all grade levels.
- **Build on our collaboration** between City/County/Colleges & Universities.
- **Use and research** best practices being used around the country.

QUESTION 4:

How can the School Board best address racial and cultural divides in the community and in our schools?

CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

By encouraging more parent involvement while removing systemic barriers which prevents ALL parents from feeling welcome and an asset to our schools. Mandated professional development regarding cross-cultural competency, anti-racism and white privilege for all staff and board members. We can start by understanding the privilege we inherently have before we start making decisions for those not like ourselves. Community based activities to expand cultural connections and ensuring that policies and procedures are fair and equitable. One of the primary functions of the board is to create and update policies. The vast majority of our policies were last updated in the 90's. Many of these old policies do not reflect current societal trends.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

As a School District our goal is to raise the achievement of every child and to contribute (because schools can't do it alone) to helping each child grow into a successful adult, able to take care of themselves, assume adult responsibilities and live a happy and fulfilling life.

Minnesota Education Equity Partnership is an organization I have received training from. Their vision and belief statement, speaks to how I feel. "Our views are shaped by what we value"- Equity matters. Justice matters. Critical thinking & self –reflection matters. History matters. Relationships matter.

In their 2016 State of Students of Color and American Indian Students Report they suggest Tools for addressing Education Equity. I believe our School Board can create a framework for our decision making. Examples:

1. Recognizing and Developing a common understanding of racial equality, race equity, and what it means to educational success.
2. Engaging students, parents, educators, and community members to examine what are inequities in our community.
3. Commit to doing things differently.

I recognize our School District has been working in a variety of ways to address racial and cultural divides in our community and schools. As a School Board we need to continue to support and expand work currently happening such as: Making high quality preschool available to all, full service community schools, recruiting and retaining teachers of color and indigenous teachers, additional staff supports in our schools (Integration specialists, check & connect), community partnerships, and cultural competency training with all our staff.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

How can the School Board ensure equal access to educational opportunities throughout ISD 709? Please address disparities in enrollment, funding, and course offerings.

There are opportunities to shift some boundaries for those families willing to go to neighboring schools. For instance, Lakewood elementary is under-utilized, while Lester Park is very near capacity. I have spoken with some parents with children at Lester Park who would welcome sending their children to Lakewood. We also need to keep the compensatory money allocated from the State in the schools that generated it. This will help with equalizing the course offerings at the two high schools. Right now, we are taking money generated at western schools and sending it to eastern schools. This money is allocated based on free and reduced lunch populations. Ask yourself: Is it fair to take money from the students that need it most and send it to schools that have less need? Are these our values?

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

The School District is committed to closing opportunity gaps in education as a means to close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates of our students of color and low income students.

I will continue to work with District staff to:

- Further discussions around boundary changes to address enrollment disparities
- Invest in professional staff development for all staff specific to cultural understanding, awareness and greater understanding of the barriers that families face.
- Support systematic changes such as, recruiting, hiring, and retaining more staff of color, Ojibwe & Spanish Language Immersion programs, and Early Childhood Programs (Head Start, ECFE).
- Support ISD 709 Office of Education Equity.
- Advocate for more funding for Full Service Community Schools (Myers Wilkins, Lincoln Park Middle School, Denfeld) & expand this model to other schools.
- Invest \$\$\$ and Staff resources in areas of transportation, class offerings, cultural support services, extracurricular activities.
- Maintaining and expanding our Districtwide programs/services/educational offerings for all students

We have great need as a community to continue to address disparities in housing, income, health, transportation, jobs, etc. As a School District, we have a higher % of students receiving special education services. As a community and a School District much work is happening and there have been many investments made with both staff and \$\$\$resources. I will continue to be engaged in community conversations to develop more community partnerships around: equity, mental health needs, health disparities, housing, youth homelessness, etc.

We have received a number of suggestions from the Community-Based School Equity Initiative.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

Please explain how Charter schools in the region operate, how they may or may not impact a traditional school district like ISD 709, and what ISD 709's relationship should be, if any, with Charter schools in Duluth.

