



2019 LOCAL VOTING GUIDE



The [Verona Community Group](#) reached out to all candidates for Verona Borough and Riverview School Board and asked them to respond to 5 questions each. Their responses can be found below and are in the order in which they will appear on the ballot. Responses are verbatim from the candidates and were not edited. The Verona Community Group is a non-partisan organization that does not endorse any candidate. Our goal is to help inform the local community about the candidates running for office. *Please remember to vote in the primary on May 21st!*

Where to vote: Find your voting place by visiting www.votespa.com

Who will be on the ballot? Your ballot will look different, depending on the political party with which you are registered. You can enter your address and see a sample ballot here: <https://www.vote411.org/ballot>
The following offices are up for election, but this guide only focuses on Riverview

School Director and Member of Council for Verona Borough.

- Judge of the Superior Court
 - Judge of the Court of Common Pleas
 - County Chief Executive
 - County Controller
 - District Attorney
 - County Treasurer
 - Member of County Council At-Large
 - School Director
 - Member of Council
-

VERONA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Four year term. Vote for no more than 3

There are 5 candidates running for 3 slots. All are democrats and will therefore only appear on the democratic primary ballot, however a republican may write in any candidate they wish to support.

Questions:

1. Initiatives
 - New candidates, what is one small initiative that you will make a priority in your first 6 months of serving in 2020 and why is it important?
 - Incumbents, what is the one initiative that you are most proud of that residents in the community might not know is associated with your efforts?
2. What is one line-item of the budget that you wish was able to be increased? What is one line that could be reduced in the budget, and why?
3. If you could change one thing in our zoning code, what would it be and why?
4. How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process for the borough?
5. Are there any initiatives that you feel may benefit from partnering with neighboring communities?

DAVID CHARLES MATLIN

Age: 35

Profession: Senior Project Engineer at Port Authority of Allegheny County

How long have you lived in Verona? 2 years

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? N/A

1. Initiatives

- **New candidates, what is one small initiative that you will make a priority in your first 6 months of serving in 2020 and why is it important?**

I would prioritize making meeting minutes, agendas, and proposed ordinances available electronically via Borough website. It is important because it will make it easier for community members to know what is happening in our local government and be informed about issues that affect them.

2. **What is one line-item of the budget that you wish was able to be increased? What is one line that could be reduced in the budget, and why?**

One item I would seek to increase is the line for a Comprehensive Plan. Currently there is \$0 in the budget for a Comprehensive Plan, and that's because the current Borough leadership feels that they can develop a Comprehensive Plan using "in-house" resources. I do not think this is a very good idea,

because a Comprehensive Plan is a rather large undertaking and requires the skills and experience of an independent consultant in the field of planning and community development to be effective and thorough. There are many grant opportunities to fund the costs associated with hiring a consultant to develop a Comprehensive Plan, and I would seek any and all available grants so that any net impact to the budget is minimal.

As far as a budget line item that could be reduced, it is tough to say because the current format of the publicly-available budget does not give enough detail line by line to truly know what each item covers. For instance there is an unknown "Consulting Fee" of \$19,200 budgeted for 2019. This seems like a sizeable chunk of money, and I would look to see what this is being used for and if there are ways to consolidate this consulting service along with other Administration items in order to increase efficiency.

3. If you could change one thing in our zoning code, what would it be and why?

I would change the fact that our zoning code currently says very little about preservation of historic structures. I think that we should look to revise the zoning code to encourage, promote, and preserve structures that have historic value in Verona in such a way that their facades, exterior, and/or interior won't be altered through future renovations that might destroy their historic significance. For instance, the beautiful 100-year old bank building on Allegheny River Boulevard is a pillar of our main street business district, yet in recent years it has been altered in ways that don't seem to fit its architectural and historical heritage. We need to do more to attract the right business/property owner for this unique property who will preserve and maintain it, which, along with preservation of other historic properties, will have long-term positive effects for the Borough and our business district.

4. How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process for the borough?

As stated above, I will make meeting minutes, agendas, and proposed ordinances available electronically on the Borough website. If the Borough is transparent and open, and residents are informed about what's going on, they will be more likely to participate in the decision-making process. We should be encouraging resident participation in their local government every way we can. I will also continue to actively solicit feedback from residents - whether it is electronically or in person - on how well Borough Council is serving them and what ideas or suggestions they have for Verona.

5. Are there any initiatives that you feel may benefit from partnering with neighboring communities?

As a current member of the Verona Parks & Recreation Board, I have already been working with Mike Forbeck and representatives from Oakmont, Plum, and Penn Hills on a project to develop a multi-modal trail connecting the Allegheny Riverfront with Boyce Park through these four municipalities. It is a great example of how we can collaborate with our neighboring communities, and I think we should expand on that. There are many more ways we could partner with Oakmont in particular, since they are our closest neighbor and we share the Riverview School District with them. For instance, we could look to develop comprehensive plans for our respective municipalities simultaneously with them. It could save on costs and would open up additional grant opportunities since many of the grantors and funding sources like to see multi-municipal collaboration in selecting who they award money to. This is similar to what Sharpsburg, Etna, and Millvale have done on many

initiatives, including joint zoning, which could be really beneficial to both Verona and Oakmont if we were to do that together.

