

Why are you running for school board?

I choose to seek another term on the board because I have a deep care and concern for the students in our growing community. Ensuring that all students are provided with the opportunities necessary to achieve their greatest potential after graduation is key.

Over the last 17 years as a board member I have seen great change in the district. I began my service as a concerned parent, wanting the best education possible for my three sons and their schoolmates. Over those years, I have learned that it takes a big commitment on the part of the board member to develop a thorough understanding of the complexities of guiding a school district. Much time is needed to become familiar with the roles of administration, teachers and staff. I have spent a significant amount of time going to board meetings, board committee meetings, state and area school board meetings, finance/budget seminars and meeting with local and state legislators and political candidates. My work on our board policy/legislative committee has proven to be especially enlightening and fruitful.

My service on other local boards including the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, Ashland-Greenwood Area Community for Kids and the Ashland-Greenwood Public Schools Foundation has brought interaction with school groups including the FBLA and the AG Booster Club. Over the years, I have spent time in classrooms at the Elementary, Middle and High School levels. This has given me valuable insight into the day to day dealings that occur in the classrooms.

I want AGPS to continue to be an integral component of our community. Strong schools are vital to a strong community. Families, the local economy and schools are all closely intertwined and depend heavily on each other.

Property taxes are a challenge, especially with increasing property valuations in the district creating higher tax bills for local taxpayers. How will you support providing excellent educational and extracurricular opportunities for Ashland-Greenwood students while also being conscientious of the contribution of district tax payers?

I have worked hard along with other board members to maintain the lowest possible tax impact to our taxpayers. The AG school district has demonstrated fiscal responsibility with historically low tax levies compared to neighboring districts and also compared to districts of comparable size across the state. There are times when levies must increase in response to inflation, salary increases and increased healthcare costs to staff. This should be familiar to tax payers, as a family's budget

must adjust and increase due to these factors as well. Over time a family's earnings must increase to meet the cost of living. Tax asking may increase to meet these needs. If it does not, then difficult future cuts might become necessary to sustain current operational costs.

The current administration has done a phenomenal job of identifying areas and cutting costs in reaction to a 3% cap the state put on the funding that school districts can pull from their property tax levy. Nearly \$500,000 was cut in non-payroll expenses the first year of the caps (from 2022/23 to 2023/24) We want to continue to offer excellent teachers, programs and extracurricular opportunities for our students. If caps or future mandates from the state continue to limit our asking authority, the district may be forced to lean more on private funding and increased support from entities such as the AGPS Foundation.

With growing enrollment, appropriate staffing levels are a concern. How will you ensure effective staffing levels are in place to address the varying needs of all students?

Expected enrollment numbers in the 2027-28 school year will see an increase from 1112 students to 1187 students in the district. Much of the increase is expected at the elementary level (K-5). It is critical that teacher:student ratios remain at an optimal level, so that quality early learning occurs. If early learners get behind, it will affect their entire academic experience. In addition, the district is currently operating at a 3-5 teacher deficit. Not addressing this deficit adversely impacts our students' education.

Adequate funds are needed to address student concerns, all the way from our large special education population to our high ability learners. We must do everything in our power to meet the obligations of being a responsible board. Our responsibility is to our students first, obtaining adequate funding is crucial to positive student outcomes. There must be a balance between tax payer accountability and thriving students.

What are other key issues facing the Ashland-Greenwood school district and how do you feel the school board should address them?

Key issues facing the school district include uncertainty with state funding, high cost and need of staff for special education, maintaining high quality teachers in a shrinking teacher workforce and lack of a cash reserve.

The state is forcing increased burden on school districts by limiting their tax asking authority. If this continues and the amount of state aid per student

decreases, the board will have to figure out ways to generate more revenue. What this would entail remains to be seen.

Special education funding may undergo decreased funding in the near future, increasing the financial burden on the district. We must ensure that we meet the needs of all students, especially the most vulnerable.

Capital maintenance issues have taken a back seat in the last few years due to budget constraints. Continuing to defer building and property maintenance could become very problematic in the very near future.

As you can see, there are a variety of financial challenges facing the school district. It will likely take a board that can work together and vote together to get key items passed that will set the district up for an improved financial position. Each board member is tasked with making decisions that will keep the well being and ability to provide a quality education for all students, not anything on a personal agenda.