

School board members to be elected in primary

Comet staff report

Carroll and Delphi school board members will be elected in the May primary, and will begin serving on July 1. School board elections are nonpartisan.

There are only two contested races, both in the Delphi Community School Corporation: Jim

Garrison (incumbent) and Steve Myer are running against each other in District 1 (Deer Creek Township 1), and Wm. Michael (Mike) Penn and Melinda Rossetter are opposing each other in District 7 (Tippecanoe Township 1 and 2).

Unopposed candidates in the Carroll election are David Lambert in District 2 (Carrollton Township)

and Eric Johnson in District 5 (Washington Township).

Unopposed candidates in the Delphi election are Nick Cronk in District 2 (Deer Creek Townships 3 and 5) and Jerry Sparks in District 3 (Jackson Township).

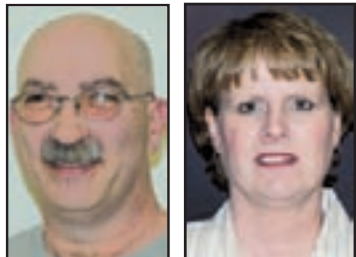
In the Carroll corporation, candidates must reside

in the district where they are running, but residents in all the Carroll districts vote for all the candidates.

In the Delphi corporation, only the voters of any given district elect the candidate from that district.

The Comet conducted interviews with the candidates in the two contested races. (See related stories.)

Wm. Michael Penn vs. Melinda Rossetter



Penn

Rossetter

By Jennifer Archibald
Staff writer

Wm. Michael Penn and Melinda Rossetter are vying for a position on the Delphi Community School Board, representing Tippecanoe Township. The contest will be decided in May by Tippecanoe Township voters, and the winning candidate will begin serving July 1.

In separate interviews with the Comet, the two candidates were each asked why they would make a good school board member, what they thought about public comments at board meetings, and if there are any specific school issues or needs that they wanted to comment on.

Penn has previously served on the school board – from 1998 to 2002. He feels his experience on the board makes him a good candidate to serve another term.

He said it takes about two years to become an effective, contributing board member, so he feels he would already have that learning period behind him.

Penn said he considers another asset to be his long-time involvement in the schools as a parent.

"I've had five children come up through the ranks over the last 17 years," he said. "Three out of the five are out of the house, so I would have the time

it takes to devote to the school board."

"Being a board member is more than it appears," Penn said. He explained that there is more time involved than just attending regular board meetings.

"It takes extra time to review material, attend work sessions and various other meetings and school functions," he said.

Penn said his occupation, manager of County Line Egg, gives him a good background for serving on the school board.

"I'm responsible for multiple budgets and 33 employees," he said.

Rossetter said she believes she has two particular qualities that would serve her well on the school board.

"The main thing I could contribute is a business sense," she said.

Rossetter works in the Purdue Athletics business office, which she says has given her experience in budgetary matters, procurement, policies and procedures.

She also thinks one of the best attributes a school board member can have is common sense.

"I think I have a lot of common sense," she said.

On the topic of public comments at a board meeting, Penn said, "There are times I would welcome the input, but there are times public comments can overwhelm a meeting – stray away from the topics at hand. We have to come to some happy medium about it so we can run an efficient meeting."

He said he believes if school patrons have questions or concerns, they should contact their representative, and then that board member can bring up the matter to the whole board. If the matter isn't resolved to the patron's satisfaction, then he could ask to be put on the agenda and take it to the board himself, Penn said.

He added that the agenda is posted on the school's Web site (www.delphi.k12.in.us), so patrons can know in plenty of time what will be on the next agenda.

"I've never known any board member who didn't want input from the public, especially from those they represent," Penn con-

tinued.

He said if he gets elected, he will base his voting on available data and what is in the best interests of the children, factoring in the feedback from his township.

He said he would not just go along blindly with a recommendation or with the majority vote.

"I've voted no before," he said. "I have no problem going against anything I don't think is the best decision."

He said he has no agenda of something he would like to get passed or stopped if he is elected.

"I have no burning issues," he said. "Besides, you're only one person of seven."

