SPECIAL EDITION VOTER GUIDE 2022



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2022 · EDEN PRAIRIE

elcome to the 2022 Eden Prairie Voter Guide brought to you by Eden Prairie Local News (EPLN). If this is the first time you have heard about EPLN, we're very excited to meet you and hope that you will join us going forward. More on that in a minute.

If you have been watching us as we grow, welcome and thank you!

EPLN is a nonprofit, nonpartisan digital news source. We exist to tell your story – the people of Eden Prairie! We published our first story in September 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our long-time weekly newspaper, the Eden Prairie News, had been scuttled earlier that spring by a New York-based hedge fund and suddenly this city of 65,000 people had no local source of news.

We've heard from many of you how much you miss your local newspaper.

A group of interested citizens got together in the spring of 2020 and began to invent an online newspaper from the ground up. All volunteers, that group formed a board of directors and began the process of creating a nonprofit, online newspaper.

From there, the group began recruiting experienced writers and editors, as well as those without much experience but with a sense of responsibility and willing to work hard to provide a local news organization.

For the first year, a handful of volunteer, mostly former journalists, joined a group of dedicated citizens willing to knock on doors to raise money to keep the fledgling organization going.

Two years later, we have a few parttime paid staff members, and a hard-working group of writers who are paid a modest stipend for the stories they write or for photographs. Together, we have published nearly 1,200 stories

about your schools, your city, and you.

One of the primary motivations that gave birth to EPLN was providing residents like you with information about local elections. Our first stories published on Sept. 25, 2020 were interviews with city council candidates; the next day interviews with school board candidates.

Today, in one of just three occasional print editions – and the first to be mailed to every household in Eden Prairie - we bring you the information you need to be an informed voter between now and Nov. 8.

We want – and need – your support to continue building EPLN. Please consider signing up for a free subscription at eplocalnews.org/subscribe. You will have the choice between receiving a daily or weekly email newsletter wrapup of stories published. Your subscription will not only provide you with important news about your neighbors,

businesses, and activities, it also will help us as we seek donations from foundations and other sources that match funds to help news start-ups such as EPLN, or from advertisers and sponsors. Please patronize the advertisers in this print edition, and online. Tell them you saw them on EPLN!

So, please take some time with this Voter Guide to learn about how to register to vote, where to vote, and learn about the candidates in the upcoming election. Leave it on your coffee table or kitchen counter for future reference. If you'd like to meet us and learn more about EPLN, come to our annual meeting at 9 a.m. Oct. 17 at Star Bank, 250 Prairie Center Drive.

If you want a local news source that you can trust and that provides information you can use, please sign up for your free EPLN subscription and check us out at eplocalnews.org!



Vhen and how to vote in Eden Prairie

den Prairie residents have • the opportunity this fall d to "hire" their government representation. All it takes is the act of voting.

RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER ****ECRWSSEDDM****

Candidates from city council and school board all the way up to 3rd District U.S. representative are on the ballot, waiting for final voting on Nov. 8 to find out if "elected official" will be on their resume for 2023 and beyond.

If you will be 18 or older on Election Day and are registered to vote – or will register at the polls – you can help determine who's hired and who's not. Absentee ballots can be requested now, and early voting in person – including locally at the Eden Prairie City Center, 8080 Mitchell Road – got underway Sept. 23.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day. Identify your polling location and bring



proof of residency to the poll if you're registering to vote on that day.

Here are the of the best online sources of voting information:

- Minnesota Secretary of State: sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/
- Hennepin County: hennepin.

us/residents#elections

• City of Eden Prairie: edenprairie.org/city-government/elections

The Minnesota Secretary of State Office also has detailed information about voter registration at sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/register-to-vote.

School Board election is for four full-term seats, one special two-year seat

They say good schools are the backbone of a community. On Nov. 8, our community will have the chance to ensure Eden Prairie's remain strong, when voters will select five candidates to join the board, or continue to serve.

The school board shapes the strategic direction of our district. It sets high-level goals, then the superintendent administers the board's vision. The board also hires the superintendent, approves the budget, and makes sure that our schools are spending wisely and are financially sound.

Voters will be asked to fill five open board seats for terms beginning January 2023. School board terms are staggered so the seven-member board is never replaced all at once.

Four of these seats are for four-year terms. The fifth seat is for a special, shorter term of two years. The person elected to this seat will serve the remaining two years left on the term of a school board member who resigned in September 2021.

We hope you will read the candidates' profiles and responses to EPLN's questions and consider: Are they qualified

to serve on the school board? Do you agree with their positions? Do you feel their goals and plans will best serve our students, staff, and community?

We encourage you to visit the candidates' websites to learn more about their views, values, and visions. If you haven't voted already, head to the polls on Nov. 8 to help choose board members you think will best serve our public schools.

Position: Eden Prairie School Board Member (4-year position)

CANDIDATES

Steve Bartz (incumbent) Aaron Casper (incumbent) Debjyoti "DD" Dwivedy (incumbent) Abby Libsack Francesca Pagan-Umar (incumbent) Jody Ward-Rannow

JOB POSTING

In addition to seeking one executive who will fill a two-year, unexpired term, Eden Prairie is seeking four other executives who, for the next four years, will establish and monitor policies for Eden Prairie School District #272 in concert with fellow office holders (one vote each), but delegate administrative duties to the school superintendent. Exec-

utives who are hired to be part of the school board - typically called school board members - approve the district's budget, monitor finances, hire a superintendent, and establish a strategic vision.

COMPENSATION

School board executives, who have two meetings per month, receive a stipend of \$4,800 per year.

OUALIFICATIONS

A school board member must be at least 21 years old, an eligible voter, a district resident for at least 30 days, and not be a convicted sex offender.

ABOUT THE HIRING PROCESS

The school board is composed of seven members, each of whom typically is elected for a four-year term. Terms are staggered, so that the entire board is not up for election at the same time. These are at-large representatives, not assigned to specific wards or areas of the Eden Prairie School District. This election differs in that four executives are being elected to four-year terms, and one executive is being elected to fill the remaining two years of a term for an executive who resigned in mid-term in September 2021.

Steve Bartz

Website: stevebartz4ep.com

Bartz, 49, is an 18-year resident of Eden Prairie. He and his wife Traci have three kids. Their son is a 2021 graduate of EPHS, now attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and their daughters are seniors at EPHS. Elected in 2022, he currently is a director and treasurer of the Eden Prairie School Board. Bartz has served in our schools in the following ways: classroom and Eden Lake carnival volunteer; field trip chaperone; speaker at EPHS careers class round-table discussions; and job shadow host for students interested in the medical profession. He is a long-time coach from grade school into high school for a variety of his kids' sports teams. He is active at Grace Church of Eden Prairie, having served in a variety of youth ministries and community outreach events, and will co-lead a men's bible study again this fall. Professionally, he works as a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist in the Methodist Hospital anesthesia department, where he has been employed for 20 years. Additionally, he works part-time at Ridgeview Medical

Center in Waconia, and has also provided contract anesthesia services in greater Minnesota.

EPLN: What difference would you hope to make as a school board member?

BARTZ: If reelected, I would continue my efforts to make a difference by providing common sense, principled leadership and decision making with an education-first vision. I am a proponent of our schools, teachers, and support staff working together with parents and the community to provide an educational experience prioritizing academic excellence, high standards and expectations with regard to character, behavior and responsibility, as well as district transparency and accountability.

fully-funded, right-sized and equipped classrooms and safe buildings with highly skilled, caring teachers and staff.



Steve Bartz

survey data reveals high satisfaction scores in the 90th percentile among all people groups and demographics. I will continue to champion these efforts. If we are treating others how we would like to be treated, with trust, authenticity and mutual respect, we can make an incredible impact in the lives of each student in EP Schools.

> **EPLN: Do you support the** 2018-2023 strategies for the Eden Prairie Schools that are currently in place? If not, what would you change?

BARTZ: Yes, I support the 2018-2023 strategies that are in place. Over the past four years, many of the district's strategies have taken shape. The Designing Pathways initiative tied to the 2019 voter-approved

bond referendum has provided safety and security updates, improved and updated learning spaces, a state-of-theart Performing Arts Center at CMS, and the shift of our pre-K students into our elementary schools and sixth-graders into the middle school. Secondly, with the groundwork for EP Online being established prior to the pandemic, Eden Prairie schools pivoted efficiently and effectively to keep our students engaged and learning in a virtual setting. EP Online, our newest "school" in the district, continues to be a choice for families and students both inside and outside our district. Academic programs in our high school and middle schools continue to expand, allowing students to align their potential career interests with related course choices. Lastly, I am enthusiastically supportive of the board's end goal (policy) of preparing each of our students with 21st century skills, the 4 C's — critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication preparing them for their next steps after graduation.

Furthermore, I want to continue the work I've done with fellow board members, overseeing and promoting the financial stability of the district. If reelected, I will continue to prioritize good stewardship of the investments being made in our schools. I will advocate to keep Eden Prairie's school taxes among the lowest of our neighboring districts, ensuring our students are in

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EPLN: How will you support racial equity in the Eden Prairie Schools?

BARTZ: A definition of equity first needs to be established. As it relates to education, I prefer the definition of equity described as impartiality to equal opportunities and just treatment of students. I support this cause, advocating for good-faith efforts by both our schools and the people groups we are serving, regardless of race, culture, or ethnicity – while working together to understand what barriers stand in the way of each individual's path to achieving their full potential. However, this does not mean we lower standards; rather, we continue to set high expectations, providing students the tools and support needed to be their best. Such work is underway in our schools, with a goal that achievement disparities will not be predictable between racial groups. Our graduation rates exceed those of most Minnesota schools, especially with regard to our students of color. District

EPLN: Do you support the referendum the current board has placed on the November ballot?

BARTZ: Yes, as a board member, I cast my vote of approval for the district to put two referendum questions on the ballot this Nov. 8. Over the past several months, I have listened intently to presentations by our administration. I have asked questions and reviewed shortterm and long-term budget assumptions related to both the operating levy, which supports learning and programs across the district, and our capital project levy (aka tech levy), which funds technology, security and infrastructure. Eden Prairie taxpayer dollars have been impressively stretched beyond what the 2014 referendum assumptions predicted, but they are set to expire. Inflation-based stateaid formulas continue to lag behind actual inflation numbers, which puts our schools in a tough position in the event the referendums do not pass. Historical-

Bartz continues on page 3

Position: Eden Prairie School Board Member (4-year position)



Aaron Casper

Website: Casper4SchoolBoard.com

Casper is currently in his third year serving on the Eden Prairie School Board. He was treasurer for two years and now serves as vice-chair. Casper has been an Eden Prairie resident since 2003. He has been married to Lisa for 24 years, and they have four children: three college-age daughters and an eighth grade son attending CMS. All four children are products of Eden Prairie Schools and attended Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion program.

Casper has previously served as an Eden Prairie Community Foundation Finance Committee member, and Eden Prairie Fire Relief Association trustee, and past president. He's currently in his 12th year on the Eden Prairie Fire Department as a duty crew firefighter, active in the Eden Prairie A.M. Rotary Club, and participates in the men's ministry program at Grace Church, while continuing to coach in the Eden Prairie youth basketball and football associations.

Professionally, he has worked as an insurance benefits consultant since 1998 for a firm working almost exclusively in the public sector. He works with K-12 superintendents, finance directors, and human resource professionals throughout the state. Casper holds Series 6 and 65 securities licenses and has completed the Certified Financial Planner certificate program through Minnesota State University. He earned a BA degree in political science from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

EPLN: What difference would you hope to make as a school board member?

CASPER: If provided the opportunity to continue to serve on the school

board, I would work to maintain the financial stability and accountability standards that have positioned Eden Prairie Schools as a destination district for not only families and their students, but also well-qualified and dedicated teaching professionals. At a time in which families and staff have options, it would be my continued goal to attract and retain the highest caliber teaching professionals to lead our students into the future through robust academic programming that promotes personalized learning and student choice.

EPLN: How will you support racial equity in the Eden Prairie Schools?

CASPER: I understand and support the value of creating an inclusive culture and attracting students and staff that know how to interact effectively with people from different cultures, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. I affirm each student in the Eden Prairie School District deserves the right to have an educational environment free from any form of racial discrimination. I have supported, and will continue to support the ongoing evaluation of curriculum, continued student input, and data driven analysis of discipline data while ensuring no student group(s) are marginalized in the process.

EPLN: Do you support the 2018-2023 strategies for the Eden Prairie Schools that are currently in place? If not, what would you change?

CASPER: Yes, I supported the Eden Prairie Schools 2018-2023 strategic plan focusing on personalized learning initiatives through Designing Pathways, eliminating achievement disparities through equitable access, and engaging stakeholders throughout our community. I would also welcome the opportunity to participate in the development and implementation of the next five-year strategic planning process scheduled



Aaron Casper

to begin in 2023.

EPLN: Do you support the referendum the current board has placed on the November ballot?

CASPER: Yes, I voted to bring the referendum to the voters of Eden Prairie and would encourage a yes vote for both the operating levy question and the capital project levy. Through prudent fiscal management of taxpayer dollars, Eden Prairie Schools has exceeded the promise made during our last referendum in 2014. Our district has been able to avoid reductions to programs and services for a full eight years. During that same time, we've been able to reduce class sizes, implement our personalized learning and academic programing, and introduce capstone projects. As a district, we are headed in the right direction and have positive momentum on our side as we look to continue down the path of excellence while inspiring each student.

EPLN: In your view, is the quality of Eden Prairie Schools about where it should be, relative to the amount of property taxes paid by residents and businesses?

CASPER: Yes. As a parent of three current college students, all of which are products of Eden Prairie Schools, what I can share with my fellow community members is the quality of education our children received along with their peers was exceptional. When talking to them along with several of their friends as they returned home from either attending college, technical schools, or jobs after high school, every one of them shared how well-prepared they were whatever their next educational opportunity happened to be. Eden Prairie Schools continue to be among the lowest property tax communities when compared to our surrounding communities.

EPLN: School board members need to collaborate in order to get things done. How and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that would benefit the school board's work?

CASPER: I've been fortunate to have had the past three years to serve our great community as a school board member and work with a handful of different board members during that time. Keeping the theme of "what's best for all students" top of mind has made it possible to successfully collaborate with my fellow board members while continuing to move the district forward. I've also previously served as a trustee and president of our Eden Prairie Fire Relief Association, working collaboratively with the City of Eden Prairie and the City Council. I tend to be a natural consensus builder and welcome alternative points of voice. If provided the opportunity to remain on the board Nov.8, I will continue to serve the students and Eden Prairie community to the best of my ability.

Bartz from page 2

ly, districts resorting to drastic budget cuts find it difficult to recover once their momentum is stalled. Our community has an upstanding record of supporting our schools, which in turn supports our property values and local economy. I encourage everyone to visit epvote.org to learn more about the referendums and how your vote can impact Eden Prairie schools. lege credits at little to no extra expense, which can potentially save families thousands of dollars. If reelected, efforts to keep school taxes low for families and business owners will continue to be a priority for me. on the board. As a current board member, I understand each director brings with them unique perspectives and life experiences. While it is expected members may not always see eye-to-eye, it is imperative that as a board we act respectfully and professionally toward one another and in the community. Over the past year, I have made a point to meet with my fellow board members individually to get to know them better. Finally, I will continue to apply the advice my favorite science teacher (my dad) always gave me which is, "Do your best."

EPLN: In your view, is the quality of Eden Prairie Schools about where it should be, relative to the amount of property taxes paid by residents and businesses?

BARTZ: Great schools are the backbone of a vibrant and healthy community; however, they are not without a worthy cost. Eden Prairie Schools have a consistent track record of providing excellent programs in academics, activities, and the arts at an exceptional value, as our school taxes consistently remain among the lowest in the southwest metro. Students receive a well-rounded education that exceeds Minnesota state graduation requirements. Additionally, our high school students enjoy a variety of class choices with options to earn colEPLN: School board members need to collaborate in order to get things done. How and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that would benefit the school board's work?

BARTZ: My work in healthcare, specifically in my role as an anesthesia provider, is analogous with the collaborative work of a school board member. In the operating room, each person plays a vital role on the procedural team to ensure the best outcome for the patient. An "all hands on deck" effort is common in my work and something I enjoy being a part of. My education and training in critical care and anesthesia have prepared me to manage difficult situations. The experience I have clearly communicating and collaborating across multiple disciplines and specialties to achieve optimal results has proven valuable to my time



Position: Eden Prairie School Board Member (4-year position)

Debjyoti "DD" Dwivedy

Website: ddforep.com

Dwivedy was elected to the Eden Prairie School Board in 2019 and serves as its clerk. His civilian occupation is system lead for Network Security & Solutions Engineering, Federal Reserve National IT. He also has an Army career, serving in the U.S. Army Reserves after a previous enlistment and service as a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He is a member of Eden Prairie A.M. Rotary. His other volunteer activities include: member of the Race Equity Advisory Commission Hennepin County; member of the Regent Candidate Advisory Council, University of Minnesota; and senior vice president, Policy & Strategic Affairs, for Immigration Voice. He has a B.S. degree in electronics and communication engineering and an M.S. degree in computer engineering (networking).