Charter schools, though public schools, operate apart from the conventional school district. State law mandates their school board be made up of parents, staff from the school and community members. Also, they are more regulated by state laws than regular public institutions. There is contention in our district because when students choose a charter school, they take their individual educational funding with them to the charter. However, as a neighbor and citizen, I don't believe it is my place to tell parents what public school their children should attend. I believe it would behoove our district to have a working relationship with the area charter schools, as a lot of the students matriculate to our district middle and high schools. Also, to the extent that parents are choosing charter's, it can benefit our district to learn what they are doing differently. Parents respond to good customer service and knowing that their and their students concerns are being validated and met. We gain nothing from a contentious relationship with charter schools. I believe there is room for a win-win relationship to exist.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

Charter schools are independent public schools. They can be privately run by non-profit organizations or for-profit businesses. Funded according to enrollment levels and receive public funds on a per pupil basis. Charter schools are organized under Minnesota Statutes 124 E.

Charter schools:

1. **Lack of public accountability and subject to fewer rules, regulations, and statutes than** traditional public schools.
2. **Receive public funds but not governed by an elected public body** like traditional school districts.
3. **Lack financial transparency** and are not required to disclose how funds are raised or spent unlike traditional public schools, which are required by law to show how they use public dollars.
4. **Most often non-union, pay lower wages and benefits.** High staff turnover which undermines school performance.
5. **On average do not outperform their traditional public schools counterparts.**
6. **Often high lightened for their innovation – public schools and teachers offer many innovative programs & teachings.**
7. **Does not need to enroll students with disabilities at the same rate as traditional public schools, despite federal laws that require all publicly funded schools to serve disabled students.**
8. **State legislation**, requires that all Special Education services Edison provides are billed directly to the Duluth Public Schools. ISD 709 pays for Special Education services required by Edison. We are reimbursed for a % of those expenses – but the rest is paid for by our general fund. **We are not on a level playing field with funding and reimbursement costs.**

9. Charter schools are our competition.**QUESTION 7:**

Please explain why ISD 709 should or should not sell vacant District-owned properties, such as the Central High School building or Cobb School building, to other educational entities.

CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

The Cobb school building is not a district owned building, and it is not our place to tell The Hills to whom they may sell their building. Our budget woes are an emergency. We absolutely need to sell these vacant buildings to whomever will give us a reasonable price. New leadership could effect this sale. As far as not selling to the “competition”, I think this is a disservice to our staff which is second to none. I've spoken with many staff members, and they are not afraid of competition. It is also a disservice to parents who live in a free market economy and have numerous options for educating their children. It also neglects the responsibility of our community to allow students to be educated in the best environment for each student. We shouldn't try to force kids to go to our schools in an age where they can go to other educational options on a whim. We should meet individual student needs with the best customer service possible to help parents want their kids to stay.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

We currently have a School Board policy in place not to sell to another school. This would require changing policy.

It is not in our best long term economic interest of ISD 709 to sell to a competing school. It is in the best interest of ISD 709 and the City of Duluth for our vacant properties to be sold to an entity that brings revenue dollars back into the city property tax rolls.

Public education is a community investment for its future. Education finance is complicated. Enrollment numbers is an essential element in determining what breadth and depth of programming can be offered. Selling our buildings to a competitor would impact our enrollment numbers and impact our services and programs we provide.

Our vacant – District-owned properties are an asset to both the ISD 709 and the City of Duluth. We are aggressively working with the city, county, and our state elected leaders to market our properties, including with the City of Duluth Economic Development Office.

As a Duluth Public Schools Board member, my primary focus is how to best serve ISD 709.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

How can the School Board and ISD 709 stay responsive to student and parent concerns? If elected, how would you engage with students and parents?

Transparency is key. Showing the public what the district is doing to solve problems and where the tax dollars are going instills trust and shows honesty and respect. We need to have a better and more open dialog between staff, the board, students, parents and the community. We need more responsive board members who are willing to respond and work with community members. Customer service is more important than insincere PR. I would encourage all board members to volunteer in the schools. Board members need to be accessible, approachable and above all, reliable. We need to be ambassadors for our schools, and we need to be responsive by listening, returning phone calls and helping. Board members shouldn't be passing the buck.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

Benefits of a Public Education System are that a wide range of decision making resides in the community and with locally elected School Boards. Citizen participation and parent involvement is critical to our success.

