

DCSC board candidates share views

By Kevin Schnepf
Staff writer

Three townships within Delphi Community School Corporation will hold elections for school board representatives during the May primary election, but only two positions have the potential to change hands.

Liberty Township incumbent Mike Shoemaker is challenged by William Trueblood. Rock Creek board member Paul Brown is opposed by Chris Nipple. No one is slated to run against Madison Township representative Robert Resler.

School board members at DCSC are elected only by voters whom they will represent. For example, only eligible voters who live in Liberty Township will vote for that school board seat.

To help readers learn more about their DCSC board leadership options, the Comet posed the same four questions to each candidate. Following are the questions and each candidate's response.

What course of action would you take if you discovered a decision approved by a school board of which you were a member was carried out in a way contrary to the board's decision?

Liberty Township

Trueblood: "Issues like this are going to deal with personnel. I would ask for either the superintendent or committee of the board to make an investigation and to bring that investigation back to the school board. If it deals with personnel, it would have to be dealt with in an executive session."

Shoemaker: "No one likes surprises and everyone de-

serves respect. There is due process when you discover something that is contrary to what you thought. Basically you make the input and let the responsible person investigate and get you an answer. To have a public confrontation during a meeting is not appropriate. I always treat everybody the way I like to be treated. I am not one to put someone on the spot like that. Likewise, I am not one to ignore it either."

Madison Township

Resler: "The first thing I would do is contact the superintendent and ask what happened. I would then bring it to the full board's attention at the next meeting or I would request a special meeting be called. At that point it would be up to the board to decide the next phase. If it was a direct violation of the board policy, then the board would have to decide if any discipline was required."

Rock Creek Township

Brown: "The first step would be contacting the superintendent to assess what exactly transpired and why. The full board would need to be notified in a formal, open meeting to discuss the change and any resulting ramifications including potential disciplinary action. As a matter of policy, changes contrary to board votes are not acceptable. It is vitally important that the board receive full and complete disclosure in open meetings on all topics. This helps the board make informed decisions and ensures the public is made aware of all issues."

Nipple: "I would want to know why they went against our decision first. It's very complicated. I would have to

see, and it would have to be a group decision. Some things might not be that simple to correct. The main issue is someone went against the decision, and the board is there to make the final call."

Is deficit spending appropriate for DCSC? Please explain.

Liberty Township

Trueblood: "No. I believe we have to live within our means. Right now it's difficult to know what our means will be. Our budget has not been approved at this point by the state, but we have to take our best guess at what our revenues are going to be and live within those. I am a little concerned we do not know the direction our general fund will take with the state taking over that. I am also concerned we are adding staff, which would come out of the general fund, when we don't know what will happen to the fund after it's taken over. This is similar to the building project, given the unknowns of the latest tax reform bill."

Shoemaker: "When I took the job four years ago, I thought it was time for the school to look into saving instead of spending. After four years I have found, especially when it comes to spending large dollars on projects, it simply can't be done. There is no way to save the money in order to make a large-dollar investment into the school because of state law. If someone was concerned about the current building project, took a tour and asked questions, they would come to the same conclusion that action needs taken. If you investigated other schools, which the board did, looking at their facilities, we actually got a really good picture of what the need really is. It was a key thing for the board to compare ourselves to other schools."

Madison Township

Resler: "No. This corporation does not deficit spend. Budgets are established and we live by our budgets. If you are referring to bonding, then yes. Most school corporations are just like us. Monies are tight. To accomplish major projects, a bond issue must be undertaken. This is no different that anyone in the private sector that needs to make improvements or build a home or business. They have to borrow money. Only in their case they just go to the bank and borrow. A school corporation has to jump through the hoops of a bond issue."

Rock Creek Township

Brown: "I do not support deficit spending. It is bad policy. In the past fiscal year, the corporation was able to alleviate an account that had been in a deficit mode for many years, well past the terms of current board members. The budget for the corporation must be developed many months in advance of a given fiscal year with little room for emergencies or unexpected problems. Being forced to clear an account that had been running in a deficit mode for many years was difficult and hindered progress in our academic programs."