EPLN: What difference would you hope to make as a school board member?

DWIVEDY: I believe I bring a very diverse perspective and unique experience to the Eden Prairie School Board.

- I am the only first-generation American on the board.
- I am the only member on the board who has real-world expertise in data security (cloud and network) from my 12-plus years of experience in civilian career.
- I am the only member of the board who brings seven-plus years of physical security expertise through my experience in the Army.
- I am one of the very few members on the board who has a wide range of experience at the federal and state level to negotiate, collaborate, and craft policies.

Over the last three years, I brought these perspectives and experiences to the board to serve our students, teachers, staff, and the community effectively. If reelected, I will keep on doing that.



Debjyoti "DD" Dwivedy

DWIVEDY: Eden Prairie Schools empowers each student to reach personal fulfillment and contribute purposefully to our ever-changing world and focuses on their well-being, development, and success. Our teachers and staff take personal interest to inspire each student to contribute positively. The board encouraged the administration to make sure that staff reflects the diversity of our student population.

As chair of the Policy Committee, I championed the change of the policy to monitor the end results for each ethnic group of the student population to track progress and focus on areas requiring attention to fulfill our mission. I supported the inclusive and equitable school calendar, which accommodates and celebrates various religious and ethnic festivals and customs.

Over the years, we have built an inclusive culture and a welcoming environment in our schools. We made sure that students attending EPHS for four years will graduate on time, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, or religion. Our third and 10th grade reading scores are on a positive trend, which is against the trend of neighboring districts and the state. More students of color are enrolled in AP classes than ever before.

I strongly advocated and supported these measures and will keep going

are delivering the promise made to the community about implementing Designing Pathways: personalized learning; offering choice programming; eliminating achievement disparities; increasing graduation rates; and engaging our stakeholders to achieve the district's mission.

Though we made significant strides and achieved great success, we have a lot of work ahead of us and I am fully committed to do what it takes to be on the right track toward academic achievement, educational excellence, safe and secure schools, and fiscal stewardship of taxpayers' dollars.

EPLN: Do you support the referendum the current board has placed on the November ballot?

DWIVEDY: Absolutely. In meetings, I have championed the cause and worked to develop consensus among board members for unified support of the proposal.

The operating levy, which supports programs across the district, if passed, will provide long-term fiscal stability, helping us achieve educational excellence. It will help us keep K-5 class sizes lowest among the southwest metro, maintain mental health support for students, and keep and attract the best teachers. The current operating levy, approved in 2014, was promised for five years but with the fiscal stewardship and discipline of the board and administration is in its ninth year.

The capital project levy, which provides technology, security, and infrastructure across the district, if passed, would ensure: continued student access to devices that help in their everyday learning; security of student and staff data, the centerpiece of my campaign; and would maintain and update critical infrastructure that is nearing end-of-life. Renewal would provide funding for investment in top-tier protection and to stay on the leading edge of data and device security. We've seen the positive impact of this during the pandemic. While other districts struggled to provide infrastructure for remote learning, we were ready on day one for every grade level.

convinced the district provides a very high-quality education with state-ofart infrastructure and facilities.

The board has shown extraordinary fiscal discipline and stewardship of taxpayer dollars and I am proud to be a part of the team for the last three years. The 2014 levy, initially approved for five years, is in the ninth year without budget cuts, workforce reduction, or change in offerings. It was possible because of the long-term vision and planning of the board and efficiencies brought by the administration, year after year.

The tax rate of Eden Prairie Schools is one of the lowest among the neighboring districts and districts of similar sizes across the state.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. There is no room for complacency. We need to keep doing the things working for us and find every opportunity to bring efficiencies to the system. We must be laser focused on delivering world-class education and maintaining/enhancing our facilities and infrastructure.

I am fully committed to the task.

EPLN: School board members need to collaborate in order to get things done. How and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that would benefit the school board's work?

DWIVEDY: The strength of Eden Prairie Schools and its board is its diversity. It is an honor and a privilege for me to serve with individuals who bring their passion, experience, and diverse perspectives every time. I learn a lot from the discussions, where viewpoints different from mine are shared.

As a member of the Community Linkage Committee, we collaborated to start a new project, Measuring what Matters, to bring more transparency to the public. We started the initiative to make the board more visible by being present in the different school activities and gatherings across the district.

As a chair of the Policy Committee, I helped to develop the consensus to change the Ends Monitoring Policy to track progress across each student ethnic group.

The educational excellence, personal care, and inclusive culture in our buildings is a product of the hard work and unparalleled dedication of our teachers and staff. They need our continuous support, encouragement, and advocacy. I have been the strongest cheerleader and advocate for our district and community during my time on the board and I will keep on doing that, if reelected.

EPLN: How will you support racial equity in the Eden Prairie Schools? forward if reelected.

EPLN: Do you support the 2018-2023 strategies for the Eden Prairie Schools that are currently in place? If not, what would you change?

DWIVEDY: I absolutely support the 2018-2023 strategies that are in place for the Eden Prairie Schools. As a current board member of the School Board, I worked shoulder-to-shoulder with the district administration to make sure that the strategies are implemented effectively and in a timely manner. The implementations were also monitored closely to make sure that we

EPLN: In your view, is the quality of Eden Prairie Schools about where it should be, relative to the amount of property taxes paid by residents and businesses?

DWIVEDY: We live in an outstanding community, and I am proud to call it home. It is extremely supportive and invested in the long-term success of our schools and students. I'm As senior vice president of Immigration Voice, I negotiated and collaborated with lawmakers from both sides of the aisle for the successful passage of a High Skilled Immigration Reform Bill in a divided U.S. Congress.

Throughout my time at Eden Prairie Schools and in my professional and Army careers, I demonstrated the ability to effectively communicate and collaborate across multiple levels to achieve the desired results. I will continue doing so if reelected.

I dentifying and joining with souls of like and open minds makes progress through life measurably more enjoyable and easier. Dr. Jean Harris – Mayor of Eden Prairie, 1995-2001

Position: Eden Prairie School Board Member (4-year position)

Abby Libsack

Website: abbyforep.com

Libsack was raised in Missouri and also lived in Colorado and Georgia before moving to Eden Prairie in 2013. She and her husband, Syd, a 1998 Eden Prairie graduate, have two children: Carley, 12th grade; and Graham, eighth grade. Libsack has a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Northwest Missouri State and a master's in curriculum from the University of Colorado-Boulder. She taught fifth grade from 2002 to 2005, has been a private tutor, and served as a substitute teacher in the Eden Prairie Schools from 2016 to 2020. Libsack has been a classroom and field-trip volunteer, Eden Prairie High School Math Center volunteer, volunteer for school carnivals and fundraisers, volunteer team mom for baseball, Eden Prairie Volleyball Association board member, and volunteer photographer for school and sports events in Eden Prairie. She has operated a small business, Abby Libsack Photography, since 2010.

EPLN: What difference would you hope to make as a school board member?

LIBSACK: I feel very fortunate to be a candidate for a school board seat in a district that already has so many excellent programs in place and values each student's voice. I would hope to find a way to give teachers and staff a bigger voice in the conversation. America is facing a teacher turnover crisis and we need to be vigilant in giving them the support they need to remain in Eden Prairie. Teachers are our front line workers. They are the ones face-to-face with the students we serve daily and are invaluable to the continued success of our district. As a board member, I would hope to be in touch with schools, teachers, staff, students, and families more often to hear about what is working well and what we could do to improve.

EPLN: How will you support racial equity in the Eden Prairie



Abby Libsack

students feel welcome and included. We can do this by making sure our staff and teachers are representative of the diversity of our community and by incorporating elements of different cultures into our curriculum. Additionally, we can promote racial equity by recognizing, sharing, and celebrating the unique racial and cultural backgrounds of our students. Sharing holidays and traditions and having guest speakers would be one way to accomplish this.

As a board member, it would be my responsibility to listen, learn, and support measures that ensure all students feel valued. By working together, we can create an environment where all students feel valued and supported.

EPLN: Do you support the 2018-2023 strategies for the **Eden Prairie Schools that are** currently in place? If not, what would you change?

LIBSACK: I do support these strategies. I feel that personalizing learning, eliminating achievement disparities, and engaging our stakeholders are all essential in achieving the district's mission. The strategic plan, core values, and mission are well-developed by staff, executives, and board members who care about the success of each student and his/her success.

EPLN: Do you support the referendum the current board has placed on the November ballot?

LIBSACK: I support the referendum because I believe it is critical to maintaining excellence in our schools. Our board has worked diligently to stretch our funds and find the most efficient ways to use our funds while still providing world-class opportunities

for our students. Replacing the current operating levy and renewing the capital projects levy would allow the district to maintain stability and plan for the future of our district without budget reductions. Decreasing the budget means possibly dismissing staff or resources, which would have a negative impact on our students.

EPLN: In your view, is the quality of Eden Prairie Schools about where it should be, relative to the amount of property taxes paid by residents and businesses?

LIBSACK: Absolutely! Eden Prairie is an outstanding and supportive community. The strides made in recent years to offer individualized experiences and narrow the achievement gap while preparing our students for the world after high school have been phenomenal. Eden Prairie School District has worked hard to eliminate unnecessary costs to stretch our budget further. Our tax rates are lower than nearly all of our surrounding districts and we've done this while maintaining a stable budget for multiple years. In addition, we have put a great deal of effort into fundraising to supplement

our budget. All of this has allowed us to maintain our high standards despite tight budgets.

EPLN: School board members need to collaborate in order to get things done. How and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that would benefit the school board's work?

LIBSACK: I think this would be the best part of serving on the board. I value collaboration and enjoy listening to those with other viewpoints and areas of expertise. I have experience in the classroom as a teacher, substitute, and volunteer. I have recently volunteered on multiple boards and in various leadership positions in the community.

One of my most memorable and challenging collaboration experiences was as a co-chair of the elementary school carnival. It was incredible to see so many people volunteering and working together with one focus. Each of us brought different strengths to the table and used those to benefit our school!

Collaboration is using our different strengths to achieve a common goal. It is why there is more than one individual on the board. A variety of voices should be shared and considered to make the best-informed decision for the students in Eden Prairie Schools.

good newspaper is a country **A**talking to itself.

Arthur Miller, playwright

WEILER

NAVY SUBMARINE VETERAN

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Schools?

LIBSACK: There are many ways that we can support racial equity in the Eden Prairie Schools. First and foremost, we need to ensure that all

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OCTOBER 2022

Position: Eden Prairie School Board Member (4-year position)

Francesca Pagan-Umar

Website: Francesca4ep.com

Pagan-Umar has been a director on the Eden Prairie School Board since December 2021 and a director on the Intermediate District 287 School Board since January 2022. She is the parent of three Eden Prairie students who are in kindergarten, seventh grade, and tenth grade. By occupation, she is a teacher in special education, general education, early childhood literacy, science, and science through literacy. She is co-founder of local nonprofit Inspire Community MN 501(c)(3).

EPLN: What difference would you hope to make as a school board member?

PAGAN-UMAR: My background in education informs deep examination of district and student performance, behavior management, curriculum, learning interventions, meeting the needs of general and special learners, interactions and support for families, meeting the needs of our teachers, and anything related to these that the board has set a policy to monitor.

I'm committed to longterm outcomes for our schools because I'm passionate about public education, and my three children are in Eden Prairie Schools.

I represent a significant portion of our students, staff, and community, bringing diversity of thought to ensure our district is led by highly qualified people who represent our vibrant and diverse community.

EPLN: How will you support racial equity in the Eden Prairie Schools?

PAGAN-UMAR: I have advocated to combat inequities in demographic groups, as well as between typical and unique learners. I have seen through my work on the board that the district is doing some intentional work to counter systemic inequities in various ways, including striving to eliminate achievement disparities by 2023, extensive added supports in



Francesca Pagan-Umar

reading, increasing diversity of the highly qualified educators in leadership roles, and the Cultural Competency Training the board received to use in our discussions and decision making. I hope to remain on the board to ensure these efforts continue and expand.

EPLN: Do you support the 2018-2023 strategies for the Eden Prairie Schools that are currently in place? If not, what would you change?

PAGAN-UMAR: Yes! My family moved here when our children were in Little Eagles and elementary school. We've seen the transformation in academic offerings, learning spaces, and diversity. The preschool is now in the elementary schools, offering more pre-

schoolers preparation for kindergarten – with included busing to ensure transportation is not an obstacle! The Pathways initiative gives students more choices and supports individualized learning. The high school has doubled AP class enrollment, inviting students across demographic and learner groups to challenge themselves. The partnership opportunities with colleges like Hennepin Tech, and expanding Capstone experiences, offers students to try out what they may wish to pursue after graduation. All the while our student body is becoming increasingly diverse. More than 47% of students report being non-white, with more than 50% of kindergartners reported being of color. Motivational phrases and images of students line the entryways and

halls of our buildings, reflecting the culturally competent approach to welcoming students and families, and fostering a sense of belonging.

I will continue to advocate for students' voices, to respect students and staff to be their authentic selves, and to receive input from the incredible staff, parents, community, and local businesses to continue educating students with excellence and flexibility to meet the ever-changing needs of our stakeholders.

EPLN: Do you support the referendum the current board has placed on the November ballot?

PAGAN-UMAR: Yes! I voted for it!

State funding hasn't kept pace with inflation, leaving a \$2 million annual gap for EPS. Districts can make cuts or ask the community for support. Eden Prairie has been supportive of schools, and the district honors that by looking for efficiencies. For example, 80% of district electricity is provided by the solar panels of our roofs, representing a huge cost savings.

The 2013 capital project levy supported 21st century learning and student devices, which we didn't know then would support distance learning when other districts were scrambling to get devices for students. This mitigated the learning loss most other districts experienced from the COVID-19 shutdown. We're asking for a renewal on this, with no tax increase.

The 2014 operating levy funds our small class sizes in kindergarten and first grade. These funds were promised to last five years, and due to good financial management have lasted eight years! We're asking to revoke and replace this with a new levy to expand small class KG – 5th grade, to maintain the existing financial stability of the district, and to not make cuts for at least the next five school years. Approval would add less than \$8 per month in tax to the average home in Eden Prairie. EPLN: In your view, is the quality of Eden Prairie Schools about where it should be, relative to the amount of property taxes paid by residents and businesses?

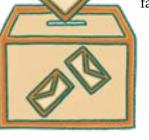
PAGAN-UMAR: Yes. Eden Prairie Schools are among the best in the state, while Eden Prairie property taxes are among the lowest in the southwest metro. We offer personalized learning, sports, the fine and performing arts, advanced courses in honors, AP and PSEO, broad access to technology (that kept students learning during the COVID-19 shut down when other districts were trying to obtain needed devices), beautiful and innovative spaces, and staff dedicated to inspiring each student to achieve their unique best – at an amazing value.

EPLN: School board members need to collaborate in order to get things done. How and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that would benefit the school board's work?

PAGAN-UMAR: I've worked hard to build relationships with my fellow board members. At our meetings, I ask questions, seek points of shared values, and strive to understand and be understood. I support board members when they express that connection to shared values. My efforts have caused other board members to support things I've pressed for, even though they didn't originally see the merits. I hope I am reelected to continue these efforts and the work I've done.

> Local newspapers are basically little machines that spit out healthier democracies.

Joshua Benton,



director of the Nieman Journalism Lab



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Prepared and paid for by the Knecht Volunteer Committee, knechtformn.com

Position: Eden Prairie School Board Member (4-year position)

Jody Ward-Rannow

Website: jody4ep.com

Jody Ward-Rannow and husband, Mike, have two children: Emily, sixth grade; and Ben, third grade at Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion (EHSI). They moved to Eden Prairie in 2012 for the schools.

For six years, she has been on the EHSI Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) Board, and is currently the president. In this role she also participates in the PTO President's Council and partners with other school PTOs. Last year, she was chair of the Spring Fling Committee for all fifth graders. She also holds leadership positions with Eden Prairie Girl Scouts.

Ward-Rannow earned her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Minnesota. She is in her final year of a Masters of Public Health program at St. Kate's University. She is a labor and employment attorney and in this role advises employers on a wide range of employment laws and workplace issues. If a dispute arises, she negotiates a resolution or represents her client through the litigation process in court.

EPLN: What difference would you hope to make as a school board member?

WARD-RANNOW: As a school board member, I would hope to help district leadership identify ways in which well-intentioned policies are not reaching "each" of our students. Our district's mission is to inspire each student and I think it is important to challenge us to continu-

> ously find new ways to reach toward that aspiration. I have 16 years' experience identifying program gaps and assisting clients with solving those gaps to make better, more



Jody Ward-Rannow

EPLN: How will you support racial equity in the Eden Prairie Schools?