Please check out our website: www.isd709.org for more information including:

- **ISD 709 School Board monthly meetings** – Open to the public. Recorded and can be viewed on our website. Public comment, letters, emails welcome.
- **ISD 709 communicates information to parents/caregivers.**
Examples: Districtwide weekly email newsletters, mailings, all call phone messages.
- **Individual schools communicate** in a variety of ways.
Examples: school/classroom websites, newsletters, email alerts, classroom folders, parent/teacher conferences, PTA meetings & events. Opportunities to participate in District wide & individual school committees.
- **Think Kids community meetings/surveys**
- **District staff and School Board members** attend numerous school/ community events and meet regularly in person, on phone, and by email with community members.
- **Annual Community meeting – November 9, 2017 – Lincoln Park Middle School.**

As your School Board member: I bring 23 years of professional and volunteer work engaging parents/ caregivers, families, and community members. Examples: Local, City and State MN PTA (Parent Teacher Association), chairing the League of Women Voters Duluth - Annual Citizens In Action workshop, and founding member of the Lakeside/Lester Park Community Club.

I seek input from students, parents/caregivers and community members in a multitude of ways. I have had numerous phones/in person meetings, attend school, neighborhood and community events, door knock in my District, etc. My contact information is on District website.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

What are three positive things the District is doing now to support students and, if elected, how would you continue or expand on these support structures?

1. The community school initiatives at Myer-Wilkens, Lincoln Park and Denfeld hold promise to better engage and serve the community. 2. The pathways2Teaching initiative will hopefully help to bring teachers of color back into our district. 3. The various advanced placement and college in the schools course offerings though I would work toward there being a more equitable distribution between the two high schools.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

1. Full Service Community Schools. Expanded our work at Myers-Wilkins Elementary School, Lincoln Park Middle School, and begun at Denfeld High School. Create partnerships between families, schools and community resources with a goal of narrowing the opportunity gap. Each school has a Community Coordinator working closely with the Principal, staff, parents, students, and a School-site leadership team. www.isd709.org & www.communityschools.org

I have been actively involved with our Full Service Community Schools and will continue advocating at the state level for further funding to expand.

2. Ojibwe & Spanish Language Immersion Program at Lowell Elementary School. Successfully launched the Ojibwe Language Immersion program and now are in our 4th year. Successfully launched our Spanish Immersion program beginning with Kindergarten in September 2016; now are in our 2nd year.

I am a strong supporter and have had opportunity to tour Spanish Immersion Programs with District staff as part of planning process. I will continue to advocate for providing support as we develop our Immersion programs.

3. Expanding our early childhood programs. Early childhood years play an important role in student achievement and we have a huge need in Duluth for quality early childhood programs. Districtwide we have aligned our Early Childhood Pre-K to Kindergarten Programs to improve school readiness and create a smooth transition for children, families, and staff.

I will continue to advocate for expanding early childhood programs. I have served for 3 years as the School Board Liaison to our Head Start program and will continue to be active

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE KURT KUEHN:

If elected, what would your top three priorities be for the District, and how do you propose to implement them given budgetary constraints?

1. Bring in an independent person/company to look into district finances. There are professional companies that will do this on a contingency basis. They receive a percentage of the savings. As long as it doesn't come at the expense of staff or students. 2. Sell our vacant buildings. 3. Address the achievement gap through eliminating systematic inequities. The savings from addressing inefficiencies and the revenue from selling vacant properties will help in eliminating systematic inequities. These things will not happen with the current board leadership. They seem to be satisfied with the status quo. They have not lead us to more transparency. They have voted to not consider selling vacant properties, and they have not lead us to overhaul outdated policies and procedures to eliminate systematic inequity.

CANDIDATE ROSIE LOEFFLER-KEMP:

1. **Attendance Matters District wide campaign!** Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through middle and high school. Chronic absenteeism has been found to be an early warning sign of low academic achievement and a predictor of those who may drop out of high school. As a School Board working on improving educational achievement, closing the Achievement gap, and increasing graduation rates we need to be addressing chronic absenteeism.
It is a priority for me to take this message & campaign out to the community.
2. **Mental Health Services.** We have invested in more mental health support from early childhood to high school and have created many community partnerships. We need more social workers, mental health therapists, and counselors in our schools. **My priority is to advocate for more community partnerships and for further funding.**
3. **Hiring more staff of color.** Research shows the importance of a student's chance for success by getting them in a classroom with a teacher of the same race to address the Achievement Gap.
My focus:
 - **Pathways2Teaching**
 - **Recruitment process**
 - **Collaborative more with our 3 area colleges**
4. **Class sizes.** We have schools with large class sizes and we have schools with low enrollment numbers. **My focus:**
 - **Boundary change process to balance our school enrollment numbers**
 - **More staff in buildings to reduce class sizes**
 - **Class offerings at East and Denfeld High School to address what & how it is offered**

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER DISTRICT 4 INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #709

QUESTION 1: **CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:**

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for School Board?

