



S.O.S. Wauwatosa Voter's Guide

2020 School Board Election - Candidate Responses to S.O.S Questions

Support Our Schools (S.O.S.) Wauwatosa is a parent-powered, non-partisan, grassroots non-profit that believes in and advocates for public education in Wauwatosa and throughout Wisconsin. All of our board members are parents of current and former students of the Wauwatosa School District.

To help the citizens of Wauwatosa better understand the background and positions of the candidates for the four seats up for election on the Wauwatosa School Board in 2020, we sent each of the candidates a questionnaire. Their answers to two questions are provided in this voter's guide.

Below are the candidates running for the four seats up for election on April 7. All are incumbents who are running unopposed.

Seat #4

Leigh Anne Fraley

7025 Cedar St., Wauwatosa 53213

Seat #5

Michael Phillips

2633 N. 73rd St., Wauwatosa 53213

Seat #6

Sharon Muehlfeld

123 N. 87th St., Wauwatosa 53226

Seat #7

Steven Doman

613 N. 63rd St., Wauwatosa 53213

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S.O.S. Wauwatosa does not endorse individual candidates or political parties. We encourage voters to learn about the candidates and issues by researching media sources and attending forums throughout the campaign period. Visit us at www.soswauwatosa.org.

The Questions and Answers

Each candidate was emailed a questionnaire containing two questions in mid-February 2020. The candidates were asked to keep their answers to 150 words or fewer, and were asked to email their an-

swers to S.O.S. Wauwatosa by March 10. Each page of this guide contains one of the questions, and the candidates' answers are placed below.

1. What are you most proud of accomplishing in the past three years in your role as a school board member?

Fraley (Seat #4)

- Increased Student Perspective - The addition of student school board members has lifted up the student experience and broadened board perspectives in decision-making
- Financial Sustainability - Strategic spending, a clean audit and a consistently balanced budget is something the school district is proud of in a tough financial climate
- Facility Management - The community supported a \$125 million referendum to address aging schools
- Celebrating Success - We regularly recognize exemplary accomplishments by staff and students at board meetings which contributes to an engaged culture
- Relationship Building - Our Legislative Advisory Committee has worked to build relationships with our elected officials so that they have a deeper understanding of the student, teacher and district experience
- Deepened Understanding - I have visited ALL of our schools—participating in events, engaging in classrooms, observing professional development offerings and meeting with teachers and school leaders so that I truly understand the day-to-day experience of our students and staff

Phillips (Seat #5)

I am really proud of our team, how well we work together, and the level of commitment of each member. We have all invested vast amounts of energy into really understanding the opportunities that we have as a District. There has also been a lot of work done around setting a foundational structure that will support the road map laid out in our strategic plan. I truly look forward to working with this team to see the vision created for the District come to fruition.

Muehlfeld (Seat #6)

Listening to community members and working alongside my Board colleagues, the Wauwatosa School District placed better resources and more innovations in the classroom to help students. We also supported our teachers by providing more assistance for them with curriculum, safety, equity, coaching and in many other ways enabled each Wauwatosa school community to better serve our children and families. In a difficult State school funding environment that does not support innovation, I voted to move forward with significant capital projects in a fiscally sound way that will update and invest in our neighborhood schools.

Doman (Seat #7)

I am proud of our focus and direction on closing achievement gaps on our schools. We have not accomplished this yet, and there is still a lot of work to do, but I feel the district now has a focus and is starting to look through the lens of equity when we are tackling problems and looking for opportunities. In my three years on the board I have been consistent in my message that closing the achievement gap is my top priority and I believe that has helped steer our district decisions.

2. What do you believe are the most significant challenges that will be faced by the Wauwatosa School District in the next few years?

Fraley (Seat #4)

- Recruitment & Retention of highly effective teachers (particularly staff of color) - The number of students completing teacher preparation programs in Wisconsin has decreased by 35% since 2010* and the national average for teacher tenure is only 5-7 years. We need to ensure we recruit the highest quality staff and that we create an environment where they can thrive.
- Increased Academic Achievement - Like much of the nation, the school district has not yet seen the increased achievement that we desire. Over the past several years we have put rigorous curriculum in place, added advanced level classes for all students and have done targeted professional development for our staff. Consistency of implementation and using our data effectively should help us to see some gains soon.
- Financial Sustainability - Demands on the school district are increasing and funding is not keeping pace. The funding formula is antiquated and needs to be changed.

*Center for American Progress, "What to Make of Declining Teacher Enrollment in Teacher Preparation Programs." December 2019

Phillips (Seat #5)

There will be challenges in how we are funded, headwinds that will encroach on our ability to recruit top talent, and an ever evolving vision of a successful graduate, but by really executing on providing the support that each one of our staff and students need to excel at a high level we will overcome and achieve greatness.

Muehlfeld (Seat #6)

The Wauwatosa School District continues to face many financial challenges each year. There are also many successes and growth opportunities. I am most concerned about the academic performance of all students and how to accelerate higher achievement and experience levels.

I am also concerned about a State educator pipeline and the ability to find and retain teachers as less young people enter college education degree programs or new teachers leave the profession after a short tenure. I also believe there is a great need to better help students and our school communities with mental health and other trauma support services. These are not core services of K-12 education and finding solutions/cooperation among many different community experts and resources to assist us is difficult work.

Doman (Seat #7)

Financial Funding for public schools will continue to be a large issue in Wisconsin during the coming years. As a community, and as a nation, we need to put our focus on fully funding our public schools. Properly funding our public schools and rewarding our hard working teachers and staff will make education a sought after career for people from all backgrounds. Our student population is rich in diversity and we need an educational staff that reflects our students. We can do that by attracting more and better candidates into teaching and education.