Nipple: "No. I don't think we ought to be spending more money than we've got coming in. I never really have agreed with tax anticipation (warrants), but when the state is late sending forms out, it's a necessary evil. However, the school is still stuck with the interest. But when you are talking about our economic situation in the county and going into great debt like we are looking at, we need to make a list of the things that we need and the things that we want. There's a lot of difference there. I believe some of that goes along with the deficit spending. If it is something that we need, but possibly have to go into the hole on, that's one thing. I am not in favor of doing so for wants."

Approximately 87% of the DCSC General Fund is used to pay staff, leaving about 13% for other spending. What are your priorities for that money?

Liberty Township

Trueblood: "We again have to take a look at the amount we spend for salaries to ensure we are getting the best educational opportunities for our students as possible. That may be possible through various ways, such as when we can better use the staff we have or when we do not need as much staff to perform the job. If all that staff is required, I think

the 13 percent would need spent directly on education of the students. What do they need to better their education? The theory behind spending discretionary money would be what best helps the kids learn."

Shoemaker: "Teachers' contracts, typically multi-year deals, are difficult to change. Little can be done to free up more of the 87 percent that goes to pay staff. There are certain things we can't mess with and that's teachers, so all we have is our administrators. I am more concerned with how tax reform will affect the corporation budget and what will happen when the state takes the fund over. Class size is important to me. My biggest fear is the state will come back and say, 'Here's your pool of funds' and it's a seven percent cut. Future contracts could be changed. The other 13 percent will be well-scrutinized, but let's face it, it wouldn't be enough to fix that budget crunch. We have dealt with a lot of change over the past four years. It's a dynamic all school corporations go through. There are changes that will continue to happen. The current board is very active in addressing problems through analysis and then taking appropriate action."

Madison Township

Resler: "The balance of 13 percent is restricted by the state for what we use it for. It can only be used for education items, such as books, teacher training, or other student-related education. Also utilities and insurance are allowed to be paid from this fund. Since as a single board member I cannot direct how money is spent, it is up to the board to maximize the use of this fund. I feel that training of our staff is important. With the ever-changing front of education, we have to keep our staff up to date. The days of only teaching reading, writing and arithmetic have long past. While these still are the basics of our education, ongoing training is very important."

Rock Creek Township

Brown: "As a professor at Purdue, this is an easy question. Academic programs, ed-

ucational programs and approaches, like everything else in our society, are advancing at an incredibly rapid rate. The challenge for all school corporations is keeping up with those changes so that our students are prepared to enter the workforce or continue their education. The state restricts use of the general fund to several categories of spending, mostly education related. Now that the budget is under control, we are seeing, and approving, more requests to improve educational programs. Those requests include new technologies and continuing education for our teachers."

Nipple: "That would go back to the wants and needs. You have 13 percent to take care of the needs of the corporation. I would have to look at the curriculum (computer updates, etc.), and see if we are taking care of that. Then there are facility concerns, such as a need to maintain buildings. Transportation would be next in importance. Basically, we must make sure the rest of the budget is addressed. If there is anything left, that is when you could go into your extra things. Athletics would come after those three things. It's somewhere down the line. I was involved in athletics, but with the current budget we have to tighten our belts. Other things need taken care of before that, even with how much I've supported athletics in the past."

Why did you choose to run for school board?

Liberty Township

Trueblood: "I chose to run because I feel my years of experience in education I have something to offer the school district to help us move forward educating our children. The school board needs to be good stewards of tax money."

Shoemaker: "I decided to run again because I see all the financial and budget changes coming from the state and I truly believe we need an experienced board that will take the issues as they come, do the proper analysis and then take action. My feeling is maybe some past boards have either been hamstrung or deadlocked

for some reason, but it doesn't appear there has been as much activity and change (compared to) what we've seen. I think that will be a staple of the school. I believe I can bring that instrument of change and react appropriately. My second area of focus is on academic improvement."