WARD-RANNOW: For the last several years I have been a persistent advocate for racial equity in our schools. As a member of the school board, I would have the ability to dig deeper into our district's blind spots. For example, I have advocated at the district level for a review of our gifted and talented program selection process. I find the process to be confusing and not well explained to parents. Gaining access to the program often involves knowing the right people to contact. Tips for navigating our gifted and talented program are largely passed along through word of mouth and so the information is not evenly distributed. Typically, minority families are the least likely to know which person to email for an individual assessment, or which person to email for outside course options to qualify for advanced classes. If I was on the school board, I could advocate through the board oversight process for a review of our gifted and talented program through an equity lens. This is just one example of an area where we could do better from an equity perspective. No student should miss out on opportunities our district offers because a particular process is not equitable.

EPLN: Do you support the 2018-2023 strategies for the Eden Prairie Schools that are currently in place? If not, what would

VOTE er we are fully evaluating our programs in a manner to achieve those goals. For example, the strategies rely on data, (i.e., testing) to measure achievement. The tests are in English. If English is a student's second language or not the language in which a student is taught (immersion), then if a math score is low, was that because the student did not understand the math or because they did not understand the language in the question? As of last winter, when I talked with district leadership, it seemed we were just starting to explore this question. I think validating what we are measuring for each student is central to personalizing learning and fulfilling our strategies. If I was on the school board, I would ask our district leadership how we can further evaluate our strategies so that we can help each student excel.

EPLN: Do you support the referendum the current board has placed on the November ballot?

WARD-RANNOW: Yes, I support the referendum on the November ballot. If the referendum does not pass, the district will need to make cuts. A strong education is one of the most significant determinants of an individual's life-long health. To me, less than \$8 a month for a home valued at \$430,000 is worth the investment to set up the future of Eden Prairie for success. As a PTO member, I have an opportunity to see how funds are used in our schools. Our PTO Boards collaborate with school leaders to fund items our district does not. This means funding is a frequent topic for discussion. If community members have questions about school funding, in addition to school board meetings, PTO meetings are a great way to get an onthe-ground view of how leanly our schools operate and why we need to pass this referendum to avoid cuts.

EPLN: In your view, is the quality of Eden Prairie Schools about where it should be, relative to the amount of property taxes paid by residents and businesses?

WARD-RANNOW: Yes, I think the quality of Eden Prairie Schools is about where it should be relative to the amount of property taxes paid by residents and businesses. I think our district leadership has done a great job being stewards of community funding. That said, I think we should always strive to improve and I know our district leadership believes continuous improvement is important.

EPLN: School board members need to collaborate in order to get things done. How and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that would benefit the school board's work?

WARD-RANNOW: I successfully collaborate in my career and volunteer roles. To best serve my clients, I need to have a reputation for integrity, professionalism, and collaboration and demonstrate it on each matter. Collaboration is also an important part of PTO work. Our PTOs provide important support to our schools with a small volunteer crew. Volunteers need to be able to work well together and with their schools to complete the work on which our school communities rely.

Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere. Democracy is the letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea which hasn't been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad. *E.B. White, writer for* The New Yorker (1899-1985)

inclusive workplaces. As a member of the school board, I would hope to use my experience and skills to help the district make it easier for all families to take advantage of the amazing resources our district has to offer.

you change?

WARD-RANNOW: Yes, I support the 2018-2023 strategies. I would not change the strategies themselves, but I would challenge our district on wheth-



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26 YEARS OF SERVICE TO EDEN PRAIRIE

Position: Eden Prairie School Board Member (2-year position)

CANDIDATES

Isaac Kerry **Dennis Stubbs**

JOB POSTING

Eden Prairie is seeking one executive who will fill out the remaining two years of a four-year term. The vacancy was created by a resignation in September 2021. This executive, or school board member, will establish and monitor policies for Eden Prairie

Isaac Kerry

Website: kerryforedenprairie.com

For the past nine years, Kerry has been a stay-at-home dad to his two daughters. During this time, he has built careers as a children's author, freelance developer, and Eden Prairie firefighter. Before his daughters were born, he earned a Master's Degree in Urban Studies and worked for a variety of local governments and economic development agencies.

He and his wife. Brianna, moved to Eden Prairie from Mankato in 2019. He said they absolutely love the community, and couldn't be happier with the move. Both daughters attend Prairie View Elementary School, and this year are in first and fourth grades.

In Spring 2022, he was hired as the education reporter for Eden Prairie Local News. He says he loved covering the schools, but soon realized that just reporting on what was happening wasn't enough for him. He says he wants to offer up his time and talents to help our district be the best it can be.

EPLN: What difference would you hope to make as a school board member?

KERRY: A major catalyst that pushed me into running was the devastating school shooting in Uvalde. As a parent and as a first responder,

School District #272 in concert with fellow office holders (one vote each), but delegate administrative duties to the school superintendent. Executives who are hired to be part of the school board approve the district's budget, monitor finances, hire a superintendent, and establish a strategic vision.

COMPENSATION

School board executives, who have two meetings per month, receive a stipend of \$4,800 per year.

OUALIFICATIONS

A school board member must be at least 21 years old, an eligible voter, a district resident for at least 30 days, and not be a convicted sex offender.

ABOUT THE HIRING PROCESS

The school board is composed of seven members, each of whom typically is elected for a four-year term. Terms are staggered, so that the entire

board is not up for election at the same time. These are at-large representatives, not assigned to specific wards or areas of the Eden Prairie School District. This election differs in that four executives are being elected to four-year terms, and one executive is being elected to fill the remaining two years of a term for an executive who resigned in mid-term in September 2021.



KERRY: Eden Prairie's property taxes are some of the lowest in the southwest metro while our schools continue to outperform many of their peers. I believe our district provides an exceptional "bang for your buck" when it

comes to our students' education. The operating levy that passed in 2014 was designed to provide five years of funding and district leadership managed to stretch that out into eight years. I think that shows fantastic financial stewardship.

I do believe more investments need to be made into student mental health resources. Schools are in a unique position where they can reach hundreds of students that might otherwise not have access to mental health support. If elected I would work to ensure this becomes a policy priority for the district, with the requisite funding to truly make an impact.

EPLN: School board members need to collaborate in order to get things done. How and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that would benefit the school board's work?

KERRY: I am by nature a pragmatist who looks for ways to reach agreements. I enjoy learning what others' viewpoints are and trying to understand where they are coming from if we have different opinions. If elected I would strive to work with my fellow board members to create an environment where differences of opinion are shared collegially, and productive discussions lead to decisions that benefit the district.



Isaac Kerry

Each of these groups is critical to the success of our district and as a board we need to be able to be responsive to their concerns and needs.

EPLN: How will you support racial equity in the Eden Prairie Schools?

Kerry: I am extremely passionate about ensuring all the students that go through Eden Prairie Schools are given a fantastic education and are prepared to excel after graduation. As a district that currently sits at 46%minority enrollment, a key part of this goal is to focus on narrowing the racial achievement gap that currently exists in our schools. As one example, our third grade reading metrics show significant disparity between racial groups. Twenty percent fewer of our students who identify as Black and

district are a fantastic aspirational set of goals. The specific sections of Personalized Learning, Achievement Disparities, and Engagement all put forth a compelling vision for what our district could be.

If elected and able to participate in the next iteration of our strategic plan, I would like to see a few changes. Specifically, I would like to see a series of goals based around school culture. I think that as a district we need to make explicit our commitment to embracing the diversity of our community, building inclusive and welcoming schools, and putting in place feedback mechanisms to help us identify where improvements could be made. Additionally, I believe we should set goals toward creating a culture that emphasizes mental health and creating positive support networks for students.

EPLN: Do you support the referendum the current board has placed on the November ballot?

KERRY: I wholeheartedly support both referendum questions that are being put forth to the community this fall. Our technology levy has proven instrumental in allowing students and teachers to respond flexibly to the extremely chaotic demands the last few years have put on them. Continuing our investment in these technologies will allow the district to weather any additional unforeseen circumstances that may come along down the road.

I was left grappling with what could possibly be done to ensure something like that never happens here. I concluded that one of the most impactful ways we can address the issue on a local level is by supporting the mental health of our students.

There is a crisis of adolescent mental health in our country. So many of the dangerous and tragic incidents that we see on the news have their roots in mental health crises. If elected, I will be a voice for mental health support, constantly looking for ways we can do more for our kids. I will additionally draw on my experience as a first responder to be a voice for improvements and innovations in the areas of school safety, responder training, and disaster preparedness.

Finally, I will seek to ensure the board has open lines of communication with teachers, students, staff, and parents.

Hispanic are meeting the district's goal than white students. As a district we can and should do more.

I believe that the board missed an opportunity when it voted to not adopt a resolution formalizing their support for racial equity last year. As a board, I believe we need to lead, and an important component of leadership is setting a clear direction for the district. Our teachers and staff are doing excellent work to advance racial equity across the district, and I believe as a board we owe it to them, and the students it impacts, to explicitly state our support and analyze our existing polices through that lens.

EPLN: Do you support the 2018-2023 strategies for the **Eden Prairie Schools that are** currently in place? If not, what would you change?

KERRY: I believe that the 2018-2023 strategies laid out by the school I also support the increase to the operating levy. Many of the key components of the district's strategic plan, such as more personalized learning opportunities, smaller class sizes, and attracting the most talented teachers, are dependent on these funds. The modest increase the district is asking, which will cost the average household \$8 each month, will allow the school's funding to keep pace with inflation and provide the resources to continue striving to meet and exceed district goals. Without this funding in place, the district will begin making significant budget cuts as early as next year.

EPLN: In your view, is the quality of Eden Prairie Schools about where it should be, relative to the amount of property taxes paid by residents and businesses?

My time serving on the North Mankato Planning Commission as well as my time with the Eden Prairie Fire Department have both given me ample experience working in high-pressure environments where thoughts and feelings about what is right can differ.

I pride myself on often being a moderating influence when discussions get heated and am confident that I can provide the same steady hand to our school board meetings.

Position: Eden Prairie School Board Member (2-year position)

Dennis Stubbs

Website: stubbs4epschools.com

Stubbs grew up in Anchorage, Alaska, along with his wife, Miranda. They moved to St. Louis Park in 2011. He has been associated with the building trade for 20 years. The couple relocated to Minnesota so he could oversee a drywall company in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. After their first child, Decker, was born, they moved to Eden Prairie because they love the community. Their son is now eight and in the third grade at Eagle Heights. They also have a daughter, Reece, who attends first grade at Eagle Heights. Their youngest child, Mykah, is three. Stubbs started and became CEO of an energy logistics company in western North Dakota, including opening a construction-related company in the Eden Prairie area. Before COVID-19. he helped serve by volunteering to chaperone class field trips and many similar activities where an adult was needed. He has coached flag football for five seasons now, teaches Sunday school, and volunteers in youth activity groups every week.

EPLN: What difference would you hope to make as a school board member?

STUBBS: If elected as a school board member, I will work with other board directors to continue supporting the superintendent and his administration, while providing oversight to see that they remain on course. I want to make sure that parents are heard and have a voice. I will focus on continuing and improving the excellent education that our students are receiving by keeping class sizes smaller. In order to do so, we need to continue to be supportive of our teachers and parents.

EPLN: How will you support racial equity in the Eden Prairie Schools?



Dennis Stubbs

raised and taught in school that all are created equal. Every student deserves the great opportunities that our educational facilities can provide. We want to see each child flourish and be successful long after they graduate. I believe Dr. Swanson and his staff are working hard, and doing a great job of making sure teachers are giving each child the tools they need. They're very supportive, with children learning to respect each other regardless of where they were born, or what their ethnic background is. I constantly read the parent comments, and see so many of our students of all race and nationality, being praised for excellence in math competitions, essay writings, debates, and sports. It's great to know that the school district goes beyond in this area to make things better. As school board members, we want to provide the same.

EPLN: Do you support the 2018-2023 strategies for the EP Schools that are currently in place?

STUBBS: I agree, and I'm in line with the current strategies that are in place. I believe that there are always ways to improve and keep moving forward. I fully support keeping the class sizes small. And this support includes stricter security measures to keep our children safe.

placed on the November ballot?

STUBBS: I am a strong supporter of the referendums on the ballot this November. The superintendent and his finance team are doing a great job. We've all seen the cost of everything rise, and inflation growing all over this country. Along with that is the cost of educating a student. This funding will keep our "student-to-teacher" ratio one of the lowest in Minnesota. That is important because of the impact that COVID-19 had on our district and many others. Our test scores have always been among the highest and now they've dropped. We must focus on the education of our kids before anything else and keeping small classes is a great way to do that. This funding will also provide the extended ability to keep up with software and technology. I was pleased to hear Dr. Swanson mention the other day how corporations and businesses have emphasized not only the need for good math, science, English, and writing, but equally important, students having the ability to operate a computer or electronic device from remote locales for spreadsheet and other workplace purposes. These two referendums are going to put the Eden Prairie School District and our academic achievement numbers at the very top here!

EPLN: In your view, is the quality of the Eden Prairie Schools about where it should be, relative to the amount of property taxes paid by the residents and businesses?

STUBBS: Everything I've witnessed so far, having two young children in the district, and looking at the stats, test scores, and walking the facilities, is right on target. I do believe that you get more than what you pay for in this district. Our students are very blessed in that they live in a supportive community which funds the facilities, while also backing the administration and teachers. I am very blessed that my kids get to attend classes here. One of the ways you can visually see the benefits of our school funding is to look at the amazing teachers that we have in our learning institutions. In my opinion, not only are they the best educators, but I can genuinely see that they care. Our teachers excel at helping students in any way they can. I've personally witnessed this. I want to make sure this district continues to value our teachers, while making this a place where every teacher wants to come and work.

EPLN: School board members need to collaborate in order

to get things done. How and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that would benefit the school board's work?

STUBBS: I grew up playing a lot of sports, most of which were team variety. Athletics and great coaches teach you how to work together and achieve a common goal. I currently work with people every day, running my own business. I've learned how to work with a variety of personalities. Together, we've been able to adapt to sudden changes and always advance forward during these shifts. Always improving, and always learning is the key. I've always been a team leader in my companies, both in construction and out in the oil fields. I have to be open for suggestions, be a good listener, sometimes agree to disagree, then find a solution. Afterward, you brainstorm to get it all implemented. The most important things a board, a team, or a committee can do in order to be successful are simple and pretty basic: Work together, work hard, listen, and be respectful to one another.

Join Us Online For Election News



STUBBS: One thing that makes Eden Prairie a great place to live is the cultural diversity within. I was

EPLN: Do you support the referendum the current board has

School referendum seeks to increase operating levy, renew capital project levy

By Juliana Allen

en Prairie voters will be asked to approve two tax levies when they go to the polls Nov. 8.

About 71% of funding for Eden Prairie Schools (EPS) comes from the State of Minnesota. Twenty-two percent comes from local property taxes, 4% from federal government grants, and 3% from local sources. Districts have the option to ask taxpayers for additional funds through levy referendums.

When you head to the polls, you'll see a two-question referendum on the ballot.

Question 1 asks to revoke the current operating levy (which pays for learning and programs) of \$1,815.27 per student and replace it with a levy of \$2,075.27. The current operating levy was approved in 2014, and was only intended to last until 2019.

The district says this change translates to under \$8 per month in increased taxes for an Eden Prairie home valued at \$430,000.

Question 2 asks to renew the existing capital project levy (which pays for technology, teacher training, security, and infrastructure) with no funding increase from when it was approved in 2013. There are no additional taxes associated with this question.

Both existing levies expire when the 2024-25 school year ends. If the new levies are not approved, EPS expects a financial shortfall. This could force cuts to staff and programs for the first time in eight years.

If the new levies are approved, EPS expects financial stability for at least five years.

Before you vote, consider: What is your position on the funding of public schools? Are you willing to pay increased taxes to help increase funding for schools? Do you think the current school board and administration are appropriately spending the money they have now? Do quality schools have a positive effect on my property value, quality of life, and Eden Prairie's economy?

Learn more about the referendum on the Eden Prairie Schools' website at edenpr.org/community/referendum-2022.

City election is for a mayor and two council members

By Mark Weber

It was Abraham Lincoln who said, "Elections belong to the people."

There's a Nov. 8 election that belongs to Eden Prairie people. It's called the city election, and it has to do with hiring a mayor and city council members while taking stock of the services received from the City of Eden Prairie: police and fire protection, roads and sewers, parks and recreation, and more.

You can participate this fall by voting

for Eden Prairie mayor and two council members, which are the three city positions on the ballot. (The Eden Prairie City Council is composed of five members total, one of whom is the mayor. Terms are staggered, so only the mayor and two council member seats are up for election in 2022.)

Two persons are vying for mayor: Incumbent Ron Case; and challenger Tracey Schowalter.

Four people are seeking two council-member seats: Mark Freiberg; Greg Lehman; Kathy Nelson; and Micah Olson. Freiberg and Nelson are incumbents.

The persons with the highest vote totals for mayor and council win terms starting in January, joining council members PG Narayanan and Lisa Toomey.

Eden Prairie Local News asked readers for topics of concern, and that input was used to formulate questions posed to city candidates. The candidates had roughly three weeks to respond. They were given word limits for their responses, and responses were edited for ease of reading. EPLN thanks the candidates for their participation.