SANDY DRABICKI-BELL

This candidate did not respond to our request

SYLVIA K. PROVENZA

Age: No response

Profession: Retired from Ingalls Steel Construction as an administrative assistant in the engineering department. Currently serving as Director of Freedom of Choice in health and nutrition and as an elected borough council member

How long have you lived in Verona? Lifelong resident and homeowner

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? 4 years

1. Initiatives

- **Incumbents, what is the one initiative that you are most proud of that residents in the community might not know is associated with your efforts?**

The one initiative that I am most proud of that most of our residents in the community might not know is: I was very instrumental in getting the doughboy refurbished and put back up at the war memorial.

2. What is one line-item of the budget that you wish was able to be increased? What is one line that could be reduced in the budget, and why?

- a. The one line-item of the budget I wish to see increased is: For the streets and alleys. The reason for the increase is that man of the streets and alleys are in dire need of repair. This would also be a safety factor for our residents.
- b. One line that could be reduced in the budget would be as follows: Do a check and balance on what we're currently paying for all employee insurance expenses and borough utilities. The reason for the reduction would be to save the taxpayer's money.

3. If you could change one thing in our zoning code, what would it be and why?

The one change in our zoning code would be: I would want to see more responsibility on the part of owners of rental properties within the borders of Verona. The reason is obvious, some properties are in very poor condition due to absentee landlords.

4. How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process for the borough?

To involve residents in the decision-making process for the borough, they must be informed by the Verona Community Newsletter, instant messaging service, borough website, updated community calendar and public service announcement system incorporated into the borough's phone system.

5. Are there any initiatives that you feel may benefit from partnering with neighboring communities?

Yes, I feel there may be benefits from partnering with neighboring communities such as:

- a. Joint effort for grant opportunities within our twin borough, Oakmont at a government level.
- b. Joint effort with our police department and our fire department at a government level.

- c. Do community days and other similar community events at a community level.

MICHAEL G. FORBECK

Age: 61

Profession: Professional Engineer; Retired Program Manager for PA DEP; Currently working as an Environmental Consultant for Tetra Tech and my own company Enviro-Mentors, LLC

How long have you lived in Verona? 16.5 years in Verona proper, 25 years on Verona Hilltop

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? N/A

6. Initiatives

- **New candidates, what is one small initiative that you will make a priority in your first 6 months of serving in 2020 and why is it important?**

The difficulty is to limit this to one item as I would like to tackle many issues including developing a comprehensive plan, improve accountability and follow up by Council and improve communication among the Council, Chamber of Business and the Community. However, for an initial priority initiative I would have to say safe streets. There have been many instances where people are speeding in areas where there has been increased pedestrian traffic due to the presence of great new and existing businesses. A targeted enforcement program could help to resolve this problem.

7. What is one line-item of the budget that you wish was able to be increased? What is one line that could be reduced in the budget, and why?

- a. I would like to see the police and crossing guard's salaries increased. We are dependent on them for our children's and our safety yet the pay for an officer is not much above the minimum.
- b. I believe you can reduce fuel cost if you go with more fuel-efficient vehicles or initiate some bicycle or foot patrols.

8. If you could change one thing in our zoning code, what would it be and why?

One zoning issue is preservation of the riverfront property but there are more! Zoning in general needs to be revamped. This would be resolved through a full study of current and future land use and tied to a detailed comprehensive plan that I would like to see be developed in my first term. I would move to hire a professional consultant who would work with the Council, Planning Commission, Zoning Board, Chamber, Community Group and Public to develop a plan and obtain funds through grants so that there would be minimum cost to the citizens.

9. How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process for the borough?

I think it is extremely important to have residents involved. I have been part of the grass roots community voice for many years and have participated in many Council meetings. In addition to what I have already said, such as involvement in the comprehensive plan, I think it is important for the residents to be an integral part of the council meetings and would like to see them participate in every meeting. We should also reach out to the Community Group for development of community events and communication through a joint or at least linked website and calendar. I would also

participate and hold more public forums and make contact information available to the community and in turn reply in a timely manner.

10. Are there any initiatives that you feel may benefit from partnering with neighboring communities?

Some ideas of possible joint municipal efforts include: combining waste and recycling contracts, joint police enforcement and street maintenance. Long term we should investigate incorporating the Penn Hills portion of the Verona hilltop to the Borough of Verona. I think we should take advantage of is the Riverview school district initiatives and should parallel efforts accordingly. Currently I am part of a multi community effort to develop a trail system from Verona through the communities of Oakmont, Penn Hills and Plum to Boyce Park. We are in the feasibility stage, but I would like to see more cooperative efforts for recreation and connection of communities.

