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Unit D304 Trustee

These responses to Key Issues appeared on the Daily Herald website prior to the Spring, 2009, District 304 School Board election. All four of these candidates were elected and are current members.

Bill Wilson

Incumbent: Yes

Occupation: Senior Project Manager - Construction Management

Age: 49

Address: Geneva, IL

Candidate's Key Issues

Key Issue 1

Budget control and tax affordability. We are currently facing an economic crisis in our country. This has impacted state aid payments to our schools, as well the ability of the residents of our community's ability to fund our schools through property taxes. We must look for ways to control/revise current budgets/expenditures, offset rising costs through strategic use of current reserves, and look for ways to bring additional revenue into our district through methods other than the property tax.

Key Issue 2

High school expansion for current and future growth. We must re-evaluate the requirements for the final build-out of the high school. We need to ensure that our plans meet the needs of our students near term and that they have the ability to adapt, affordably, to unknown future needs. We must also review the possibility of phasing this process, as necessary, to meet the financial ability of the community to pay for any required facility growth.

Key Issue 3

Continued student excellence and maximizing available funding to the classroom. The school district has historically met/exceeded state standards at lower than average per pupil funding levels. However, due to the current economic environment, it will be necessary to review all school funding needs, prioritize funding to ensure that adequate funding flows to the classroom, and to maintain the student excellence levels we have achieved over the years.

Questions & Answers

ANSWERS PROVIDED HAVE NOT BEEN EDITED FOR GRAMMAR, MISSPELLINGS OR TYPOS. IN SOME INSTANCES, CANDIDATE CLAIMS THAT COULD NOT BE IMMEDIATELY VERIFIED HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

1. Name the three most important goals or objectives this board should tackle in the coming term. Prioritize them, and briefly discuss why you believe each to be critical, and how the board should go about addressing them.

The three most important goals the board of education must tackle in the coming term are budget control/tax affordability; high school expansion; and continued student excellence. The most pressing issue is budget control/tax affordability, followed by a final resolution to the final buildout of Geneva High School. Continued student excellence is woven into both of these priorities, and must be considered when decisions are made on both of these important issues.

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Family

Divorced, 2 children Daughter: Lindsay C. Wilson, Senior Geneva High School Daughter: Elizabeth G. Wilson, 3rd Grade, Mill Creek Elem. School

Education/degrees

MS Engineering - University of Illinois 1984
BS Civil Engineering - University of Iowa 1982

Civic Involvement

Adjunct Professor Waubensee Community College
Geneva Park District - Girls Softball Coach
Member Church Building Committee
Religious Education teacher

Elected/appointed offices held

Board Member Geneva CUSD 304 2001 to Present

Other Government services

Plan Commission Member - Village of Winfield 1992 to 1997



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Budget control and tax affordability. We are currently facing an economic crisis in our country. This has impacted state aid payments to our schools, as well the ability of the residents of our community's ability to fund our schools through property taxes. We must look for ways to control/revise current budgets/expenditures, offset rising costs through strategic use of current reserves, and look for ways to bring additional revenue into our district through methods other than the property tax.

High school expansion for current and future growth. We must re-evaluate the requirements for the final build-out of the high school. We need to ensure that our plans meet the needs of our students near term and that they have the ability to adapt, affordably, to unknown future needs. We must also review the possibility of phasing this process, as necessary, to meet the financial ability of the community to pay for any required facility growth.

Continued student excellence and maximizing available funding to the classroom. The school district has historically met/exceeded state standards at lower than average per pupil funding levels. However, due to the current economic environment, it will be necessary to review all school funding needs, prioritize funding to ensure that adequate funding flows to the classroom, and to maintain the student excellence levels we have achieved over the years.

The only way that these issues will be totally resolved in the best interest of our education community will be to have the board work as a team in an open and transparent manner. It will be essential that the community be incorporated in the decision process and be allowed to "own" the process. Ultimately, the board of education will make the final decision, however, it will be one that will be the correct one for our children and our tax payers.