Now, it's your turn. We encourage readers to review candidates' backgrounds and responses. Do they seem qualified for city office? Did they respond to questions with specific and thoughtful answers? Does their vision align with yours? Check their candidate websites for more.

Then, head to the polls and prove Lincoln correct.

Position: Eden Prairie Mayor

CANDIDATES

Ron Case (incumbent) Tracey Schowalter

JOB POSTING

Eden Prairie is seeking an executive, called the mayor, who represents the City of Eden Prairie in many matters over a four-year term and joins with

Ron Case

Website: roncaseformayor.org

Case has served 26 years on the Eden Prairie City Council, four years as mayor. He is a 40-plus-year resident, a retired Eden Prairie Schools teacher and adjunct college psychology professor, currently employed at UnitedHealth Group as director of operational effectiveness for the Optum Financial Team. He is married to Kathie Case, president of the Eden Prairie Historical Society. They have four adult children who graduated from Eden Prairie Schools, and five grandchildren. He has a doctorate degree in leadership, master's in counseling/psychology, and bachelor's in education.

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be, and why?

CASE: Expand the positive trajectory Eden Prairie is currently on with its strong tax base, low taxes, incredible park and trail system, connected and engaged community, amazingly high resident and business quality of life survey scores, and "best in class" public safety police and fire departments. other council members in making city-related policy and legislative decisions – including budget and tax-levy decisions – but delegates administrative duties to the city manager.

COMPENSATION

The executive elected as mayor is paid an annual salary of \$15,077.30, as of 2022.



Ron Case

if any, from the Race Equity Report prepared for the city in 2021 deserves the council's highest attention?

CASE: We need to continue the work of partnering with all of our diverse communities to build connections, ensure equity and inclusion initiatives are strengthened, and improve our hiring practices by proactively building relationships earlier in the pipeline.

QUALIFICATIONS

Must be 21 or older and a resident of Eden Prairie at least 30 days before the election.

ABOUT THE HIRING PROCESS

Four city council members and a mayor are elected to four-year terms, but terms are staggered. As a result, the 2022 election is for mayor and two city council members. These are at-large representatives, not assigned to specific wards or areas of Eden Prairie. The top vote-getter for mayor will serve a four-year term starting in January 2023.

those activities? Why?

CASE: Affordable living units occupied by people who have salaries in the \$40,000-\$70,000 range are in short supply across the metropolitan area. This is not just an Eden Prairie issue, but it is one that every southwest suburban community needs to address in order to keep the region economically strong and safe. Our new inclusive housing policy is a great step in the right direction that will allow police officers, teachers, and city staff to have the opportunity to live in our community.

EPLN: The Eden Prairie City Council adopted a Climate Action Plan in March 2020, with the overall goal of achieving communitywide carbon neutrality by 2050. Do you support this plan? What changes in this approach would you favor, if any?

CASE: This was a critical campaign pledge of mine in 2018 that is one of my three proudest accomplishments of my first term. We are the first city in Minnesota to have a goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, a goal of all electric fleet vehicles by 2030, and the first Minnesota city to purchase electric police cars within the past year. If EV

cars and trucks continue to become more available in all vehicle types, I would like to see the city accelerate the transition to an all-electric fleet. Additionally, I'd like to see the city incentivize our business community to place solar panels on all flat rooftops over the next decade.

EPLN: In your view, do Eden Prairie residents currently receive a level of city services that is too low, too high, or about right compared to the amount of city property taxes they pay? What changes, if any, would you make in this area?

CASE: According to our resident surveys, our high-quality services relative to our low city taxes receive high scores and positive comments. We should continue to aggressively pursue efficiencies, new technologies, and work to maintain our phenomenal city cadre of employees who are truly the best in class.

EPLN: City council members need to collaborate in order

EPLN: What recommendation,

EPLN: The city has been enacting 2020 task force recommendations to create more affordable housing. Would you favor staying the course, slowing those efforts, or accelerating

to get things done. What role should the mayor play in promoting council member collaboration, and how and where have

Case continues on page 11





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Position: Eden Prairie Mayor

Tracey Schowalter

Website: Ttt4ep.substack.com

Schowalter and her husband, Mike, are five-year residents of Eden Prairie. She worked nine years as a customer service representative for the City of Eden Prairie, and in many of its departments, including four years as an administrative assistant to the police chief. She also spent two years in a part-time position with the Farmington Police Department. She has worked for three different churches, and volunteers with her homeowners association and children's activities as team manager. In addition, she and her husband have volunteered to serve church youth groups and in other church activities. She says she is self-taught in constitutional law and was part of a group that sued Gov. Tim Walz over his pandemic policies. She was an applicant for a seat on the Metropolitan Council.

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be, and why?

SCHOWALTER: I would like to educate and empower the people of Eden Prairie to be the checks and balances that they were intended to be for their government representatives. People nationwide have been traumatized by the pandemic, negative and fearful legacy media campaigns, and governmental overreach. It's time we step into that power to influence and take action. The fundamentals of our nation were built for the people to have all political power. I hope to instill courage and confidence in others by showing that a knowledgeable Eden Prairie citizen can contribute, lead, and exercise those inalienable rights as provided and written into our Constitution.

As far as tangible accomplishments, I would like to find new and innovative ways to carry out the business of government services. It's time we start looking for new and creative places to develop land for necessary projects; find or create new programs so people who are working hard but are unable to get ahead have programs they can easily access and step out of as needed.



Tracey Schowalter

EPLN: What recommendation, if any, from the Race Equity Report prepared for the city in 2021 deserves the council's highest attention?

SCHOWALTER: Remaining committed to what you said you'd do is of utmost importance. For instance, saying you want to celebrate and respect indigenous people and actually doing it in a way that means something to them is important. Festivals and celebrations are one way to celebrate different cultures and ethnicities, but when it comes time to show the respect they are due, is of utmost importance.

After reading the Race Equity Report, it seems that melanated people and indigenous people perceive the efforts of the city as somewhat disingenuous. The only way to find a solution is to approach them in their own communities and speak to them about what is holding them back.

I would love to see more town hall meetings in areas of the community that make them accessible for BIPOC (Black, indigenous and people of color) people to attend. For example, if you want to know what the Hispanic community is thinking and feeling, then hold an event closer to where they reside in the community so it's convenient for them to attend and feel comfortable. To take it one step further, I would love to attend one of

their events and then have conversations in a setting that is natural to them.

the cost of housing is rising rapidly. I see many homes for sale and there are numerous rentals available, but the cost is above what most people can afford.

I don't think we need

more high/medium density housing to fix this problem. If higher density units are necessary, there are areas that can be redeveloped because their commercial tenancy is not at full capacity.

I would also like to find a way to use "affordable housing" monies through grants for aiding people to purchase homes as well as rent. The City of Eden Prairie has received federal grants for affordable housing projects. I want to understand more about how these grants can be used and what the stipulations are.

We need to find ways to help people upgrade the homes they are already in, to provide assistance for those that want to own, and provide a stepped system to allow them to build assets at the same time they are receiving vouchers.

EPLN: The Eden Prairie City Council adopted a Climate Action Plan in March 2020, with the overall goal of achieving communitywide carbon neutrality by 2050. Do you support this plan? What changes in this approach would you favor, if any?

SCHOWALTER: I believe we need to be more responsible with our energy choices. I support a lot of what is in the Climate Action Plan, but I want to know more about the ordinances that the city is looking to adopt.

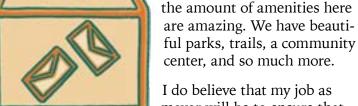
Whenever we start to make new policies on what residents and taxpayers are required to do, I believe they should be a part of the process. It's not just about educating people, it's about having conversations to come to realistic expectations.

I believe in energy diversity. One form of energy is not going to fix all our problems and save the planet. Diversifying our energy and creating a balance between all of them is key. We live in Minnesota, where we may not see the sun for many months, therefore solar cannot be the only answer. The batteries needed for electric energy storage are made from lithium and the mines are very destructive and we haven't a proper avenue yet to recycle them.

would you make in this area?

SCHOWALTER: Eden Prairie's

taxes are definitely higher than in a lot of other communities, but as I said in the forum on Aug. 31, the amount of amenities here are amazing. We have beauti-



I do believe that my job as mayor will be to ensure that people's money is being spent

wisely. To do this, I would make sure the flow of finances is an easy and open process to see and request. Money is tight for everyone, and I feel it's necessary to give people fiscal transparency.

The tax base of Eden Prairie is already substantial. I'd like to investigate the need for continued increase. Forecasting should be done for future years and projects so that a mature community like Eden Prairie is not struggling to make ends meet. Maybe it's time to review current spending and see if there are places to trim out the excess before big decisions are made to add high density housing in order to increase the tax base.

EPLN: City council members need to collaborate in order to get things done. What role should the mayor play in promoting council member collaboration, and how and where have you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that get things done?

SCHOWALTER: I collaborate with people of all walks of life on a daily basis. I work with people of all skin colors, all religions, and all political leanings. I have found ways to empathize and see a person from their point of view, even when it's completely different than my own. Sometimes I've changed my mind because they showed me things I didn't see before; and sometimes those conversations have strengthened my own views.

No matter what the outcome, collaborating is all about being respectful and communicating your thoughts in a professional way. When people adhere to these basic principles, they can get a lot done.

I'm not opposed to compromise. Finding a common thread that everyone can rest on, and building on that, is how we co-exist as individuals while being respectful of each other's perspectives.

I would also like to support our law enforcement so that they can keep people safe from harm in these tumultuous times.



EPLN: The city has been enacting 2020 task force recommendations to create more affordable housing. Would you favor staying the course, slowing those efforts, or accelerating those activities? Why?

SCHOWALTER: The amount of housing seems to be stabilizing, but

Corporations that do business in Eden Prairie also need to take ownership in these conservation practices as well. Many times residents are sanctioned for not adhering to ordinances, but businesses do not have the same rules.

EPLN: In your view, do Eden Prairie residents currently receive a level of city services that is too low, too high, or about right compared to the amount of city property taxes they pay? What changes, if any, The local and regional newspapers around the country that could fill in the picture of who we are with more granular human detail continue to die out.

George Packer, writer for The New Yorker

Case continued from page 10

you demonstrated the kind of collegial and collaborative skills that get things done?

CASE: It's critical for the mayor to ensure that the city council operates in a functional, positive, and collegial fashion. That does not mean unanimity of philosophy, opinions, or perspectives. In fact, the public is well-served when there are diverse opinions being shared and acted upon. But it does mean maintaining a healthy respect for each other as servants of the public. From my 33 years of running classrooms through to my current role as a corporate facilitator in conjunction with my mayoral duties, I'm very proud of the intelligence, hard work, and energy demonstrated by the current five city council elected officials who have represented the people of Eden Prairie over the last several years.

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CANDIDATES

Mark Freiberg (incumbent) Greg Lehman Kathy Nelson (incumbent) Micah Olson

JOB POSTING

Eden Prairie is seeking two executives who will make city-related policy and legislative decisions – including budget and tax-levy decisions – in concert with fellow office holders (one vote apiece), but who delegate administrative duties to the city manager.

COMPENSATION

City council executives who are not

mayor are paid an annual salary of \$11,672.96, as of 2022.

QUALIFICATIONS

Must be 21 or older and a resident of Eden Prairie at least 30 days before the election.

ABOUT THE HIRING PROCESS

Four city council members and a mayor are elected every four years, but terms are staggered. These are at-large representatives, not assigned to specific wards or areas of Eden Prairie. The top two vote-getters will serve terms starting in January.

Mark Freiberg

Website: markfreibergwinsep.com

Freiberg and his wife, Patty, bought their home in Eden Prairie 41 years ago and raised their family. They have three adult children, college graduates whom Freiberg says are fine examples of the education that they received in the Eden Prairie school system. His professional career consisted of more than 30 years of experience within the home financing industry.

He has been a member of the Eden Prairie City Council since 2018; a board member of the Eden Prairie Community Foundation; a board member of the SouthWest Transit Commission; a member of the Eden Prairie Historical Society; a member of the Eden Prairie A.M. Rotary Club; a past member of the Eden Prairie Planning Commission (2016-2018), and a past member of the Eden Prairie Heritage Preservation Commission (2013-2016).



Mark Freiberg

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be and

why?

FREIBERG: If reelected, one major item that I would like to see eliminated would be the food challenges that affect many of our senior residents and children within our community. Why? It's the right and compassionate thing to do!

DEBJYOTI DWIVEDY DDDFOR E Com FOR EDEN PRAIRIE SCHOOL BOARD EPLN: What recommendation, if any, from the Race Equity Report prepared for the city in 2021 deserves the council's highest attention?

FREIBERG: I believe our city workforce should mirror the diversity of our city whenever possible. I especially believe that a "heavy emphasis" needs to be applied in the diverse hiring efforts of our police and fire departments whenever possible. By stressing these actions now, we will set in place the hiring model for years to come. If needed, we need to think "beyond the box" and be creative when recruiting new hires.

EPLN: The city has been enacting 2020 task force recommendations to create more affordable housing. Would you favor staying the course, slowing those efforts, or accelerating those activities? Why?

FREIBERG: I'm in favor of staying the course in the short term regarding the 2020 Task Force recommendations on affordable housing. During this time, we will need to explore additional options whenever possible and implement those options as needed to accommodate future needs. It will be a difficult balancing act with the diminishing availability of buildable land. This decreasing land inventory will most likely result in a need to better determine how redevelopment options come into play. Presently, the metro area is approximately 20,000 housing units short of the demand.

This is projected to grow dramatically over the next 10 years. To solve this, we will need to plan and implement our proposed solutions wisely.

EPLN: The Eden Prairie City Council adopted a Climate Action Plan in March 2020, with the overall goal of achieving communitywide carbon neutrality by 2050. Do you support this plan? What changes in this approach would you favor, if any?

FREIBERG: I personally like the Climate Action Plan that the city council adopted in March 2020. The plan is balanced and the communitywide goal of being carbon neutral by 2050 is in line with other communities surrounding Eden Prairie.

EPLN: In your view, do Eden Prairie residents currently receive a level of city services that is too low, too high, or about right compared to the amount of city property taxes they pay? What changes, if any, would you make in this area?

FREIBERG: Overall, I believe that the residents of Eden Prairie receive a high level of city services for the tax dollars invested. The City of Eden Prairie completes an annual survey of our residents and the high marks that are given the city for the services provided point that out. It doesn't happen by accident that the city has one of the best police and fire departments in the state.







Safe & Secure Schools Academic Achievement Fiscal Stewardship Educational Excellence

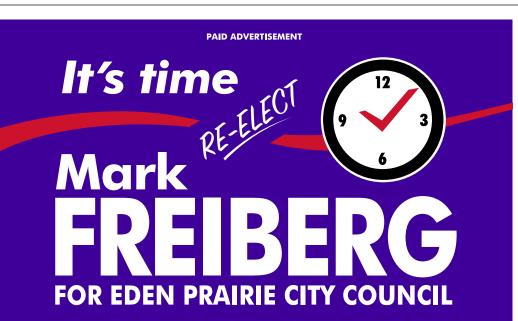
📞 (952) 479-0609 🛛 🔀 debjyoti@DDforEP.com

Paid for by Debjyoti "DD" Dwivedy for Eden Prairie School Board 8391 Townsend Drive, Eden Prairie, MN 55344



Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.

Reinhold Niebuhr, theologian (1892-1971)



PREPARED AND PAID FOR BY THE MARK FREIBERG ELECTION COMMITTEE 10425 BUCKINGHAM DR EDEN PRAIRIE, MN 55347

Greg Lehman

No candidate website. LinkedIn information at linkedin.com/in/greg-lehman-86248435

Lehman has had a 30-year career in technical support, and has spent 21 years working part-time at a children's hospital. He has resided in Eden Prairie for 20 years, raising two children here. An Eden Prairie School Board alumnus, he has volunteered as a career roundtable speaker at Eden Prairie High School and completed 12 humanitarian service trips to six different countries. He has B.A. and M.B.A. degrees in business administration from Augsburg University and has several technology certifications.

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be, and why?

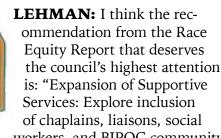
LEHMAN: I would help businesses located in EP thrive by increased communication and greater sensitivity to corporate needs. I would also like to partner with the community stakeholders to find solutions to some of the city's crime statistics, based on statistics from the EPPD. I would do so because



Greg Lehman

our families want EP to remain a safe and peaceful place to live.

EPLN: What recommendation, if any, from the Race Equity Report prepared for the city in 2021 deserves the council's highest attention?



workers, and BIPOC community leaders into sub-beat outreach activities when appropriate."

ocal news makes a huge difference. A PEN America study concluded last year that as local journalism declines, "government officials conduct themselves with less integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness," and corporate malfeasance goes unchecked. With the loss of local news, citizens are less likely to vote, less politically informed, and less likely to run for office, according to the study. Democracy loses its foundation.