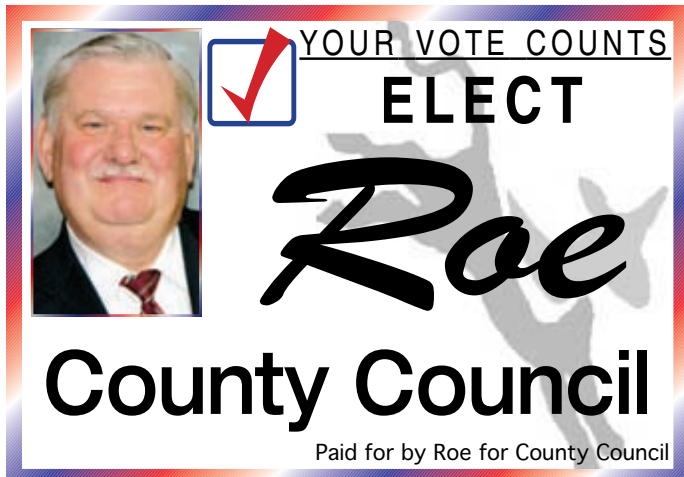
Madison Township

Resler: "I wanted to join the school board so that I could attempt to help improve our corporation. I was selected in 2001 to fill the post created by a resignation. I ran for election to the board in 2004. I decided to run for another term because we have accomplished a lot in the last three years, but we have a lot left to accomplish. With Mr. Walker coming on board as the superintendent two years ago, we have a superintendent who is very strong in finance and curriculum. He puts the children of our corporation first. He has an honest goal of putting our corporation in the top ten in the state when it comes to education. I want another four years on the board to work with him and help make this happen."

Rock Creek Township

Brown: "I am a full professor at Purdue University and believe in the importance of education. The public education system in the United States is, in my opinion, one of the underlying factors that made this country great. I was initially invited to interview for a vacancy on the board and have found that I enjoy interacting with corporation administration, teachers, staff and students. Public school corporations face distinct challenges in the 21st century and I am proud to participate in helping young people realize their potential."

Nipple: "I feel like our representation here in our township is not being met. We have a person on our board right now who is not in touch at all with our township. I feel like our people need to have a face they can relate to and talk to anytime. I am around the community all the time."



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ELECT
Roe
County Council
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PUBLIC INVITED
CARROLL COUNTY
GOP CANDIDATE
FORUM
WHEN
APRIL 24, 2008 7PM
WHERE
CARROLL
HS AUDITORIUM
The Carroll County GOP Central
Committee and Republican Women
are sponsoring a public forum
for all GOP primary Candidates.
Refreshments will be served
Looking forward to seeing you on the 24th.

Mature drivers and home owners fit into our group.

Insure your car, home or mobile home with us, through Auto-Owners Insurance Company, and save money with their Group Program. As a member of a company-approved retirement association or group, you may qualify for substantial group discounts. Ask us about it today!

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Glendon Wolfe, Agent

Foundation work



Foundation for learning

Recent activities for canal volunteers have included putting a proper foundation under the old log schoolhouse at Canal Park. Leading this effort was Rich Markins of Valparaiso. Roy Patrick, who also worked on the project, is shown in the photo. The one-room school was moved to Delphi from near Idaville 18 months ago. Photo provided



Volunteer masons

Rich Markins (front, left), retired mason from Valparaiso, came to Carroll County in his motor home to volunteer with canal projects. He and other workers built a foundation under the railroad baggage building that was recently added to the Delphi trails interpretive exhibits. The building is near the trail tunnel under the old Monon RR line. Delphi Limestone donated large crushed stone, and Segal's Gravel donated mortar sand. Markins also built the lime kiln exhibit in the canal museum. Others shown in this photo, l-r, are Al Auffart, Roy Patrick, and Vernon Cripe. Photo provided