2. What is the greatest challenge faced by your district? Please explain your position on how to address it.

Last year the consumer price index (CPI) as measured by the United States Department of Labor, was set at 0.1%. As a result of the CPI measuring 0.1%, the property tax limitation act (tax cap) will fix the growth in the school districts operating income via property taxes to approximately \$60,000. This amount is little more than the cost of a newer teacher to our school district once salary, benefits and overhead are taken into consideration. As the average value of homes begins to reflect the recent drop in housing prices, the combination of dropping values and limiting CPI will have a dramatic impact on revenues to the school district. With continued growth in our student population and dropping revenue, the board of education will be forced to balance the reduction in operating costs with the need to channel adequate funding to the classroom to support our children's education. As I have stated since my first run for this position, all program costs across the board must be reviewed for their respective costs vs. the benefits derived. Existing programs must be continually reviewed, with those no longer meeting our needs eliminated and adjustments made such that we can provide a first class education at affordable costs.

3. Share your philosophy on how to approach teacher contract negotiations. Do you think they should be done in public?

In Geneva, we have been following an interest based negotiation for several years now. The interest based model is that it limits the topics that are negotiated, and over time it has developed a very good rapport between the board and the teachers union. The existing teacher contract expires this summer and the board and the teachers union have begun the negotiation process. I believe that this approach is the best method for arriving at a solid, multi-year contract between the union and the board. Regarding the public side of negotiations, it is essential that all matters discussed should be open and transparent. This is so because the final outcome of the discussion has an impact on all members of the Geneva school community.

4. What are your ideas for improving compliance with the No Child Left Behind standards? What is your view of the federal No Child Left Behind standards in general?

At the current time, here in Geneva, we are in full compliance with all aspects (including all subgroups) of No Child Left Behind standards. The challenge regarding the law, is that it relies on one test as a means of measuring student and district performance. However, there are several groups (ie. special education students, those using English as a second language, etc.) that should be evaluated via an alternate method more

appropriate to their unique needs.

5. Are there significant needs for the district's physical plant? How would you address them? Please account for financial ramifications.

In 2007, the community gave the board of education authority to issue \$79.9 million in school construction/improvement bonds. The funds were utilized to construct two new elementary schools, provide life safety and technology upgrades to all of our facilities, and plan for the future expansion of Geneva High School. As a result of the use of these funds over the last two years, and wrapping up this summer, all of our schools within the district will be in compliance with state of Illinois life/safety requirements. In addition, throughout this process, we have utilized maintenance-free/renewable materials, as well as energy efficient equipment, within our facilities. We are now in position to realize the combination of energy savings and reduced maintenance allowing the district to realize significant reduction in operating costs, and a manageable tax burden.

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NEWS OPINION BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIFESTYLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

MARKETPLACE

Unit D304 Trustee

Timothy E Moran

Incumbent: Yes
Occupation: Attorney
Age: 47
Address: Geneva, IL

Candidate's Key Issues

Key Issue 1

The primary issue facing the school district is the economic downturn.

Key Issue 2

Crowding at the high school.

Key Issue 3

Involving parents in the programs at the schools, and seeking greater public input.

Questions & Answers

ANSWERS PROVIDED HAVE NOT BEEN EDITED FOR GRAMMAR, MISSPELLINGS OR TYPOS. IN SOME INSTANCES, CANDIDATE CLAIMS THAT COULD NOT BE IMMEDIATELY VERIFIED HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

1. Name the three most important goals or objectives this board should tackle in the coming term. Prioritize them, and briefly discuss why you believe each to be critical, and how the board should go about addressing them.

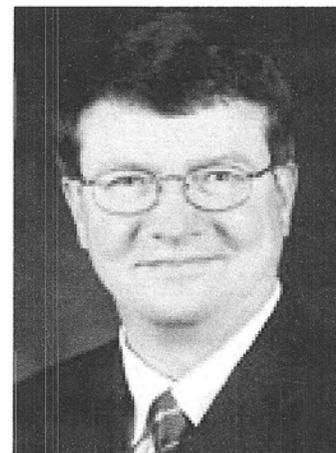
First, continue the level of academic success we have now achieved as a district. Second, continue to involve parents in the school's programs, and expand communication with the public as to district plans and seek input. Third, balance the budget with diminishing revenues.