EPLN: The city has been enacting 2020 task force recommendations to create more affordable housing. Would you favor staying the course, slowing those efforts, or accelerating those activities? Why?

OTE

LEHMAN: It depends on the availability of suitable housing proposals that are submitted to the council for approval. We should preserve Eden Prairie community's natural resources.

EPLN: The Eden Prairie City **Council adopted a Climate Ac**tion Plan in March 2020, with the overall goal of achieving communitywide carbon neutrality by 2050. Do you support this plan? What changes in this approach would you favor, if any?

LEHMAN: I support the plan. Environmentally friendly technologies are improving. Hopefully, with improved technology and economies of scale, environmentally friendly practices will have a reduced negative financial impact on EP families and businesses.

EPLN: In your view, do Eden **Prairie residents currently** receive a level of city services that is too low, too high, or about right compared to the amount of city property taxes they pay? What changes, if any, would you make in this area?

LEHMAN: I think the level of service is about right. I would like the council to have an outside study (or audit) performed every few years, to gauge the performance of the city services and the value proposition of those services.



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Kathy Nelson

Website: kathynelson.org

Nelson's family moved to Eden Prairie in 1992. She says they were looking for a nice neighborhood and a great school district for their two daughters. "We found what we were looking for in Eden Prairie." Her daughters graduated from Eden Prairie High School. While they were in school, Nelson was active in school volunteer activities.

Nelson is a current Eden Prairie City Council member, elected in 2006 and having served four terms. She represents the council on the Eden Prairie Firefighter Relief Association Board and the SouthWest LRT Corridor Management Committee.

As a community member, she also currently serves on the Eden Prairie Community Foundation Grant Committee, and volunteers for the St. Andrew Lutheran Church Food Committee and The PROP Shop.

Past Eden Prairie activities include: Eden Prairie Community Foundation board member; Eden Prairie Partners in Energy Committee; Southwest Suburban Cable Commission member; Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce Government Committee; Eden Prairie Planning Commission (six years), and adult literacy and citizenship tutoring.

Her educational background includes a B.A. degree in communications from the University of Minnesota. She is certified in emergency management.

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be, and why?

νοτε **NELSON:** I would like to greatly increase the energy efficiency of Eden Prairie. Currently, all electricity used by the City of Eden Prairie comes from solar energy. All city buildings, streetlights, and traffic lights run on solar electricity. We have done this through solar panels on buildings, and behind the water plant. The rest comes from contracts for solar energy. Some businesses have also added solar panels, including the Eden Prairie mall. Some homes have solar panels as well. We can greatly increase this!

chase. Solar rebates are back to 30%.

Solar electricity for businesses will provide them with energy-efficient electricity at known prices that will allow them a level of resiliency in their energy budgeting. Solar panels also allow homeowners to have energy-efficient electricity that is available even when regular power outages occur.



Kathy Nelson

EPLN: What recommendation, if any, from the Race Equity Report prepared for the city in 2021 deserves the council's highest attention?

NELSON: "Connection to the Community," recommendation No. 4: Ensure everyone has equitable access to services provided by the city and opportunities for providing input to city leadership.

Communication is essential between a city and its residents. Eden Prairie's website is one of the easiest ways

for residents to get information. However, it is only in English. For some city residents, English is not their first language. Eden Prairie currently uses a translation program for our resident surveys to make it easy for every-

one to give input to the city. We need to try to take that same program and apply it to the city website, so all residents and others can get translation access to city information.

Working with community leaders, council members and city staff is also important, as it's often the fastest way to get input on issues and concerns being discussed. Community gatherings and listening sessions are also important. The city council recently had a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Town Hall meeting at the EP Library. It was a great meeting with information being shared by all. These listening sessions are important for city leaders. Town hall meetings were also held with seniors and the business community. EPLN: The city has been enacting 2020 task force recommendations to create more affordable housing. Would you favor staying the course, slowing those efforts, or accelerating those activities? Why?

NELSON: I would favor staying the course. We are making strides forward in affordable homes with new policies. Builders are also very interested in building under these new policies.

Eden Prairie has many great neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods have medium homes, some large homes. Other neighborhoods have townhomes. Unfortunately, we don't have enough affordable homes for our current needs.

During the past 30 years, the families who live here have aged; children have grown to be young adults. Businesses have prospered and are hiring more employees.

Along with the rest of the Twin Cities, Eden Prairie has a housing shortage. We need new homes of all kinds, from large homes to smaller, affordable homes. However, the greatest need is more affordable homes. Homes that our children can afford as they start their careers and families. Homes for new teachers, starting police officers, and other community essential employees. Businesses are calling for more homes that their new employees can afford, so they don't have to commute long distances. We also need affordable, smaller homes that many senior residents want, so they can stay in our community as they retire.

EPLN: The Eden Prairie City Council adopted a Climate Action Plan in March 2020, with the overall goal of achieving communitywide carbon neutrality by 2050. Do you support this plan? What changes in this approach would you favor, if any?

NELSON: I support the Climate Action Plan. Our Climate Action Plan lists many steps that can be taken over time to reach our goal. Here is where we stand, and other steps we should work on next: charging stations or be "EV ready;" develop city yard waste compost site; promote SouthWest Transit bike program and SW Prime services.

Next steps: educate, promote, and continue offering PACE financing for clean energy projects; publicize rebates for energy efficiency projects, including solar panels, energy-efficient furnaces and appliances; provide help from the city to plan what steps you can take to make homes or businesses ener-

gy efficient; incentives for elective energy improvements made during remodels; require new construction to be "solar ready;" purchase electric mowers for city operations; encourage Energy Star, LEED, and/or net-zero energy certification; facilitate landfill solar project in Eden Prairie.

EPLN: In your view, do Eden Prairie residents currently receive a level of city services that is too low, too high, or about right compared to the amount of city property taxes they pay? What changes, if any, would you make in this area?

NELSON: Eden Prairie residents currently receive the right amount of services compared to the amount of city property taxes they pay.

Eden Prairie city property taxes are in the lowest 15% of city property taxes across the metro area. Its city services receive 95% "good" and "great" survey reviews by residents.

Eden Prairie city parks and trails are highly rated by the community. We have fields for the many different sports played by community members. Our pickleball courts are in great demand. Parents and kids have great fun at our play areas. Eden Prairie has 45 miles of trails, many by woods, lakes, and streams, for walking and running. Benches can be found along busy sections of trails.

Eden Prairie uses long-range planning and best-practices maintenance for roads, sewer and water, and trails to get best quality results and use our tax money wisely. Letting maintenance go on these necessary services, for as little as four years, can cost the city a great deal to get them back into shape. Our snowplowing is some of the best in the Twin Cities, making it safe and easy for kids to get to school and employees to their workplaces.

The city should provide information on energy rebates to every household and business in Eden Prairie. One of the steps in our Climate Action Plan is to get more energy-efficient appliances, furnaces, and air conditioners into homes and businesses. Rebates are readily available right now, and should be considered with every new pur-

Done, or in the process of completing: offer Home Energy Squad buy-downs; install EV charging stations at highuse city facilities; purchase EV police patrol car; modernize city facilities for operational EV fleet; replace city fleet with hybrid or fully electric vehicles as they need replacing; require new development/redevelopment to install

The vote is precious. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democratic society, and we must use it.

Robert Kagan, writer for The Washington Post.

Micah Olson

Website: micaholson.org

As a sixth-generation Minnesotan, Olson grew up in Hennepin County and has lived in the western suburbs most of his life. He graduated from the University of Northwestern-St. Paul with a degree in communications studies. His professional background consists of working in both the government and nonprofit sectors. Additionally, he has owned his own consulting business for almost a year.

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be and why?

OLSON: At the heart of any city is a thriving business community. Eden Prairie is fortunate to have incredible businesses of all sizes that call our city home. In terms of what I want to accomplish, it would be to ensure that we cultivate an environment for our businesses to flourish. We need to ensure that regulations are fair and simple, and that taxes are low and unobtrusive. When it comes to attracting business, there are two very important points to make. First, we must avoid carving out special favors or incentives for attracting businesses. Government should not be in the business of picking winners and losers. Second, I would submit that there are a number of indirect factors that people look at when wanting to start a business, including school quality, cost of living, clean water, easy transportation, access to capital, etc. Making Eden Prairie a great place to live and raise a family goes hand-in-hand with being a great place to do business. We have an opportunity to make Eden Prairie a beacon for bold ideas, entrepreneurship, and innovation. When folks want to start a business, I want their first thought to be Eden Prairie.

EPLN: What recommendation, if any, from the Race Equity Report prepared for the city me and I believe deserves the highest attention is the "Emergency Response" section on "de-escalation" training. This is about law enforcement achieving the high values of building safe neighborhoods and community trust. The council should always be looking to support our law enforcement agencies to aim higher at these goals.



Micah Olson

EPLN: The city has been enacting 2020 task force recommendations to create more affordable housing. Would you favor staying the course, slowing those efforts, or accelerating those activities? Why?

OLSON: When it comes to affordable housing there are so many factors to take into consideration.

One of the realities that we need to face is that rates of affordable housing, while lower than market value, in many cases are actu-

ally not that much lower. The reality is that housing costs here in Minnesota are higher than a lot of the country. These costs are a significant issue for low- and middle-income residents. When you look at the data, I would contend that what you'll find is that government action and policy are largely responsible for a lot of the higher housing costs. I want to be very clear; I'm not saying that the Eden Prairie government is need to advocate to eliminate these barriers at the state, regional, and county level, while at the same time reviewing whether the city's affordable housing goals are effective in this overall context.

EPLN: The Eden Prairie City Council adopted a Climate Action Plan in March 2020, with the overall goal of achieving communitywide carbon neutrality by 2050. Do you support this plan? What changes in this approach would you favor, if any?

OLSON: When I have conversations with residents, one of the things I hear a lot is people noting the high quality of our parks, lakes, trails, and water. We should take pride in the quality of our environment here in Eden Prairie. When it comes to environmental sustainability goals, I always go back to the idea of building relationships. One of the great things that has happened over the last 10 years or so has been businesses recognizing their ability to contribute to a clean, renewable, and sustainable environment. Renewable and sustainable is where the market is headed. My goal would be to encourage businesses in our city to continue this and look for ways that the city can maintain the quality programs and services we have already.

EPLN: In your view, do Eden Prairie residents currently receive a level of city services that is too low, too high, or about right compared to the amount of city property taxes they pay? What changes, if any, would you make in this area?

OLSON: Eden Prairie residents receive an incredibly high quality of city services. When it comes to property taxes, we need to understand the current context. We know that taxes here in Eden Prairie are competitive compared to other cities in Hennepin County. Another factor to take into consideration is the fact that there is a population of people who own a house and are on fixed incomes. The rising property taxes are squeezing their budgets and making it difficult to keep up with the rising costs of living. The bottom line for me is to slow the increase of property taxes as much as possible, while maintaining needed city services. We simply must look for ways to ease the burden of taxes, considering increasing living costs.

> A lways vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost. John Quincy Adams



in 2021 deserves the council's highest attention?

OLSON: There were a number of great recommendations in the report. The one that stood out the most to

to blame for this. I think that there are many mandates, regulations, and fees that are outside of Eden Prairie's jurisdiction that need to be reformed, including the Met Council. The bottom line for me is that we

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www.Francesca4EP.com Each Student Thrives Bring Everyone to the Table Committed to Service Francesca Pagan-Umar for School Board. Address is P.O. Box 44974, Eden Prairie, MN 55347



The Rahkolas support Dennis for School Board! (L to R: Jon, Mikko, Mila, McCoy, Shannon. Not pictured: Max (taking a nap inside).

About Dennis:

- Parent of three kids, two in Eden Prairie Elementary Schools.
- Football coach, Sunday School teacher, youth group leader.
- Owner of a successful residential construction firm.

Dennis wants to:

- Support our fantastic teachers by keeping class sizes small.
- Ensure parents have a voice in educating their kids.
- Advocate for resources students will need to thrive and be successful.
- Supports renewing the levies because school safety and keeping pace with current technology are top priorities.

Email us: stubbs4epschools@gmail.com Visit our Web page: www.stubbs4epschools.com

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Phillips, Weiler vie for 3rd District Congressional seat

By Stuart Sudak

Democratic U.S. Rep. Dean Phillips is being challenged for his 3rd District House seat by Republican Tom Weiler.

Phillips, 53, of Wayzata, has held that seat since 2019. Before being elected, he was a businessman and entrepreneur who ran his family's company, Phillips Distilling, and Talenti Gelato. He is now co-owner of Penny's Coffee.

Phillips told MinnPost this summer that serving in Congress is more than passing legislation. "Congress can't legislate compassion, respect or civility, but Congress can model that behavior," Phillips stated.

a two-year term. Representatives are

also called congressmen or congress-

women. Among other duties, mem-

bers of the U.S. House and Senate

- together known as Congress, or

government - make all laws, declare

war, regulate interstate and foreign

commerce, and control taxing and

spending policies.

the legislative branch of the U.S.

Phillips, according to MinnPost, is

a member of the New Democrats, a group of Democrats who are culturally liberal but more conservative on economic issues. Phillips also highlights his role in the Problem Solvers Caucus, a group of moderate Democrats and Republicans.

He has made gun violence a top priority among the many issues highlighted on his website. He advocates for expanding background checks for all purchases, reinstating the assault weapons ban, finding "common sense measures" to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people, and supporting mental health and anti-bullying programs.

Congress continues on page 20

Position: 3rd Congressional District Representative

CANDIDATES

Dean Phillips (D) (incumbent) Tom Weiler (R)

JOB POSTING

Eden Prairie and other suburbs west and southwest of Minneapolis – together forming the 3rd Congressional District – are seeking a representative to the U.S. House for

Dean Phillips (D) of Wayzata

Phillips worked at a variety of start-ups and small businesses before joining and eventually leading the family business, Phillips Distilling. He helped build Talenti Gelato before selling it to Unilever in 2014. He co-founded Penny's Coffee and a former regent at Saint John's University and is a former board chair of Allina Health. Phillips brought WE Day, the global youth-empowerment initiative, to Minnesota. He was elected in 2018 to serve the Third Congressional District and is seeking reelection.

Website: phillipsforcongress.org

EPLN: If elected, what would be your highest priority for Minnesota and the nation?

PHILLIPS: I am on a mission to restore Americans' faith in their government, and that work will remain my top priority if I have the honor of representing our community in Congress for another two years. Through serving as vice chair of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, by convening Common Ground Workshops here in our community, and by building meaningful relationships with principled members of both parties, I have worked to inspire a little more decency, civility, and collaboration both here and in Washington, D.C. This may sound trivial to some, given the major challenges we face, but our democracy is fragile, and it is under attack from enemies both foreign and domestic. Without a healthy and thriving democracy and the freedoms and liberties that come with it, I'm afraid nothing else will matter — which is why this election, and every election going forward, is so important. To make meaningful progress on the major issues facing our nation — from costs to crime to climate change and more — we need to elect people of principle who believe in America, who will defend democracy, and who will model the sort of behavior we should expect from our elected officials. I am that candidate.



Dean Phillips

think would improve that situation?

PHILLIPS: The entire world is still feeling the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, especially when it comes to inflation, including the cost of food and fuel. The U.S. House took swift action to address these concerns, passing the Consumer Fuel Price Gouging Act, which would crack down on those big oil companies who are raking in billions in profits while charging consumers exorbitant rates at the pump, and the Lower Food and Fuel Costs Act, which would strengthen the domestic food supply chain and help lower the costs of both gas and groceries. President Biden also recently signed into law the Inflation Reduction Act, which will help lower the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs — major cost drivers for many Americans — and further relieve inflationary pressure by reducing energy costs and cutting the federal budget deficit by \$300 billion over 10 years. Going forward, we need to rebuild domestic supply chains, invest in the workforce of the future, and ensure that middle class Americans can keep more of their hardearned money by ensuring the wealthiest individuals and

COMPENSATION

Rank-and-file members of Congress are paid \$174,000 annually.

QUALIFICATIONS

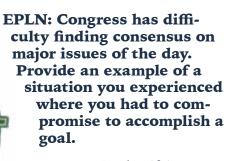
The Constitution requires that members of the House be at least 25 years old, have been a U.S. citizen for at least seven years, and live in the state they represent (though not necessarily the same district).

ABOUT THE HIRING PROCESS

The United States is divided into 435 congressional districts, each with a population of about 710,000 individuals. Each district elects a representative to the U.S. House of Representatives for a two-year term.

world, including China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, and we must continue to invest in both our diplomatic corps and in our intelligence capabilities in order to prevent an escalation in tensions with these regimes while ensuring we continue to have the world's strongest and most advanced military. I also believe that our energy policy is increasingly an issue of national security, and we must make energy independence — including an orderly but expedient transition to a clean energy economy — a priority. Right now, we are dependent on some of the world's worst human-rights abusers for our domestic energy needs. Drilling our way out of the problem will only exacerbate the negative effects of climate change, which the Pentagon has repeatedly classified as a national security threat in itself. Still, perhaps the biggest national security threat we face is the threat from within. Those who use lies and disinformation to divide us are playing with fire, and if not met with a whole lot of water this November and in 2024, I fear we will no longer recognize the nation we will become.