I am a father of two, step parent of two, and am a foster parent with Jane.

My occupation is a professional engineer specializing in structural engineering, energy analysis, and contract administration—skills that are critical in the governance of any school district.

I worked for the federal government for many year where I was also a union activist, chief steward and legislative chair.

I am running for reelection because our school has well known challenges of budget, academic proficiency and governance. I have been elected by the people of west Duluth to represent them and address our unique challenges of equity between east and west Duluth.

The main function of a school board is to be a conduit between the community and the District, to hire the Superintendent, to be a check and balance to the Superintendent, and to approve budgets and policy. In all of this you must have technological knowledge of how the system works. I think outside the box. I ask questions, I formulate solutions. I have that expertise and am effective at making necessary changes.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

I'm Jill Lofald. I grew up in Morgan Park, graduated from Esko High School and received my BS degree in teaching Communication, Theater and English from UMD in 1976. I've taught in Barnum, Esko and retired from teaching at Denfeld, after 31 years in the spring of 2016. I have been married to Roger Lofald for 41 years, have two children who attended and graduated from our western district schools and both currently reside in the 4th District. I have a 15-month-old grandson. I have been a MSHSL Coach of Debate and Speech for 40 years. I am currently coaching the Duluth Debate and Speech team. I have been selected as the Coach of the Year twice for Speech, been awarded the Greg Irons Outstanding Teacher Award, and in 2015 was the Duluth Teacher of the Year and a semi-finalist for Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

I'm running because of my deep roots in our western community- over 50 years of working, living, worshipping and shopping here. My 40 years in education gives me an important and needed perspective and knowledge of how to work with the challenges that face our classrooms and our district. I have trained over 1000 high school students on how to use their public speaking skills to lead, work for change, inspire

and step out. Because of these conversations I have had with students, I feel I now can step out and use the skills I taught them to become an advocate for our community.

QUESTION 2:

Please explain why you support public education?

CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

Public schools are critical for the functioning of a democracy where decisions must be made with rationality, fairness, recognition of long-term impacts, acknowledgment of minority viewpoints, and being supported by taxpayers.

Public schools in America are where we learn about our neighbors, where there is a robust mixing of demographics, cultures, races, and issues; in other words, where we learn about the good things of life.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

My 39 years working with all students remind me every day that public schools foster interactions and understanding among people of different backgrounds: in religion, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Public schools are the only schools that must meet the needs of all students. They do not turn away children or families. Public schools serve children with physical, emotional and mental disabilities. They serve students who are incredibly gifted and those who are learning challenged. I believe that education is the foundation of our society and public education is the strongest way to ensure that we have an informed and educated society. Children are our nation's future and we need to provide for them all and public education is a valuable investment of our public funds.

QUESTION 3:

In your opinion, what are the three most important challenges facing ISD 709 and how do you propose to address these challenges?

CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

Budgets. Enrollment decline. Achievement gaps between races and east/west.

All issues revolve around budgets. We have had budget deficits for years and this is caused by poor financial contracts (mainly building debts) that have been entered into by the school. We solve this by getting competent financial expertise to refinance our debts.

Our district must become attractive and customer driven (parent oriented) to reverse the very large enrollment decline. A welcoming environment must be modeled from the top down. As the many parents who have pulled their kids from our schools can attest, we aren't doing well in that area.

We get students back by re-instituting seven period days, which all other schools have around us.

