

As our eyes turn toward the elections in November, we need to begin to also consider the primary elections next May. In 2017, the School Board Director elections will be held. Many often say that they think about running for school board, but few actually follow through with such a decision. In this Presidential election year, it has become increasingly clear how important it is to have good citizens run for office.

If you are one of those brave souls who is thinking about running, now is the time to prepare yourself for the position. So, how can one prepare to run for a school board? Becoming familiar with the issues facing education in general and specifically, the Gettysburg Area School District, is an excellent first step. In order to do that, I strongly suggest attending the bi-monthly board meetings. By attending the meetings you will hear the reports from the different schools and departments in the district, and thereby, understand firsthand the issues facing the district and, furthermore, how the district is planning on addressing them. There are many issues facing public education in Pennsylvania. Common Core curriculum, Keystone exams, protecting the rights of all of our students, and charter schools are just a few of the hot topic issues.

In addition to attending the bi-monthly board meetings, board members also participate on different committees. These committees include policy, curriculum, and communications. These committees are tasked with negotiating the complexities of many of these issues. The meetings are advertised and can be attended by anyone. If you are considering running for a school board position, it is strongly suggested that you attend some of these meetings in advance.

The primary purpose of a school board member is to create and implement policy for the district, however budget issues often get the most media attention. Public budget discussions usually begin in December and are held throughout the budget process. A school district's budget is complex. State and federal mandates, contractual items, increasing contributions to the employee retirement system and revenue coming from local, state and federal sources are only a part of why it is so intricate. Attending the public budget discussions will help an interested citizen understand why certain decisions are made.

Why run for school board? Is it the pay? No, in fact there is no pay. For all purposes, you are an elected volunteer. Is it the fame and glory? No, many times people don't know you are on the school board until they read in the paper that you voted to raise their taxes. I ran and continue to serve the Gettysburg Area School District and its students because I know how important a good education is to the future of our youth and the community. The decisions we make as a board have a positive effect on the lives of the students in our district. We don't need payment or kudos for those decisions. Knowing that we are part of an institution that is serving the greater good of the community is fulfilling enough for us. My hope is that there are other individuals in the community who want to experience this same sense of satisfaction. If you are so moved, please take action between now and the election in May. We need a few good citizens.