EPLN: Mass shootings using military-style, semi-automatic weapons have been occurring with increasing frequency in this country. So too, are handgun murders and suicides. What kind of gun control measures, if any, do you support? and it also strengthens background checks, cracks down on gun traffickers, and supports states implementing Extreme Risk Protection Order laws — or so-called red-flag laws. No single law, including this bill, will put a stop to our nation's gun violence epidemic — but this bipartisan bill was a damn good start, and I'm proud to have voted for it.



PHILLIPS: Identifying common ground in order to make progress on the major issues of the day is the least anyone should expect from their elected officials, and yet far too few have any interest in doing so. As the 13th most bipartisan member of Congress, according to the nonpartisan Lugar Center, and as a two-time winner of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Jefferson-Hamilton Award for Bipartisanship, I don't just talk about common ground, consensus, and compromise — I seek it every day. The best part of my week is when I sit down at the table with my colleagues in the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus and spend time listening to and learning from one another and ultimately coming up with actionable solutions to the major issues facing our country. That's how we helped end the government shutdown in 2019, it's how we successfully jumpstarted COVID-19 relief talks in 2020, and it's how — after more infrastructure weeks than anyone cares to remember — we came up with the framework for what became the bipartisan infrastructure law that President Biden signed in 2021. None of these initiatives were perfect, and no one got everything they wanted — but we got it done.

EPLN: The economy is in a state of flux right now with inflation on one hand and low unemployment rates on the other. What laws or public policies do you largest corporations pay their fair share.

EPLN: What is the largest national security threat to the U.S., and how would you approach dealing with that threat?

PHILLIPS: National security means many things. We clearly face ongoing threats from adversaries around the

PHILLIPS: Like many Minnesotans, I am a gun owner, and I respect the constitutional right to keep and bear arms. I am also outraged by the notion that unfettered access to weapons of war is somehow more important than the lives of innocent children, far too many of whom are gone from this world after guns specifically designed to kill people quickly were obtained — often easily — by the very last people that should have them. Only in America do we experience this level of carnage and, at least until recently, do nothing about it. That changed when Congress passed and the president signed into law the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in June of this year — the first meaningful gun violence prevention legislation in roughly three decades. The bill invests in mental health services, school safety, and violence intervention programs,

EPLN: What organizations have endorsed your election?

PHILLIPS: The Minnesota DFL, Planned Parenthood Action Fund, Sierra Club, and End Citizens United, to name a few — with many more in the works! We will be providing regular endorsement updates here: phillipsforcongress.org/dean-phillips/endorsements/

Position: 3rd Congressional District Representative

Thomas Weiler (R) of Plymouth

Weiler graduated from Eden Prairie High School and the University of Notre Dame with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and also participated in Navy ROTC. He also holds master's degrees in public administration, engineering management, and national resource strategy. He was stationed on four submarines and one aircraft carrier during a 20-year Navy career. Between tours, Weiler served as a flag aide to the commander of the Pacific Fleet; legislative defense fellow on Capitol Hill; and military assistant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He earned three Meritorious Service Medals, four Navy Commendation Medals, one Joint Service Achievement Medal, and three Navy Achievement Medals before retiring from the Navy. Has not previously held public office.

Website: weilerforcongress.com

EPLN: If elected, what would be your highest priority for Minnesota and the nation?

WEILER: My highest priority for Minnesota and the nation is promoting the common good through improving on government's No. 1 responsibility: security. I view security from both the public safety aspect as well as the financial environment. The role of government is to assure that its citizens can flourish in a safe, secure society. Families in Minnesota deserve a thriving economy where they can work hard and afford groceries, gas, shelter, and school supplies. They also deserve a safe community

where they can live, work, worship, and go to school without fear. My focus will be on improving the quality of life for Minnesotans by improving our public safety and our economy.

EPLN: The economy is in a state of flux right now with inflation on one hand and low unemployment rates on the other. What laws or public policies do you think would improve that situInflation Reduction Act will not reduce inflation. The new law will increase taxes and pays out another \$700 billion of your hard-earned tax

dollars. With 9% inflation and the U.S. economy in a recession, this is exactly the wrong type of big-government policy at the wrong time. America's economy thrives with less government and public policies that motivate Americans to work hard so they can earn a dignified salary and support their families without facing burdensome taxes and regulations.

To improve our economy moving forward, Congress must be better financial stewards of our hard-earned tax dollars. Our Congress has properly passed our federal budget only four times in my lifetime. As a result, billions of taxpayer dollars are spent by simply taking what a government program received the previous year, and adding 2 percent. When in Congress, I intend to propose a two-year budget cycle to stop the continuous continuing resolutions and require Congress to pass a budget on time. If the budget is not passed on time, members of Congress must stop fundraising activity until the budget is completed.

EPLN: What is the largest national security threat to the U.S., and how would you approach dealing with that threat?

WEILER: The largest national security threat to the United States is China, followed closely by Russia.

I have operated submarines and conducted military operations in the immediate vicinity of units of both of these nations. I have also been involved in high-level diplomatic negotiations with China and Russia. Through these experiences, I have learned that these regimes only respond to strength and will take advantage of their power to bully weaker nations. Therefore, in dealing with China and Russia, the United States must always be clear-eyed regarding the intentions of China and Russia, and must also

always approach the issue at hand — whether that be military, economic, trade, human rights — from a position of strength.

Additionally, as the COVID-19 pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine have made clear, the United States and our allies must always work to ensure that no elements of our national security (energy, semicon-

ductors, natural resources, military equipment, medical supplies, etc.) ever become reliant on China or Russia.

EPLN: Mass shootings using military-style, semi-automatic weapons have been occurring with increasing frequency in this country. So too, are hand gun murders and suicides. What kind of gun control measures, if any, do you support?

WEILER: The level of violent crime in Minnesota's 3rd Congressional District and the Twin Cities is completely unacceptable and bringing security and safety back to our community will be my No. 1 priority as your representative.

A number of elements are required to ensure our communities are safe. Ensuring our law-enforcement officers are properly supported, funded, and resourced is essential. Additionally, reducing gun violence, removing guns obtained illegally from the streets, having more mental health resources available, and having a justice system that gets criminals off the street and in jail is critical.

I support common-sense gun control measures and support universal background checks for gun ownership. I also support banning equipment, like some bump stocks, that are specifically designed to give a legal gun the capability of an illegal gun. Additionally, I will push legislation to require a law enforcement officer to be present at every school across America.

Our society has experienced too many school shootings and we need to take aggressive, real action to minimize the chance of another school



tragedy in America. I believe having a law enforcement officer at every school in Minnesota's 3rd District is the best way to protect our children.

EPLN: Congress struggles finding consensus on major issues of the day. Provide an example of a situation you experienced where you had to compromise to accomplish a goal.

WEILER: In 20 years of service in the U.S. Submarine Force, there were countless situations in which compromise was required to achieve a mission. In my experience, a key element of compromise is the presence of leaders who understand the need for it at times.

One example occurred during my time as the executive officer aboard the USS Michigan, a nuclear-powered, guidedmissile and special-operations submarine. Due to specific timing issues of an upcoming mission, the training requirements simply did not fit in our underway schedule. Our captain would not waive any of the training requirements, nor would the SEAL commander. As the executive officer, it was my job to solve the problem. I worked with my department heads to develop a compromised solution in which some of the training would be conducted prior to the underway using in-port training simulators. The in-port trainers were not as good as the real underway training, so we added an evaluation at sea. I was able to gain support from our captain and the SEAL Team commander to execute the compromise training plan. The compromise plan worked, and our combined team flawlessly executed our mission vital to national security.

EPLN: What organizations have endorsed your election?

The Minnesota Republican Party Congressman Dan Crenshaw (TX) Congressman Tom Emmer (MN) Congressman Pete Stauber (MN) Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach (MN)

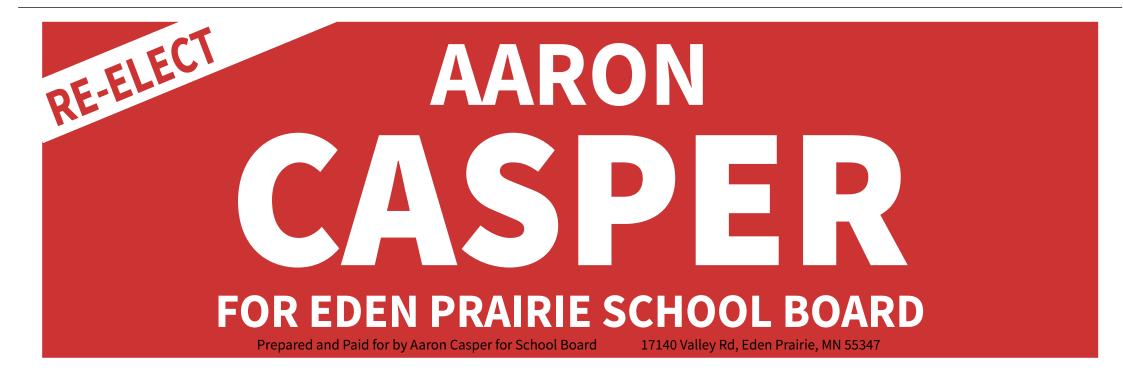


Tom Weiler

ation?

WEILER: Federal laws that would improve inflation are those that would drastically reduce federal spending.

For example, the recently enacted



Position: District 49A State Representative

CANDIDATES

Ryan Chase (R) Laurie Pryor (D)

JOB POSTING

Eden Prairie is seeking a part-time executive – that is, a state representative – who will represent District 49A residents in the Minnesota House portion of the Legislature for the next two years. His or her higher purpose is the enactment and revision of laws. In practical terms, this means the state representative works on state issues, such as funding the elementary and secondary education system, setting state tax policy, and funding state human service programs.

COMPENSATION

Salaries for Minnesota's legislators were once set by legislators themselves. But voters amended the state constitution in 2016 and salaries are now prescribed by a Legislative Salary Council. The Council set the salaries of Minnesota senators and representatives at \$48,250 per year effective July 1, 2021.

QUALIFICATIONS

Representatives and senators must be qualified voters of the state, be 21 years of age, and must have resided one year in the state. In addition, legislators must have lived the six months immediately preceding the election in the district in which they are elected.

ABOUT THE HIRING PRO-CESS

All 134 members of the Minnesota House are elected by the voters in their respective districts every two years. District 49A has been redrawn as a result of redistricting that followed the 2020 Census, and it generally comprises south Minnetonka and Eden Prairie north of Highway 5. The last election of all 134 members of the Legislature was in 2020.

Ryan Chase (R) of Eden Prairie

Chase has worked for Stratasys in Eden Prairie, Donaldson Company in Bloomington, and Nonin Medical in Plymouth after graduating from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., with an accounting degree. This is his first campaign for elective office.

Website: chaseformn.com

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be?

CHASE: The main goal that I will work toward in this position is creating a bipartisan budget that funds initiatives and projects that all Minnesotans will benefit from. The budget must positively impact our economy and slow inflation by reducing frivolous spending, getting people back to work, and growing our local businesses that invest in our community. It should fund organizations and initiatives that provide public safety to push back the crime wave we have seen explode over the past two years. With over \$20 billion of the state's budget going to education, we must put safeguards in place to ensure schools are helping students reach grade-level standards.

EPLN: Minnesota has a projected budget surplus of approximately \$9.3 billion. Would you favor using any of this surplus, considering more tax revenue than was needed to support the budget. With rampant inflation due to overspending, we must give a portion of the surplus back, while adjusting tax rates to reduce the state income in the future. However, a much smaller portion should be considered for projects that would increase our quality of living in areas of public safety, environmental conservation, and the state's infrastructure. These are the areas that have historically enticed people to come to our great state.



Ryan Chase

EPLN: Violent crime increased across the U.S. during COVID-19, even as property crimes and burglaries decreased. What additional resources, if any, should be provided to law enforcement via the state budget?

CHASE: Our law enforcement groups, especially locally, have done a great job of protecting and serving our community with respect and honor. At the state level, coordination across jurisdictions for training and targeted

task forces to support smaller or less experienced departments has been critical. The state troopers focus much of their time supporting Minneapolis due to its depleted department. The state has led efforts that have been very successful in reducing the drug trade and human trafficking in Minnesota. Beyond funding these efforts, we must support law enforcement by holding judges accountable to their sentencing duties and to keep repeat offenders off the streets.

EPLN: Considering the new importance of state laws regarding abortion, what changes to Minnesota law regarding abortion and abortion access would you favor, if any?

CHASE: I believe the laws that Judge Thomas Gilligan recently struck down were put in place for the benefit of our state. He effectively removed parental rights to support their minor children in one of the most important decisions of their lives. The informed-consent law required doctors to explain the procedure, risks involved, and gave an opportunity to ask questions. This is an attack on patient safety and undermines our entire healthcare system.

EPLN: Do you favor additional restrictions on the sale of guns in Minnesota, including a red flag law and restricting sales to anyone younger than age 21?

CHASE: I do not support expanded restrictions on the sale of guns in Minnesota, specific to red flag laws and those under age 21. We have well-written laws in place that already restrict the possession of firearms, which need to be enforced. I'm open to discussing

the goals of red flag laws and restrictions of sales to anyone younger than 21 to better understand how we can protect society, but any additional restrictions put in place must be constitutional and must not be discriminatory.

> EPLN: With federal action wilting on climate goals, what additional Minnesota Legislature actions would you support, if any?

CHASE: There are two major areas that I believe we must consider if we are to meet the climate goals. First, we must increase our clean-energy sourc-

es and ensure we maintain a stable energy grid. Due to the volatile nature of wind and solar, the environmental impacts of hydro, and the carbon impact of gas and coal, we must consider nuclear energy as an option for Minnesota's future. It has been shown to be safer and more environmentally friendly than most other energy sources. Secondly, switching to electric cars will require a worldwide increase in nickel and cobalt, both of which Minnesota has large reserves of. Current mining activities outside the U.S. for these materials have destroyed ecosystems in multiple countries, which defeats the purpose of trying to save our planet. Expansion of mining in Minnesota and consideration for new nuclear energy sources must be discussed if we hope to reach our climate goals.

the current economic climate? If so, how?

CHASE: As Minnesota's tax system ranks 45th in the U.S., it is easy to conclude that we have simply collected





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Position: District 49A State Representative

Laurie Pryor (D) of Minnetonka

Pryor is program director for nonprofits focused on education and health care. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota. She was elected to the Minnesota House to serve District 48A in 2016; she is currently in her third term. She is running for reelection in what is now House District 49A as a result of redistricting.

Website: lauriepryor.org

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be?

PRYOR: Every year we work on passing major initiatives. Supporting education, ensuring affordable healthcare, and preserving our environment for generations to come are a few examples of possible legislation that would improve lives.

However, if there can be only one accomplishment in the next term, I would want it to be passing legislation to help keep our families and communities safe by preventing acts of gun violence. Every community is affected by gun violence. In fact, 58 percent of adults report that either they or someone they care about has experienced gun violence.

We can't prevent all tragedies, but we can pass measures that have been proven to work. The data shows that having in place common sense measures like criminal background checks and red flag laws save lives. It's time Minnesota acted.

EPLN: Minnesota has a projected budget surplus of approximately \$9.2 billion. Would you favor using any of this surplus, considering the current economic climate? If so, how?

PRYOR: I favor a balanced approach for investing the \$9.2 billion. First, we should set aside a portion to add to the "rainy day fund" that will be a hedge against possible downturns in the economy. I also support targeted tax cuts for Social Security recipients, families with young children, and property taxes. Finally, I will advocate for increases in spending in areas where Minneso-



Laurie Pryor

tans continue to have unmet needs.

Every child deserves a world-class K-12 education. That means reducing class sizes and increasing teacher salaries to address the workforce shortage. We need to improve access to mental health and addiction services so treatment is available sooner, stays affordable, and is effective. Our economy depends on working parents, but the current childcare system is broken. Our state will receive a solid return on an increased investment in our youngest Minnesotans. We can and should invest in solutions that improve lives now and into the future.

EPLN: Violent crime increased across the U.S. during COVID-19, even as property crimes and burglaries decreased. What additional resources, if any, should be provided to law enforcement via the state budget?

> **PRYOR:** Though it did not receive final passage, I voted yes to providing additional resources to fight violent crime in the House Public Safety bill and will continue to support this funding.

The bill we passed in the House funded data-driven, targeted grants that would have gone to communities around the state with the highest growth of crime rates. These grants would have funded local initiatives, such as recruiting new officers, assisting victims of violent crimes, and improving the clearance rates of investigations of homicides. The intent was to prevent violence, help victims recover, and bring to justice those who committed the crimes. EPLN: Considering the new importance of state laws regarding abortion, what changes to Minnesota law regarding abortion and abortion access would you favor, if any?