We have to first acknowledge the achievement gap where students of color are graduating at one of the lowest rates in the country. Many schools have reduced or eliminated the achievement gap. We can too, by emphasizing that graduation is the expectation, that students of color have equal access, encouragement, and determination to enter into successful post-education careers and life goals.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

In my classroom experience I am keenly aware of our growing mental health issues. I see the state of our DPS students in the area of their mental health as one of our biggest challenges. It encompasses many of the other challenges such as: absenteeism, achievement gap and graduation rates. The DPS schools have been partnering with Duluth-based Mental Health providers to place more therapists in our schools. This is an opportunity to expand and continue to work with agencies to address our mental health concerns in our elementary, middle and high schools.

Classroom size is another challenge facing our district. Many areas of the country are facing classrooms that are literally busting out at the seams. Our district continues to work to keep class sizes below 30 in our elementary classrooms. Our middle and high school sizes do exceed what I feel our community and teachers feel is acceptable. Most are not easy problems to solve. With my experience I know I can work with our school leadership to suggest ways to reduce class size.

The third important challenge is our declining enrollment, especially in our western district. Our challenges in Duluth Public Schools, because of Charter schools and choice, is to reach out to our communities with the strengths of our schools. As board members and leaders, we need to be positive voices, strong community connectors and relationship builders within our community. We can have a stronger marketing focus in our western community.

QUESTION 4:

How can the School Board best address racial and cultural divides in the community and in our schools?

CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

We must acknowledge that we have issues and that there is systemic racism in our schools and community. There has long been denial of this, or some even blame the victims.

We must have the same expectations for achievement for ALL students. Full access to all academic and extra-curricular courses must be assured.

Truancy is an early sign of disengagement from the system and economic situations always contribute to that. We must assure that all students have access to transportation. An often overlooked issue is encouragement of extra-community involvement like drivers' educations (note the large differences in car usage from student in East and Denfeld.)

We need to "grow our own" teachers of color by encouraging and paying for students of color to enter the teacher profession. Where do we get the money to do this? By being financial sound, prioritizing, and selling our excess property.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

Bridging this divide is really in the hands of our teachers, administrators and school staff. Culturally responsive teaching is something that our district has started to work on in the last 5 years. Connecting to the students means a lot more than having the same skin color. Culture is so much more than the color of a student's skin. You have to dig deeper, culture is about family life, religion, home life, and socioeconomic status. Once an educator steps back and begins to understand the myriad ways a student's culture can impact learning, the task may seem overwhelming. But to be an effective teacher makes it no longer a choice. Everything is changing, teachers bear the burden and they have to take the lead on it.

I understand that helping students make the link between what they learn in the classroom and the life they know outside of the classroom is at the core of cultural competency, a skill sought after by school districts across the country. Our nation can no longer be satisfied with success for some students. Educators with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to value the diversity among students will contribute to an educational system designed to serve all students well. An effective school board member needs to support the school district leadership with their programs and policy decisions and hold them accountable to make sure our staff are properly, and continually, trained and our students are receiving the best possible education.

QUESTION 5:

How can the School Board ensure equal access to educational opportunities throughout ISD 709? Please address disparities in enrollment, funding, and course offerings.

CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

We must assure that money is equitably split between our east and west schools. That is not happening. Our western schools have more needs, but money earmarked for addressing those needs have been siphoned off.

When Central closed, few students went to Denfeld. That has resulted in the lowest number of graduates in Denfeld since it was built in 1926. This declining enrollment has been exasperated by the District's six period days because with fewer students in Denfeld, the scheduling options and ability to take required, and desired, classes are often closed. We must bring back 7 period days.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

As school board members, we need to hold our district accountable when it comes to fully funding, promoting and expanding the programs that address these concerns. There are disparities when it comes to the enrollment and course sections between East side and West side schools. I saw it as a teacher at Denfeld High School. We need to make sure all of our students have the opportunity to take elective and advanced classes. I also saw the increased need for extra supports that our students at Denfeld needed, which meant more dollars from the district. More staff, more programming, and more opportunities all take funding. I want to help make sure the district is focused on spending its dollars on student-focused, community-building and effective programs, like: full-service community schools, career and tech education offerings and robust clubs and extra-curriculars.

We can invite our state legislators into our schools and show them the need for increased funding from the state government. They should see first-hand what happens to our classrooms when the state funding doesn't keep up with inflation.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

Please explain how Charter schools in the region operate, how they may or may not impact a traditional school district like ISD 709, and what ISD 709's relationship should be, if any, with Charter schools in Duluth.