2. What is the greatest challenge faced by your district? Please explain your position on how to address it.

The goals outlined above are not independent. The district's revenues are being squeezed by three declining economic factors: falling property values which may diminish assessed values, near zero growth in the CPI (used to calculate the so-called 'tax cap'), and declining state reimbursements. But while revenues are declining, costs are not. Expenses such as pencils, paper, books, software, desks, utilities, transportation, and maintenance continue to increase, and the major issue to confront the next board is to identify and prioritize only the absolute needs and match these with available resources, and make the difficult decisions as to other items.

3. Share your philosophy on how to approach teacher contract negotiations. Do you think they should be done in public?

I believe the proactive approach taken by the district over the past several negotiation periods has served the parties well, and should be continued. This approach brings the parties together well before expiration of the current contract, and provides much opportunity to discuss and think through the implications of wage and benefit demands, versus the constraints of current economic conditions. I also believe that the current system of voting on contracts in open session is absolutely necessary.



CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Family

Wife, Barbara; Son, Christopher, 16;
Daughter, Alison, 13

Education/degrees

Juris Doctor, DePaul University
Bachelor of Science in Commerce, DePaul University

Civic Involvement

Co-Chair, Property Tax Committee, Civic Federation, 2009-present; Member, Board of Directors, Civic Federation, 2008-present; Member, Property Tax Advisory Committee, Taxpayers Federation of Illinois, 1999-present; Member, Governing Assembly, IL State Bar Ass'n, 2008-present; Chair, Legislation Committee, Chicago Bar Ass'n, 2008-present; Chair, Unauthorized Practice of Law Task Force, IL State Bar Ass'n, 2008-present; former Chair, State & Local Tax Section Council, IL State Bar Ass'n, 2001-2002; former Chair, Real Estate Tax Committee, Chicago Bar Ass'n, 1998-1999

Elected/appointed offices held

4. What are your ideas for improving compliance with the No Child Left Behind standards? What is your view of the federal No Child Left Behind standards in general?

The district meets or exceeds nearly all of the NCLB standards. But the standards themselves are flawed, and must be re-examined. As an example, the standards require that all schools meet all standards in the future, a well-intended but unmeetable goal. Our district is fortunate in our economic base, but for districts with many immigrant children, or with a lower income base, the demand to increase test scores without accompanying assistance is unrealistic.

5. Are there significant needs for the district's physical plant? How would you address them? Please account for financial ramifications.

The high school is reaching a critical point with regard to the number of students in attendance. The expansion plan was justifiably withdrawn and should remain so for the foreseeable future due to economic factors, but the need to provide additional space remains. Further scheduling changes must be considered, and the use of evolving technology for off-campus studies may be worth looking at, which might also help to alleviate some of the parking problems which currently exist.

Member, Geneva CUSD 304 Board of Education, 2005-2009;
Vice President, Geneva CUSD 304 Board of Education, 2007-2009; Trustee, Geneva Public Library District Board, 1999-2003; Vice President, Geneva Public Library District Board, 2001-2003; City Treasurer, City of Geneva, 2001-2003

Other Government services

Chair, CUSD 304 Board of Education Policy Committee, 2008-2009; Chair, Geneva Ethics Commission, 2004-present; Member, Geneva Home Rule Task Force, 2006; Trustee, Interim, Geneva Public Library District Board, 2005; City Treasurer, Interim, Geneva, 2000; Member, Pension Board, Geneva Fire Department, 2000-2003; Vice-Chair, Citizen's Task Force for Economic Development/Implementation Task Force of Geneva's Strategic Plan, 1997-1999; Member, Growth, Services & Taxation Subcommittee, Geneva Strategic Planning Committee, 1996-1997