PRYOR: We are at a crisis moment for abortion access. Given the Supreme Court decision to overthrow Roe vs. Wade, there is no doubt that we need to protect a person's right to make their own healthcare decisions, including whether to terminate a pregnancy or secure family planning services. While Minnesota's Constitution protects access to abortion care, I believe that we must act now to further strengthen the right to access safe, legal abortion in our state.

First, I support legislation to codify the right to abortion and reproductive health care into our state law (PRO Act). I also strongly support the Reproductive Freedom Defense Act, an effort to protect Minnesota's medical providers and all patients from legal action connected to restrictive abortion laws in other states.

EPLN: Do you favor additional restrictions on the sale of guns in Minnesota, including a red flag law and restricting sales to anyone younger than age 21?

PRYOR: Our community deserves to be safe in both public and private spaces. Minnesotans have been loud and clear that they want their elected officials to address the epidemic of senseless gun violence.

During the 2020 legislative session, my House DFL colleagues and I passed legislation to expand criminal background checks on all gun sales and establish extreme risk protection orders. The criminal background check proposal would ensure that all firearms transfers and sales are subject to a criminal background check. The extreme risk protection order bill would enable law enforcement or city/county attorneys to petition a court to prohibit people from possessing firearms if they pose a significant danger to themselves or others by having a gun. measures.

EPLN: With federal action wilting on climate goals, what additional Minnesota Legislature actions would you support, if any?

PRYOR: As one of the fastest warming states in the country, Minnesota is already experiencing the impacts of climate change. We need to act boldly to prevent irreversible and potentially catastrophic consequences.

As one of the founding members of the Climate Action Caucus, I have been a strong advocate for legislation that will drive innovation and protect those who are most vulnerable to severe weather, health issues, and other impacts of climate change. The federal action to address climate change is a significant start, but it is imperative that we follow up with local initiatives. In the last session, many important climate action provisions were brought

forward, but ultimately did not pass. I continue to support these actions:

- Invest in solar and storage programs including solar on public buildings.

- Require the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to analyze cumulative pollution impacts before issuing permits to protect vulnerable communities.

- Make significant investments in transit through the Local Bus and Transit Improvement Act.

- Accelerate the development of "Continuous Living Cover" (CLC) crop enterprises by strategically investing in companies poised for commercial breakthroughs.

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Both reforms are supported by law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and the vast majority of the public. I will continue to advocate for these



Position: District 49B State Representative

CANDIDATES

Thomas Knecht (R) Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn (D)

JOB POSTING

Eden Prairie is seeking a parttime executive – that is, a state representative - who will represent District 49B residents in the Minnesota House portion of the Legislature for the next two years. His or her higher purpose is the enactment and revision of laws. In practical terms, this means the state representative works on

Thomas Knecht (R) of **Eden Prairie**

Knecht works as an attorney specializing in small business and real-estate litigation. He received a law degree from Cornell Law School, a master's in economic history from the London School of Economics, and bachelor of arts in political science and economics from the University of Connecticut. This is his first campaign for elective office.

Website: knechtformn.com

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be?

KNECHT: Reduce the partisan divide. Like most Americans, I am exhausted by the partisanship and polarization plaguing political discourse. Too many politicians are focused on winning the daily news cycle rather than working for long-term and pragmatic solutions to help voters. That needs to change.

We can't let the loudest and most extreme views, on either side of the aisle, silence the reasonable middle. We need, and deserve, elected officials who are willing to buck party leadership and do what is best for voters rather than promoting a personal or partisan agenda.

state issues, such as funding the elementary and secondary education system, setting state tax policy, and funding state human service programs.

COMPENSATION

Salaries for Minnesota's legislators were once set by legislators themselves. But voters amended the state constitution in 2016 and salaries are now prescribed by a Legislative Salary Council. The Council has set the salaries of Minnesota senators and representatives at \$48,250 per year effective July 1, 2021.

QUALIFICATIONS

Representatives and senators must be qualified voters of the state, be 21 years of age, and must have resided one year in the state. In addition, legislators must have lived the six months immediately preceding the election in the district from which they are elected.

ABOUT THE HIRING PROCESS

All 134 members of the Minnesota House are elected by the voters in their respective districts every two years. District 49B has been redrawn as a result of redistricting that followed the 2020 Census, and it generally is Eden Prairie south of Highway 5. The last election of all 134 members of the Legislature was in 2020.



KNECHT: We must reduce violent crime and gun violence in Minnesota and America. This can only be done by taking a comprehensive "all-the-above" strategy

to combat gun violence: enforce current laws prohibiting gun violence, prosecute and sentence violent offenders, and examine existing and potential regulations on gun sales.

More than that, we must examine and address the societal and cultural issues that are leading individuals, particularly young men who are predominantly responsible for gun violence and school shootings, to pick up a gun and cause harm in our communities.

EPLN: With federal action wilting on climate goals, what additional Minnesota Legislature actions would you support, if any?

KNECHT: I will support action to conserve open spaces, protect forests, maximize biodiversity, and ensure clean waterways. We should also incentivize research, development, and investment in next-generation technology that will increase efficiency, reduce emissions, and lower energy costs. Finally, I will promote investment in and use of clean manufacturing systems and low-emissions construction material.



Thomas Knecht

will advocate for common sense tax reform to reduce the tax burden and leave more money in the pockets of Minnesotans, particularly for retirees

and working families, while ensuring the necessary resources for government services and fully funding the rainy day fund.

Minnesota is only one of 13 states to tax Social Security benefits. We can provide much-needed relief to Minnesota seniors living on a fixed income by cutting the Social Security tax.

We should also provide tax relief for hardworking families and residents. Whether it's gas prices, groceries, childcare costs, or taxes, hardworking Minnesotans are getting pinched far, far too often by rising living costs. We can reduce the pain of rising costs by reducing Minnesota's individual tax burden in a fiscally prudent way.

olis and its spread to the suburbs, I am running to develop strong policies that provide police and peace officers the resources they need, ensure the mental health and wellness of law-enforcement professionals, and push back against harmful narratives that villainize the police and embolden criminals.

Together, we will support the police, strengthen community relationships, enact any needed reforms, and ensure public safety. That includes providing additional resources for police recruitment and retention, and increasing resources for the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

EPLN: Considering the new importance of state laws regarding abortion, what changes to Minnesota law regarding abortion and abortion access would you favor, if any?

KNECHT: We must provide better support for women, children, and families at every stage of life to make Minnesota the best place in the country to raise a family. I will work ensure access and availability of contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

If there are any proposed changes to Minnesota law, I will seek to achieve bipartisan consensus on abortion policy that reflects the position of most Minnesotans: keep abortion safe, legal, and rare; limit procedures when a fetus is viable outside the womb.

I will work to reduce the partisan divide, foster collaboration over conflict, increase thoughtful deliberation, and focus on the issues and work that will improve the lives of Eden Prairie residents.

EPLN: Minnesota has a projected budget surplus of approximately \$9.3 billion. Would you favor using any of this surplus, considering the current economic climate? If so, how?

KNECHT: In the face of a record state budget surplus and the highest inflation rate in over 40 years, I **EPLN: Violent crime in**creased across the U.S. during COVID-19, even as property crimes and burglaries decreased. What additional resources, if any, should be provided to law enforcement via the state budget?

KNECHT: After experiencing the alarming rise of crime in MinneapNonetheless, it is unlikely we will see changes to Minnesota law on abortion given the 1995 Minnesota Supreme Court ruling in Doe v. Gomez that held there was a right to abortion access protected by the Minnesota constitution.

EPLN: Do you favor additional restrictions on the sale of guns in Minnesota, including a red flag law and restricting sales to anyone younger than age 21?

Cink or swim, live **J**or die, survive or perish, I give my hand and my heart to this vote.

Daniel Webster, U.S. Senator, 1826

Congress from page 2

Weiler, 44, who lives in Plymouth but was raised in Eden Prairie, is running for office for the first time. Weiler was a career Navy officer, a submariner in line to command his own ship, when he retired after being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Weiler is focusing, according to Minn-Post, on what he views as the nation's worsening problems and running on issues that are at the center of many Republican campaigns — crime and the economy.

To lower inflation, he would rein in federal spending, promote domestic energy production to regain America's energy independence, and reduce unnecessary regulations.

To reduce crime, Weiler would support

policies that maintain that individuals who commit crimes be prosecuted, "not coddled and avoid responsibility for their actions."

District 49B State Representative

Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn (D) of Eden Prairie

Kotyza-Witthuhn's professional background is in operations and management in education, nonprofits, and the IT industry. She studied entrepreneurship and Spanish at the University of St. Thomas and, as an Eden Prairie resident, has served in parent-teacher organizations and as a school volunteer. She is married with four children. She is serving her second term in the Minnesota House and is vice chair of the House Commerce Committee and sits on the Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee, the Behavioral Health Committee, and the Workforce and Business Development Committee.

Website: carlieforhouse.com

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be?

KOTYZA-WITTHUHN: Study after study tells us the best return on investment, hands down, is funding for early care and learning.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, our childcare system was broken. The pandemic exacerbated challenges for providers and parents in need of childcare. Until a child turns 5 and is eligible for kindergarten, per-pupil investment at the state or federal level is marginal, at best. It would be a game-changer for our littlest learn-

ers and their families if the Legislature were to implement an income-adjusted childcare subsidy program, based on living wages for caregivers, so independent, private childcare providers, center and school-based

educators are paid fairly for the critical work they do in helping raise the children of Minnesota.

Ideally this would include some form of compensation for parents who choose to stay home with their children, in the absence of a statewide paid family leave program. When parents know their children are safe and happy, they feel better about returning to the workplace.

reflects our values. The Legislature and Gov. Walz reached a bipartisan budget framework to cut taxes, invest in our people, and add to our reserves. The pandemic didn't impact everyone the same way — corporate profits are soaring while household costs are rising. I'm focused on reducing expenses like childcare, housing, and healthcare so it's easier for folks to cover essentials like gas and groceries.

state budget is a moral document that



Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn

I am working to put money back in the hands of Minnesotans by supporting the largest tax cut in Minnesota history and the largest property tax cut in 20 years, making sure folks get the care they need by capping co-pays on prescription drugs and lowering health insurance premiums, and investing in our students from cradle through college with my Great Start Childcare Tax

> Credit, fully-funding our public schools and expanding access to higher education. We must also invest in climate-resilient infrastructure for a cleaner and greener future, and continue to support and fund our public safety system.

EPLN: Violent crime increased across the U.S. during COVID-19, even as property crimes and burglaries decreased. What additional resources, if any, should be provided to law enforcement via the state budget?

KOTYZA-WITTHUHN: Though there is new data to suggest we've

ation of an equipment library to help combat auto theft while reimbursing local departments for investigating these thefts. I co-authored the Hometown Heroes Assistance Act, the most comprehensive aid program for firefighters in the nation, providing them with emotional trauma resources, additional critical illness insurance options, and ongoing health/wellness training.

Working closely with the EPPD, I commend them for recent achievements in mental health support, community engagement, and catalytic converter recovery. Building neighborhood relationships develops and strengthens trust between residents and law enforcement. We should use data-driven approaches to target funding where it's needed most, support partnerships in community crime prevention, and bolster innovation to keep our community safe.

EPLN: Considering the new importance of state laws regarding abortion, what changes to Minnesota law regarding abortion and abortion access would you favor, if any?

KOTYZA-WITTHUHN: Despite widespread support for abortion access across the nation, the extreme rightwing Supreme Court rolled back 50 years of bodily autonomy and reproductive healthcare rights. Minnesota now is an island in the Midwest and our local providers are already seeing an influx of patients from out of state.

Simply put, politicians do not belong in the doctor's office or operating room. These decisions are some of the most personal and challenging a woman can make, and women deserve the freedom to make the best decision for them with their doctor. We must ensure that reproductive rights are protected at the state level.

Democrats hold a small majority in the Minnesota House, but we do not have a pro-choice majority. It's essential to elect and reelect pro-choice representatives in order to protect and expand abortion access.

I am a co-author of the PRO Act, which would codify the right to make personal decisions about reproductive healthcare including abortion, contraception, and pregnancy. Anything short of full-fledged support of abortion access in Minnesota is unacceptable. Make no mistake: abortion is on the ballot this year.

know with rights come responsibilities and when it comes to gun violence prevention, with deference to our Second Amendment rights, all options should be on the table for consideration by community members, law enforcement, and the Legislature.

VOTE

I've co-authored and voted in support of criminal background checks and a red flag law, which were both passed by House Democrats in 2019 and weren't even considered by Senate Republicans. This session, I worked to introduce a safe storage law, which would require that guns be stored and locked separately from ammunition when not in use. Our foster care system already requires safe storage and this is yet another way we can keep all Minnesota children safe when in daily proximity to guns.

The blatant disregard for the safety of our children and educators in schools, our neighbors in places of worship, and our friends and family as they enjoy shopping or a movie is disgraceful.

We must add "policy and action" to "thoughts and prayers" and I won't stop until we see it.

EPLN: With federal action wilting on climate goals, what additional Minnesota Legislature actions would you support, if any?

KOTYZA-WITTHUHN: Min-

nesota is one of the fastest warming states in the country and we're already seeing the impacts of climate change. On 8/16, President Biden signed into law the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), easily the most consequential climate legislation in U.S. history. This package will allow Minnesotans statewide to save money on their energy bills. The IRA is a game-changer. Minnesotans should remember that every single Republican in Congress voted against these climate provisions. The vast majority of Republicans in the Minnesota House won't even acknowledge that climate change is a manmade problem.

We can't turn back the clock on climate change without taking urgent action, now. In order to access millions of federal funds in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Minnesota must make matching investments in energy-related grant opportunities. I support the Solar Awards Program through Xcel Energy, solar on schools and public buildings, and improvements to our solar garden regulations. I support investment in electric vehicles, including school buses, which the Eden Prairie Schools are already exploring.





Early care and learning investments are pro-family and pro-business.

EPLN: Minnesota has a projected budget surplus of approximately \$9.3 billion. Would you favor using any of this surplus, considering the current economic climate? If so, how?

KOTYZA-WITTHUHN: In a

time of plenty, we must make smart investments in the future of our state, while ensuring we are able to manage a potential recession down the road. Minnesotans know that our

reached a plateau in rising crime, we must act urgently to reverse this alarming and unacceptable trend. Making prudent financial investments to fully fund good law-enforcement practices and other first-responder resources to improve our public safety response and advancing common sense policies to hold law enforcement accountable for misconduct and rebuild/strengthen community trust in law enforcement are not mutually exclusive. We must do both.

This year, I introduced a \$1.7 million bipartisan proposal for the Automobile Theft Prevention program and the cre**EPLN:** Do you favor additional restrictions on the sale of guns in Minnesota, including a red flag law and restricting sales to anyone younger than age 21?

KOTYZA-WITTHUHN: I first ran for office as a Mom Demanding Action — and my husband and I are safe and responsible gun owners. Minnesotans

Minnesotans take pride in the natural beauty of our state and want to ensure that our air is safe to breathe and our water is clean to drink for generations to come.

This country would do itself a world of good by restoring a sense of the dignity, even the beauty, of individual ethicalism, of self-restraint, of courtesy. These things might help us to like one another, even trust one another, both necessary to a functioning democracy.

Marilynne Robinson, novelist and essayist

Position: District 49 State Senator

CANDIDATES

Steve Cwodzinski (D) (incumbent) Marla Helseth (R)

JOB POSTING

Eden Prairie is seeking a parttime executive, referred to as a state senator, who will represent District 49 residents in the Senate or upper house of the state lawmaking body known as the Minnesota Legislature for the next four years. Their higher purpose is the enactment and revision of laws. In practical terms, this

Steve Cwodzinski (D) of Eden Prairie

Cwodzinski taught from 1983 until retirement in 2016, including 30 years at Eden Prairie High School teaching American history, government, and civics. As an educator, he was recognized with the Presidential Scholar's Influential Teacher Award, Eden Prairie Teacher of the Year Award, and Southwest Metro Teacher of the Year Award. He was elected to the Minnesota Senate in 2016. He has served on the following legislative committees: Education and Finance Policy, Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Finance, Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy. Cwodzinski is the ranking minority chair of Local Government and Policy and DFL Senate chair of the Civility Caucus. As a teacher, he served as a union representative to Education Minnesota.

Website: cwodforsenate.com

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be?

CWODZINSKI: If I could only accomplish passing one major bill in my next term it would be to adequately fund our public schools. Our state and country face so many important issues, but I truly believe that all of those issues become easier to tackle when we have an educated populace that has the tools and knowledge to address these issues.



means senators work on state issues, such as funding the elementary and secondary education system, setting state tax policy, and funding state human service programs.

COMPENSATION

Salaries for Minnesota's legislators were once set by legislators themselves. But voters amended the state constitution in 2016 and salaries are now prescribed by a Legislative Salary Council. The Council set the salaries of Minnesota senators and representatives at \$48,250 per year effective July 1, 2021.

QUALIFICATIONS

Representatives and senators must be qualified voters of the state, be 21 years of age, and must have resided one year in the state. In addition, legislators must have lived the six months immediately preceding the election in the district in which they are elected.