It is well known that the LWV has actively and legally opposed charter schools in many states across our country.

In an ideal world, we would have neighborhood schools where all children and parent go. But that model has disappeared in Duluth. Charters are non-profit public schools, which receive the same money as other public schools. They are open to all and are diverse. Law in Minnesota and most states authorizes them.

Charter schools are successful in Duluth. Many parents in the boundaries of our District, and that I represent, send their children to Charters schools, religious schools, private schools, and neighboring districts. Our District should be negotiating with them, learning from them, and selling property to them (like Central for \$14.2 million). Taxpayer built facilities must be available to further the advancement of ALL children in Duluth.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

Charter schools are public schools of choice, meaning that families choose them for their children. They operate with freedom from some of the regulations that are imposed upon district schools. Our Duluth Charter schools are public, do not charge admission, and do not have a religious focus at all. Our local school district does not tell our Duluth charter school when to open or close their doors, what kind of curriculum to use, what company to contract for food or paper. Charters have the freedom to hire teachers without a union contract.

Of course, the Charter schools impact our DPS. They take students away from attending a Duluth school. The Charter school then receives the per-pupil aid that state and federal guidelines give out. We are in competition with charter schools here is Duluth. It is hard to compete with our charter schools as it is not a level playing field. They do not have the accountability issues that public schools do. They are not governed by an elected school board but by an appointed school board. Some of the state and federal mandates that public schools must follow, charter schools do not.

I do believe in opening up more dialogue with our Charter school community. Maybe now that the issue of their expanding to a high school is not in their future, we might be able to have conversation on transitioning their 8th grade students more successfully into our Duluth schools and helping their families make the right choice for their 8th grader by enrolling them in DPS.

QUESTION 7:

Please explain why ISD 709 should or should not sell vacant District-owned properties, such as the Central High School building or Cobb School building, to other educational entities.

CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

In an ideal world, we would have neighborhood schools where all children and parent go. But that model has disappeared in Duluth. Charters are non-profit public schools, which receive the same money as other public schools. They are open to all and are diverse. Law in Minnesota and most states authorizes them and they follow the law like all other schools.

Charter schools are successful in Duluth. Many parents in the boundaries of our District, and that I represent, send their children to Charters schools, religious schools, private schools, and neighboring districts. Our District should be negotiating with them, learning from them, and selling property to them (like Central for \$14.2 million). Taxpayer built facilities must be available to further the advancement of ALL children in Duluth.

Cobb School is not owned by ISD 709.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

Many in the community that support the presence of charter schools state that competition is good and that it can have a positive effect on educational growth here in Duluth; I don't believe education should be viewed in this competitive framework. But, if we do look at this competition theory and then make the analogy that most businesses do not enjoy when competing businesses move into their neighborhood, and I am almost certain that no business looks to rent or sell some vacant office space, in their businesses building, to their competitor. If you own your own Dental practice and own the building you work out of, do you really think you would rent out your space to a competing dentist who would potentially draw customers away from you? It is in this vein that I also state I would not sell a vacant school building to an educational entity. It will definitely draw students out of our schools and will hurt us in the areas of: class size, course offerings, teachers and extra-curricular offerings.

As the candidate in the 4th district I cannot endorse this budget choice because I know it will have the worst effect on our western schools-especially Denfeld.

I believe we will sell these vacant buildings, without the need to sell to educational rivals.

QUESTION 8: CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

How can the School Board and ISD 709 stay responsive to student and parent concerns? If elected, how would you engage with students and parents?

School board member must represent the people that elect them by always talking with them and interacting with the communities.

The fact of the matter is, many parents feel unwelcome by the current administration. Our schools should be customer driven and the parents are our customers. Priority must be given to being responsive and listening to the concerns of our parents. When there are grievances, listening and being responsive to their concerns will go a long way at reducing dissatisfaction.

School boards should function as a conduit from the community to the schools.

Community members also include taxpayers, as well as parents and staff. Taxpayers foot the bills, and their concerns should be listened to.

School boards are non-partisan by Minnesota law (Minn. Stat. 200, Subd 28.) Duluth is one of the few cities in Minnesota where school board elections have been debased by making them partisan. This has reduced responsiveness to the community at large. All candidates should affirm that they are non-partisan.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

School Board members need to continue to appreciate the public comment portion of every school board meeting. It is a great time to learn what concerns parents and students have and also a great time to hear the successes and the challenges. School Board members can encourage their community to use the public comment time more often.