He said one thing a board must do, in general, is keep up on repairs and maintenance.

"To my knowledge, they're doing a good job of that," he said.

Rossetter said she encourages constituents who have questions or comments to contact the board member who represents them. She said if elected, she would welcome their feedback and listen to what they have to say.

"I would vote the way my conscience tells me to vote," she said. "And what the constituents want would drive how I vote."

She also encourages the public to attend board meetings.

"The public should have an opportunity to ask questions, and I think they are given the opportunity now," she said.

Rossetter said she agrees with how public comments are currently handled, as stated recently by board president Bob Resler.

Patrons must sign up prior to the meeting to be able to speak on an agenda item. Otherwise, they can only speak during the public comments time at the end of the meeting. Patrons' comments are limited to two minutes each. The public cannot comment on consent items (including facility usage and claims and payroll) during a meeting, but can direct questions on these items to the board president or superintendent after the meeting.

Rossetter said her goal as a school board member would be to do her job well, even if occasionally that meant ruffling some feathers.

She said she is running for school board for three reasons. "I'm very concerned about the quality of education of the kids in our community, concerned about the condition of our facilities, and the use of our tax dollars," she said.

If elected, this would be Rossetter's first time on the school board.

"I believe there would be a good size learning curve," she said. "But there are seasoned board members to answer your questions and take you under their wing, and shorten the learning curve. I would count on that."

Both candidates said they have been keeping up with what's happening at school board meetings by reading the official minutes on the corporation Web site and/or reading newspaper coverage of the meetings.



Carroll County
Primary Election
School Board Race

Melinda Rossetter

Age: 42
Address: 6496N US Hwy 421, Delphi
Family: Husband, Troy; sons, Dale, 20, and Ryan, 19; daughter, Megan, 14, eighth grader at DCMS
Education: 1981 graduate of DCHS; courses at Purdue
Occupation: Works in the Purdue Athletics business office

Wm. Michael Penn

Age: 49
Address: 10954W 400N, Delphi
Family: Wife, Donna; five children – Sara, senior at Purdue; Hannah, sophomore at Indiana University; Rachel, freshman at Purdue; Leah, junior at DCHS; Josh, freshman at DCHS
Education: 1975 graduate of DCHS; 1984 graduate of Purdue, bachelor's degree in physical education
Occupation: Employed by Rose Acre Farms; manager of County Line Egg
School-related background: Former member of the DCSC school board, 1998-2002; former seventh grade football coach and Little Gridiron coach

Steve Myer

Age: 40
Family: Wife, Connie; Kolby, 10, and Kain, 7, both students at Hillcrest Elementary School; and Kooper, 3.
Education: Vincennes University with degrees in surveying and architectural drafting.
Occupation: Employed with Seiler Instrument.
Related memberships: Member of Athletic Booster Club

Jim Garrison

Age: 44
Family: Wife, Tina; and two daughters, Ashley, 21, a junior at Indiana State University School of Nursing and Natalie, 17, a sophomore at Delphi Community High School.
Education: 1979 graduate of DCHS. A series of Indiana School Board Association workshops in 2002.
Occupation: Farmer
Related Memberships: A founding director of Delphi Community School Foundation; vice president of DCSC board of trustees for the past two years.

Jim Garrison vs. Steve Myer



Garrison

Myer

By Dee Dellenbach
Staff writer

Steve Myer will challenge incumbent Jim Garrison in the Delphi Community School Board race in District 1 (Deer Creek Township 1). Both candidates answered questions about the following seven issues:

Good candidates

Myer said he would be a good candidate for school board trustee because he has two kids in school now and a third who will attend soon.

"I care about our children's education and athletics and facilities," said Myer. "Delphi can improve in several areas. In my job, I've been dealing with the public for 14 years, and dealing with Little League, which is a smaller scale (than school board), but dealing with the same issues."

He said money is always an issue and he has ideas about how to raise revenue for the corporation without raising taxes.

Garrison said he'd be a good candidate for the office because he has already served for four years. "I bring experience to the position and I'd bring the financial background needed to help evaluate budget problems. I've had 28 years in agriculture, and you must know about finances to succeed."