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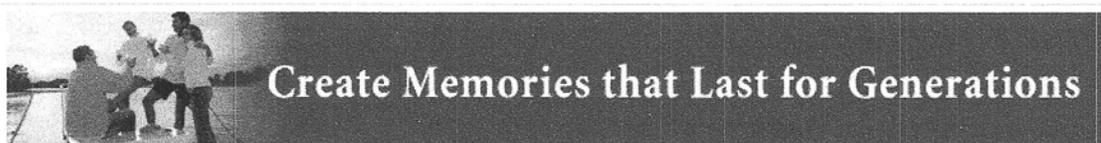
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Unit D304 Trustee

Matthew S. Henry

Incumbent: No

Occupation: National Sales Manager- Myers Lawn and Garden Group- Retail Division.

Age: 44

Address: Geneva, IL

Candidate's Key Issues

Key Issue 1

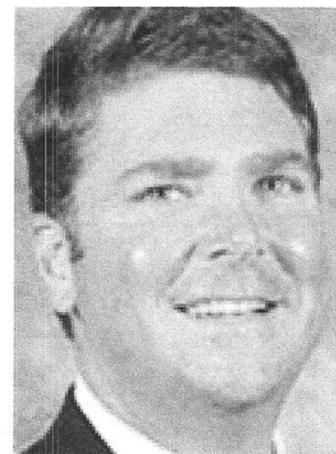
The biggest issue that I see is how we, as a community, can maintain the Geneva school district's high standards of learning, while also being fiscally responsible to the taxpayers that fund the program.

Key Issue 2

Teacher contracts will soon be in the negotiation phase. This will take an understanding of all sides and the ability to negotiate and work for the betterment of all involved, especially the students.

Key Issue 3

We need to search for additional funding for our educational system. This could be through grants, additional state and federal sources, and through necessary cuts in our budgets.



Questions & Answers

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1. Name the three most important goals or objectives this board should tackle in the coming term. Prioritize them, and briefly discuss why you believe each to be critical, and how the board should go about addressing them.

The three most important objectives in order of first to third priority are: the funding of our schools and the community impact of this; building upon our recent successes both academically and extra curricular; and teacher contract negotiations.

1.) This community is saddled with a large tax burden, and one that we can get seemingly little relief from. The board needs to go through our costs and find ways to trim out anything that doesn't impact the students education in a positive way.

2.) We have enjoyed the successes of academic excellent this year with kids scoring perfect on the ACTs, the recent winning of the Bright Red Apple Award, and our music and athletic teams being the pride of the Fox Valley. We must search, in all we do and in all we vote on, for the best ways to add to the quality of experience academically and socially for all our students.

3.) I have a degree in education, and my wife taught for eight years and has her masters in education. We understand and appreciate the role that teachers play and the importance of their career field. We need to make sure that we have the best, and those who are blessed to teach in our system, also understand that the maintenance of our high community standards must be met in all that they strive to accomplish in their day.

2. What is the greatest challenge faced by your district? Please explain your position or how to address it

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Family

Married to Carol Rennolds. Three children, ages 12, 10 and 6.

Education/degrees

BS- Secondary Education Indiana University 1990

Civic Involvement

Board of Directors- Geneva Concours 2006
Sunday School Teacher (Fifth Grade)- St. Mark's Geneva
Basketball Coach for the Geneva Park District
Soccer Coach- Tri-Cities
Baseball Coach- GBA

Elected/appointed offices held

None

Our challenges lie in the tax burden and addressing how we can pay for all the improvements needed for our students to grow.

We need to work together, as parents, taxpayers, civic leaders, and members of the community, to come together and move our schools forward, while lowering the strain felt by our property owners. I will address this by looking for other ways for funding, negotiating for the best interests of all, and being upfront and committed to bettering our schools.

3. Share your philosophy on how to approach teacher contract negotiations. Do you think they should be done in public?

I believe that, if elected, the trust of the community will be with me and the other members of the board to decide and negotiate on their behalf. I maintain that the way that we can keep the negotiations moving forward is to make sure that we can discuss the wants and desires of all parties in a frank, non-threatening, closed environment.