We can continue our role as a school board member like we are always running for the seat. We should continue to attend community events, be accessible and approachable. We can host community listening and feedback sessions throughout the year and in all of our communities.

My passion for education, students and their families will be key in the area of engaging them. I have built relationships over the years and will continue. I will attend community meetings, events and be open to conversations.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

What are three positive things the District is doing now to support students and, if elected, how would you continue or expand on these support structures?

Our vocational classes are outstanding. The fab lab, building technology, automotive, and design are attracting students and teaching students live skills and lifetime occupations.

Our college-in-the-school classes are allowing students to pursue college credit while in high school. This can save future college students' families much money. But care must be taken to assure that all students across socio- economic lines have access to these classes. We must also assure that we have 7 period days so students can actually schedule these classes.

Language immersion classes in Spanish and Ojibwa are celebrating our cultures and diversity.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

Full-Community schools represent a place-based school improvement strategy in which “schools partner with community agencies and local government to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.” Many operate year-round, from morning to evening, and serve both children and adults. Although the approach is appropriate for students of all backgrounds, many community schools serve neighborhoods where poverty and racism erect barriers to learning, and where families have few resources to supplement what a typical school provides. A positive thing happening in our district are Full-Community schools at Myers-Wilkens, Lincoln and Denfeld.

Parent Teacher Home Visits are a fast, inexpensive and replicable strategy for engaging families, educators and students as a team. For years, research has shown that families are essential to student and school success. The second positive thing would be the Home Visit model used at Lincoln Park Middle School and this year at Myers-Wilkens. Continued communication between parent and teachers is always stressed and encouraged. There was a time when a teacher showing up on a student's doorstep meant something bad. But increasingly, home visits have become a tool to spark parental involvement.

Third positive item, reflects my top priority on mental health, and that is the district's partnership with mental health agencies like Nystrom and Associates with the continued presence of mental health therapists and counselors to help our students with social, emotional and learning challenges. I also know how hard teachers, social workers, counselors and administrators work

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE ART JOHNSTON:

If elected, what would your top three priorities be for the District, and how do you propose to implement them given budgetary constraints?

Budgets. Enrollment decline. Achievement gaps between races and east/west.

All issues revolve around budgets. We have had budget deficits for years and this is caused by poor financial contracts (mainly building debts) that have been entered into by the school due to poor administrative leadership. We solve this by getting competent financial expertise to refinance our debts, by selling excess property to the highest bidder, by getting money into the classrooms, and by stop the enormous diversions of money from the classrooms caused by this poor financial management. We bring students back by being an attractive learning environment and being customer driven (parent oriented) to reverse the very large enrollment decline. A welcoming environment must be modeled from the top down. As the many parents who have pulled their kids from our schools can attest, we aren't doing well in that area.

We get students back by re-instituting seven period days, which all other schools around us have.

We must get equity in graduation rates and proficiency scores between our students of color and white students. W must restore equity between Denfeld and East HS , and Ordean East and Lincoln Park, and all our elementary schools.

CANDIDATE JILL LOFALD:

My first priority would be to maintain an effective board. Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust. There is honor in casting a sincere vote, win or lose. But, after the vote, effective boards move forward together. We need to realize that boards confront major issues all the time, and that a long-term commitment to collegiality and respect is critical to effective boards. The impact of respect goes beyond the board. The board sets the tone for the entire school system and community. This above priority does not take any money and can go a long way to helping our district move forward with policy, accountability and student achievement.

My second priority is to continue to be vigilant in our hiring of good, qualified teachers and staff. I'm impressed with the Teacher2Pathway initiative and its focus on growing our own students to be teachers; especially students of color and different cultures. We need the best teachers and we need to be looking to hire top notch teachers that have cultural competence.

Lastly, I believe a common and equitable educational system is integral to equality, democracy, and a sense of true community. As the U.S. Department of Education declares, "equity in education is vital because opportunity is a core American value" and integral to the country's economic strength. (Atlantic Monthly 2015). The western schools are struggling due in part, to decrease enrollment. This leads to reduced teachers