He said he loves kids and wants to see the corporation do what's best for them in education and in sports.

Desire to serve

Myer said he wishes to serve on the board because he wants to be involved in pursuing grants and keeping the athletic facilities in good condition. He also noted, "The board needs to do more to be more involved in the hiring process and seek out qualified candidates in all positions: people with good credentials, drive and ambition."

Garrison said he serves on the board for his own and for all the kids in the community, "and to protect the taxpayers," he said.

He noted that there were two reasons in particular for serving. First, he said he wants to give students what they need to get the best education they can have. Secondly, he wants to make sure the board does not over spend or "spend money on elaborate things." He remarked that new buildings don't necessarily give students a better education.

Voting

Myer said he will examine the issues himself and vote according to what he feels is best. He said he will also seek the public's opinion; not just the opinions of his constituents, but the opinions of all the people in the school district. He concluded, "In the end, it's my decision."

Garrison said he votes according to what his constituents want, but mainly what he feels is in the best interests of the students. He said hiring principals Keith Brakel and Bill Shidler were two decisions he made in which he first considered what was best for the students.

Needs of the corporation

Myer talked about the short-term and long-term needs of the corporation. He said there is an immediate need to increase revenue without raising taxes. He said he also wants to keep a close watch on the PL221 plan to be sure the schools are doing well, and he wants to improve the English as a Second Language program. He said he wants students to be prepared for the rigorous track that will be required for the Core 40 diploma.

Myer said he'd like to see Delphi host more sporting events and would like to see an eight-lane track built for athletics.

"You can't host conference and sectional meets with a six-lane track." He said other schools would not be attracted to Delphi's facilities.

"If we're aggressive and host a sectional meet, you can make up the cost after a few big events."

A longer-term goal, said Myer, is to reassess the buildings.

"The Camden building isn't going to be there forever. That's going to have to be addressed."

The old middle school gym, the high school and Hillcrest are all getting older and will need to be addressed as well, said Myer.

Garrison said that as far as short-term needs, the science labs and the track need to be updated.

In the long term, the corporation needs to set higher education goals. He said he'd like to hire the best staff (in all areas) the board can find, and he wants to keep the building maintenance program on track.

Garrison said he'd like to reduce the debt and be nearly debt-free by 2012. He would like to repair the six-lane track instead of build an eight-lane track so that a science lab can be renovated, he said.

Public participation

Garrison said that at board meetings, he believes the public should be able to ask questions and comment on the agenda items. He said that after the board members discuss an issue, they could ask the public if they have any questions. He would like to see the consent items (bills that have been paid) posted on the school's Web site, so that the public may call the administration office to get answers to their questions.

Regarding public participation, Myer said that there could be a time set aside during the meetings in which the public could discuss items on the agenda. He commented that there could be a certain time limit on the discussions.

"I don't see how you can keep the public out of it, but you can't let the public abuse the time," he said.

Board communications

Garrison talked about how the board discusses an issue before they take the vote. He said that as a group, the board is not allowed to discuss items before the board meeting, but that individuals are allowed to e-mail back and forth and get a feel for how other members feel about an issue.

"I like discussion," said Myer, "so that I can get my point across. If it's controversial or sensitive, I think discussion (before the vote) would be good. I think a workshop or work session prior to the public meeting would be a good idea. On a lot of things, there probably is no need to discuss and some things, there probably is," he said.

Accomplishments and goals

Garrison said during his term, the board has freed the capital projects account from the Siemen's contract, allowing the board to pay cash for smaller repair/replacement jobs instead of borrowing for everything. He said something like repairing or replacing the six-lane track, for instance, could be paid with cash.

He noted that the Rainy Day account has gone from zero to a balance of \$775,000 during the past three years. He said his goal is to use it to remodel the science labs, in part. He also wants to use the account for emergencies.

Myer said he would like to meet with the superintendent, principals, the athletic director, academic department heads, coaches, janitors and bus drivers so that they can inform him of the strengths and weaknesses that they are seeing. He said he would like to go to work on those weaknesses.

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