4. What are your ideas for improving compliance with the No Child Left Behind standards? What is your view of the federal No Child Left Behind standards in general?

I believe that the premise of NCLB was one of great promise. For the most part, it has done a fair job, but has been mired in bureaucracy. Take that component out, and as with most things, it has merit. Our schools must strive to moving our kids towards compliance with improved curriculum and teaching to meet those standards. We, as parents, need greater flexibility in our child's education, with less governmental bureaucratic oversight.

5. Are there significant needs for the district's physical plant? How would you address them? Please account for financial ramifications.

We need to look at improving the high school building again. I believe that we need to look towards this by addressing costs, budgets, and the channels of funding to accomplish this. We need to look at individual fiscal burdens that these will have on our community and address all of these before we vote, and before they are instituted.



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MARKETPLACE

Unit D304 Trustee

Mark Grosso

Incumbent: No

Occupation: Retired Manager Union Pacific Railroad 37 yrs.

Age: 59

Address: Geneva, IL

Candidate's Key Issues

Key Issue 1

Excellent education for all students must be maintained but with fiscal responsibility. I want the bulk of Geneva school district's tax dollars to be spent on high quality teaching faculty, solid core academic curricula as well as vocational programs that prepare students for post high school education and entry into the job market. Student character building is important as well.

Key Issue 2

People of all incomes are struggling with the volatile economy, and property taxes are very high for our citizens. Most of the property tax in Geneva is spent on schools, and this money must be spent wisely. Since my first goal is excellent education, I want to look for efficiencies in administration, facilities, maintenance and transportation.

Key Issue 3

I want complete transparency in all matters related to how taxpayer dollars are spent in District 304, and I believe that this can be achieved with technology. Tax money is the people's check book, and citizens should be able to see exactly how the money is being spent. I intend to be a steward of the tax dollar.



CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Family

Married, two children, two grandchildren

Education/degrees

Attended University of Wisconsin Green Bay

Civic Involvement

Scoutmaster Troop 37 Geneva
Salvation Army volunteer

Elected/appointed offices held

Vice President Pepper Valley Home Association

Questions & Answers

ANSWERS PROVIDED HAVE NOT BEEN EDITED FOR GRAMMAR, MISSPELLINGS OR TYPOS. IN SOME INSTANCES, CANDIDATE CLAIMS THAT COULD NOT BE IMMEDIATELY VERIFIED HAVE BEEN OMITTED.

1. Name the three most important goals or objectives this board should tackle in the coming term. Prioritize them, and briefly discuss why you believe each to be critical, and how the board should go about addressing them.

I think that my campaign issues address this question.

2. What is the greatest challenge faced by your district? Please explain your position on how to address it.

Growth has come to a standstill in our community, and there will be reduced tax revenue as the inflated house values are reassessed. We will see declines in tax revenue in the future, perhaps with a decline in enrollment that Geneva experienced in the early 1980s. We need to prepare now for either or both of these possibilities.

3. Share your philosophy on how to approach teacher contract negotiations. Do you think they should be done in public?

I believe that contract negotiations should not be open and held in a public forum. The contract should be negotiated by representatives of the union with the school board. In recent years, there has been a tendency to negotiate three-year contracts. I understand why this has been done, but I don't think such multi-year contracts are wise in this economic climate. We might consider a one- or two-year contract.

4. What are your ideas for improving compliance with the No Child Left Behind standards? What is your view of the federal No Child Left Behind standards in general?

Geneva school district does a very good job of complying with No Child Left Behind. The district does not have a history of letting children fall through the cracks, and the ISAT tests show that we are achieving good results. As far as this federal program is concerned, I will wait to see what the new Secretary of Education, Mr. Duncan, proposes.

5. Are there significant needs for the district's physical plant? How would you address them? Please account for financial ramifications.

Geneva's schools and administrative facilities are in excellent condition. Our issue will be how to maximize the use of these facilities for students and faculty.

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