ABOUT THE HIRING PROCESS

Minnesota is one of a number of

CWODZINSKI: There is no greater goal of a public servant than for them to make sure their community is safe. In order for our law enforcement to do the best job possible, we need to make sure that they are adequately funded.

I propose using some of the budget surplus to help law enforcement, such as the Eden Prairie Police Department, recruit exceptional candidates and expand programs that have shown success.

When law enforcement has high recruitment standards and has the tools needed to attract outstanding candidates, our community is better served because the relationships between police and residents are stronger. We must continue to fund programs that reduce crime and recidivism, such as diversion programs for juvenile first offenders and having social workers on staff. The Eden Prairie Police Department has successfully implemented these programs, and I believe we should continue to fund them.

Finally, while property crimes are down, they are still important and can cost victims thousands of dollars. To address this, I co-authored a proposed bill that would help prevent catalytic converter theft by clarifying who can legally possess used catalytic converters.

EPLN: Considering the new importance of state laws regarding abortion, what changes to Minnesota law regarding abortion and abortion access would you favor, if any? states that elect state senators for terms that are sometimes two years and sometimes four years, depending on the proximity of the election to the redistricting or reapportionment that follows the federal census. Minnesota's senators are elected in years ending in 0, 2, and 6. The 2022 election is for a four-year term in the Minnesota Senate. All 67 Senate seats are up for election this year. District 49 is all of Eden Prairie and the portion of Minnetonka that is south of Highway 7.

EPLN: Do you favor additional restrictions on the sale of guns in Minnesota, including a red flag law and restricting sales to anyone younger than age 21?



CWODZINSKI: I absolutely do. Red flag laws temporarily remove guns from people that are a risk to themselves and others which keeps our community safe. As a teacher, I've seen the impact that gun violence has on our students, watching their fear and anguish ridden faces

as they learn about yet another mass shooting. Laws such as this, universal background checks, restricting gun sales to anyone younger than 21 years old, and a ban on military-style semi-automatic rifles can keep us safe.

No single one of those laws would prevent every gun death, but together as a patchwork of protections they can prevent gun violence incidents. If any one of these laws prevents you or a loved one from being a victim, then they are worth the world. I will continue to advocate for keeping our community safer.

EPLN: With federal action wilting on climate goals, what additional Minnesota Legislature actions would you support, if any?

CWODZINSKI: As a member of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Finance Committee, I am dedicated to finding solutions that protect our climate so that future generations can enjoy our environment.



Steve Cwodzinski

EPLN: Minnesota has a projected budget surplus of approximately \$9.3 billion. Would you favor using any of this surplus, considering the current economic climate? If so, how?

CWODZINSKI: I believe we have a duty to do three things with this budget surplus: make smart investments into our government services, provide taxpayers immediate relief, and set aside some of the surplus into a rainy day fund. These goals were outlined in the compromise that almost passed this last session and each of these

three goals would receive about one-third of the surplus.

We have the unique opportunity to make generational investments into education, healthcare, and public safety that will make us healthier, safer, and more prosperous as a state. These investments keep Minnesota competitive and directly correlate to a high quality of life here for us and future generations. In addition to those investments into our government services, we need to make sure that folks across Minnesota get immediate relief through a check sent to each household in the state as soon as possible. Finally, while we are fortunate to have a surplus this year, we cannot predict what the next 5 to 10 years will hold. Therefore we must set aside some of the funds so that in years that are more difficult we don't have to cut back on essential services.

I would bring the education funding back to our 2003 levels and index it to inflation. This would allow school districts to not have to worry from year to year about how their budget will be impacted by petty politics at the Capitol. As a former teacher, I have seen firsthand how funding and investment from the state is turned into success for our students. Our students and educators deserve sustainable, consistent, and reliable funding from preschool all the way to vocational school and public universities. I'm excited for Minnesota to produce the next generation of entrepreneurs, innovators, and public servants. However, we need to supply our schools with the funds and tools to support them.

EPLN: Violent crime increased across the U.S. during COVID-19, even as property crimes and burglaries decreased. What additional resources, if any, should be provided to law enforcement via the state budget? **CWODZINSKI:** The recent Supreme Court cases have transferred the responsibility of establishing reproductive freedom rights to the states. I am in favor of passing the Protect Reproductive Options (PRO) Act, which codifies reproductive freedom in Minnesota law. The difficult and personal decision to have an abortion should be left between a woman and their doctor.

Right now, Minnesota is the only state in the Upper Midwest to have the right to an abortion and is a beacon of hope to those in other states that want bodily autonomy, which means the stakes in this election are higher than ever. These solutions include providing greater access to energy-efficient technology to businesses and residents while hastening the transition of our electrical grid to renewables like wind and solar. This is a crucial step in hitting our climate goals since six out of every 10 pounds of CO2 produced in Hennepin County are from our energy use. By 2050 Minnesota could and should run on 100 percent renewable energy.

We also need the Minnesota Legislature to help provide more access to low- and zero-emission vehicles and increase public transportation reliability to further reduce our carbon footprint. I support the proposed rule from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency that would have car dealerships stock more electric and low-emission vehicles in their lots.

Position: District 49 State Senator

Marla Helseth (R) of **Eden Prairie**

Helseth has worked as a substitute school teacher and staff aide, while married and raising two children and managing the home. Previously, she was a model and an employee at Piper Jaffray and Fair Isaac Corp., as well as part of the restaurant industry. She has not previously held public office.

Website: marlaforminnesota.com

EPLN: If you could accomplish just one major thing during your term in office, what would you want that to be?

HELSETH: Erase the learning loss experienced by students caused by extended school closures. We now know we closed schools for too long and the results were detrimental to student mental health and academic progress. Extended school closures and other COVID-19-related revelations have resulted in massive drops in enrollment nationwide and in our state, and prove that more educational options are needed.

Minnesota used to be known as an education innovation state. In the not-sodistant past, DFL legislators, including Gov. Rudy Perpich, long supported school choice. We need to return to those days, when education reform could be accomplished in bipartisan fashion instead of being held hostage by teacher union politics.

EPLN: Minnesota has a projected budget surplus of approximately \$9.3 billion. Would you favor using any of this surplus, considering the current economic climate? If so, how?

HELSETH: The budget surplus is unprecedented – by far the highest in our state's history – and should be returned to those who made it possible, the taxpayers of Eden Prairie and Minnetonka. Minnesota will never be a low-tax state due to our climate and quality of life. However, our personal and business tax rates are among the highest in the country, and Minnesota's lowest income tax rate is higher than the highest income tax rate in 24 states. That is an astounding statistic.

The Legislature should use the surplus to reduce personal and small business tax rates and eliminate the state tax on seniors' Social Security. We can provide meaningful tax relief and still preserve the education, healthcare, and environmental quality of life Minnesotans have come to expect.



Marla Helseth

EPLN: Violent crime increased across the U.S, during COVID-19, even as property crimes and burglaries decreased. What additional resources, if any, should be provided to law enforcement via the state budget?

HELSETH: For years I've lived and worked in South Minneapolis and loved it. Working in restaurants, I held crazy hours, and there were times I would walk home at 1 a.m. from Hennepin and Lake to Hennepin and 24th Street. The comfort that came from seeing police patrolling the area is now gone, and that's sad to me.

The "defund the police" demands of prominent Minnesota DFL politicians has been extremely damaging to police morale, recruitment, and reform. It shouldn't surprise us that this has resulted in crime spilling out from Minneapolis into Minnetonka and Eden Prairie. Downtown Minneapolis is less

safe than it has been in decades and it has made parents reluctant to have their children attend the

University of Minnesota due to justifiable concerns about armed robberies and on-campus safety.

Through local government aid, the state legislature provides hundreds of millions of dollars to local communities to address public safety issues. However, in 2022, neither Eden Prairie nor Minnetonka received any of these funds, while Minneapolis and St. Paul received nearly \$150 million. (Source: revenue.state.mn.us/local-government-aid-lga-certification-cities). The local government aid formula should be adjusted to provide suburban communities critical public safety funding.

EPLN: Considering the new importance of state laws regarding abortion, what changes to Minnesota law regarding abortion and abortion access would you favor, if any?

HELSETH: The Supreme Court's decision in the Dobbs case overturned Roe v. Wade, and returned the authority to regulate abortion back to all 50 states. Minnesota's position is unique in that it includes a state supreme court ruling, Doe v. Gomez, which means even with Roe overruled, abortion is still protected under Minnesota case law.

I value human life at every stage and in every environment; I am pro-life. Because abortion remains legal in Minnesota, as a state senator I hope to focus instead on supporting policies that provide broader and more comprehensive choices for women with unplanned pregnancies (especially black women who have more abortions than white women, but are smaller in population). I'm hopeful that helping pregnant women and providing more resources for them is something we can come to consensus on in our Legislature.

EPLN: Do you favor additional restrictions on the sale of guns



in Minnesota, including a red flag law and restricting sales to anyone younger than age 21?

HELSETH: A red-flag law is not a restriction on the sale of guns, it is a procedure whereby a court can order the seizure of guns from a person who is deemed by the court to be a danger to themselves or others. There are many responsible 18-yearold male and female Eden Prairie and Minnetonka high school students who participate in their school clay target team, which is the fastest growing high school sport in the country. Would we deny them the opportunity to purchase a gun and continue competing? What about 19- and 20-year-old athletes competing at the college level, or training to join the U.S. Olympic Team? Let's attack the real problem, which is prosecutors failing to bring stiff penalties to those committing crimes with a gun, instead of debating "feel good" measures that don't address the problem but instead infringe on the constitutional rights of young adults to participate in shooting sports.

EPLN: With federal action wilting on climate goals, what additional Minnesota Legislature actions would you support, if any?

Federal action is not "wilting" as is suggested; rather, recent activity at the federal level indicates that robust debate on climate legislation is in fact taking place.

When it comes to addressing this issue, market forces are having a much greater impact than heavy-handed government mandates. Car makers are building more electric vehicles; beverage companies are reducing the amount of plastic used in bottles; new homes and buildings are exponentially more efficient than just five years ago. There are countless other examples.

Additionally, in liberal states like California that have imposed aggressive regulations in an effort to address climate change, we've seen rolling blackouts, \$6 per gallon gas and energy bills that are rising at double digit rates. Let's not make the cure worse than the disease.

William Hague, leader of the opposition Conservatives, had a deadpan reply when asked how he would respond if an egg was thrown at him: "It is not my policy to hit voters during an election."

From The Washington Post, 2001



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State races: governor, attorney general, secretary of state

sponse to the pandemic.

By Stuart Sudak

Three notable statewide races will be decided on Nov. 8.

In the governor's race, Democratic incumbents Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan are running against Republican challengers Scott Jensen and Matt Birk.

For attorney general, Democratic incumbent Keith Ellison will face Republican challenger Jim Schultz. Democratic incumbent Steve Simon will face Republican challenger Kim Crockett in the secretary of state's race.

Walz, 58, a for-

mer school teacher and U.S. congressman, has been governor since 2019. His tenure as governor has been marked by the George Floyd protests and the COVID-19 pandemic.

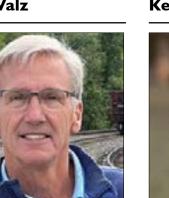
On public safety, Walz touts helping pass public safety reforms to tackle and reduce gun violence while also reforming policing. On the state's pandemic response, Walz's campaign website says his "decisive leadership saved lives and our economy recover quickly."

The administration also heralds "overcoming unprecedented challenges to provide historic investment in education, prioritize clean energy, create new good-paying jobs, and invest in small businesses and economic development."

Jensen, 67, a doctor from Chaska who served in the Minnesota Senate from 2017 to 2021, was spurred to run for governor after voicing skepticism on the



Tim Walz



Scott Jensen



COVID-19 vaccine and the state's re-

Keith Ellison



Jim Schultz

If elected, he vows never to let lockdowns happen again. He adds that lockdowns under Walz's leadership harmed children by forcing them to lose time in the classroom.

Other issues Jensen highlights are addressing the state's crime epidemic, "get-

ting serious" on inflation and the economy, and wanting to "fund kids, not broken institutions." He adds that the Second Amendment should be protected, and that integrity in the election process needs to be restored.

Attorney General

Ellison, 59, the attorney general since 2019, describes himself as a criminal justice reform and accountability leader.

On his website, he touts several accomplishments, including keeping Minnesota families and communities safe, fighting pandemic profiteering and illegal evictions, and protecting small businesses from unfair competition.

Steve Simon



Kim Crockett

ing the police, and prosecuting criminals if elected. Other issues Schultz favors include restoring the trust in the integrity of the elec-

tion system, defending the constitution, and protecting small businesses from government overreach.

Schultz, 36, is an attorney who lives in

Minnetonka. He will prioritize public

Secretary of State

safety, support-

ing and fund-

Simon, 52, of Hopkins, has been secretary of state since 2015. During

this tenure, Simon notes on his website that Minnesota has led the nation in voter turnout for the past three elections.

His priorities include defending democracy, strengthening the freedom to vote for all eligible Minnesotans, and pushing against dangerous disinformation about elections.

Crockett, 62, of Excelsior, said restoring confidence in elections is why she decided to run. According to her campaign website, she wants to "restore confidence in Minnesota's elections by enforcing the laws on the books and working with the legislature, and election officials across the state, to improve the administration of the vote."

According to the non-partisan States United Democracy Center, Crockett is one of 11 major party secretary of state candidates running in this year's elections who deny the results of the 2020 election.

Moriarty told MPR that

Witt, Banks face off for sheriff

By Stuart Sudak

awanna Witt, a major in the sher-Jiff's office, and Joseph Banks, most recently the acting police chief of the Lower Sioux Police Department, are vying to replace Hennepin County Sheriff Dave Hutchinson.

The two garnered the most votes among three candidates in the August primary, allowing them to move on to the Nov. 8 general election. Witt was the top



vote-getter with 57% of the vote, while Banks garnered 22%.

Dawanna Witt

dorsed candidate, has 22

Witt,

48, the

DFL-en-

years of law enforcement experience and leads the sheriff's office's largest bureau: Adult Detention and Court Services. She has also worked for the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.

Her campaign focus on five priorities: safe communities, reforms to reduce recidivism rates,

collaboration with other departments, recruitment and retention of officers, and her experience.



Joseph Banks

Banks, 51, has served

at various times as chief of police for the Lower Sioux, the Upper Sioux, and the Morton, Minn., police departments. He has worked with the Twin Cities Recovery Project and the Black Butterfly project for young women.

His campaign platform includes lowering violent crime, community relations, a united law enforcement, diversity, and citizenship.





Moriarty, Holton Dimick vie for county attorney

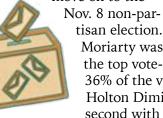




ary Moriarty, the former Hennepin MCounty chief public defender for six years, and Martha Holton Dimick, the former Fourth Judicial District judge, are vying to replace longtime Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman.

By Stuart Sudak

The two garnered the most votes among seven candidates in the August primary, allowing them to move on to the



tisan election. Moriarty was the top vote-getter with 36% of the vote, while Holton Dimick was second with 18%.

Moriarty, 58, the DFL-endorsed candidate, said her 31-year career as a public defender and her 2014 appointment as the county's first female chief public defender provides her the experience to lead the office.

apolis Mayor Jacob Frey and the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Associa-

Holton Dimick, 68, endorsed by Minne-



Martha Holton Dimick

tion, decided to retire as a judge and run for county attorney in the wake of George Floyd's murder and

Mary Moriarty

a rash of weekly shootings in her north Minneapolis neighborhood.

As an Aug. 15 MPR story noted, police reform and violent crime promise to be the central issues of the race. The county attorney's primary job is to prosecute serious crimes, and this year crime, public safety and policing are at issue.

"tough on crime" rhetorie traditionally used by prosecutors has failed to create public safety for everyone. "Yes, we can have public safety, and we need reform to get public safety," Moriarty said. "We need to implement the things that we know work using data and research. And if something isn't working, we need a new approach."

> Holton Dimick struggled with how the criminal justice system was failing communities. She wanted to do more, but her role on the bench limited her ability to take widespread, meaningful action.

She told MPR that the narrative of "defund the police" after George Floyd's murder sent the wrong message to the public and criminals.

"If you're going to commit a violent, serious crime, and gun violence, then there are consequences and if you're arrested and convicted you're looking at a prison sentence," Holton Dimick stated.



VOTE

As an Aug. 17 MPR article stated, whoever wins on Nov. 8 will take over the sheriff's office at a time of rising concerns about violent crime and increased public scrutiny of law enforcement.

Witt told MPR that the public shouldn't have to choose between law enforcement agencies pursuing criminals and ensuring that police act justly. She said people should have both.

Banks said he would work with other police agencies and the community to address and "stop the uptick in violent crimes" plaguing neighborhoods.

State auditor

Julie Blaha (D) and Ryan Wilson (R) are running for state auditor. Find articles on their race and on the judges at eplocalnews.org/election22.