DOM CONTE

This candidate did not respond to our request

RIVERVIEW SCHOOL BOARD

Four year term. Vote for no more than 5

There are 7 candidates running for 5 slots. All candidates will appear on both the Republican and Democratic ballots.

Questions:

1. What is your vision for the future of education in the Oakmont & Verona community?
2. What are your academic priorities? How would you incorporate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) into the curriculum?
3. What are 2-3 strengths of which our district can be proud, and why?
4. What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address, and why?
5. If elected, what do you hope will be key accomplishments of the board during your years of service?

ALEX DICLAUDIO

Age: 32

Profession: Entrepreneur, business executive, and arts & entertainment professional

Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there? I live in Oakmont currently, and

also grew up in Oakmont. I am a 2005 graduate of Riverview

Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past? I do not presently have any children.

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? I am an incumbent, serving in my first term.

1. What is your vision for the future of education in the Oakmont & Verona community?

Oakmont and Verona have a great deal of pride in maintaining a small, independent education system for many years – my vision for the future is that we continue to hold on to educating the children of Oakmont and Verona in Oakmont and Verona. Public education is facing grave challenges nationwide, particularly in Pennsylvania. Small schools are least resilient to weathering the current storm, but with fiscal discipline, community engagement, and a forward-thinking strategic vision we can preserve Riverview as a small, independent school for many generations to come.

2. What are your academic priorities? How would you incorporate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) into the curriculum?

I believe it is critically important to Riverview to continue striking the balance between providing an education and a set of opportunities that creates well-rounded students, with making sure we are providing a solid foundation in the core subjects and preparing students for higher education or to directly enter the workforce.

STEAM plays a critical role on all those fronts, by exposing students to a broad range of disciplines and exploring how they intertwine. It is critical that we continue to support an expansion of STEAM into the curriculum.

3. What are 2-3 strengths of which our district can be proud, and why?

The size of Riverview is absolutely a strength, as the intimate educational setting in community schools allows students to develop relationships with our faculty and staff and receive individual attention and customized education specific to their unique needs at a level that is not possible in a larger school setting.

Riverview has also long maintained a wide array of opportunities in which students can participate. It has been, and remains to this day, the policy and culture at Riverview that students should, whenever possible, not be forced to choose between activities, but that every effort should be made to enable students to participate in as much as they desire. This is a driver behind the high degree of well-roundedness of our graduates, and also allows us to support many more teams, clubs, ensembles, and activities than would be typical for a school of our size. Contrast this with the usual policy at larger schools in which students may pick one or two activities to be involved in, and Riverview has in this a strength of which we should be justly proud.

4. What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address, and why?

Given the difficulties facing public education in terms of diminishing state and federal funding, with a growing set of unfunded mandates (with which school districts have no choice but to comply), rising pension fund contribution obligations, and in Riverview's case aging school buildings with large maintenance needs, seriously grappling with our budget and operating with fiscal discipline is critically important. Raising taxes to meet our needs should be viewed as the very last resort – especially because we have seen tax revenues rising at current rates due to

increases in property values and new properties coming onto the tax rolls. It is the school board's responsibility to provide resources for the best possible education for our students, at a tax rate that is affordable for all members of our community.

We must also do more to recognize that in the face of rising costs of higher education and high rates of student debt, many students are choosing to directly enter the workforce or pursue skills-based training in the trades after graduating from high school. Riverview ought to prioritize ensuring that we are adequately preparing all students who wish to pursue this path with the skills and preparation we need, while still balancing our ability to rigorously prepare those students who are seeking to attend institutions of higher education.

5. If elected, what do you hope will be key accomplishments of the board during your years of service?

Regardless of whether I am reelected, I hope that the school board can find a way to make the tough decisions necessary to ensure the long-term stability and resilience of the district, and exercise fiscal discipline to do it at an affordable tax rate for the community. There is a great deal of growth and opportunity in our community – particularly in Verona – so I believe our future is ultimately a bright one.

MELANIE PALLONE

Age: 58 years young

Profession: Attorney; Professor; Journalist; Non-profit Volunteer

Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there? 27 years in Oakmont, 24 of them as owner of a small home.

Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past? No, however, I've been an educator for 20 years and am interested in child development.

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? Volunteered on 20 local, state, and federal campaigns, yet first campaign of my own!

1. What is your vision for the future of education in the Oakmont & Verona community?

A partnership of all district stakeholders who share decision-making AND responsibilities for the school district (students, parents, teachers, administrators, residents, businesses, councils, mayors, police, etc.); and equitable funding of a strong public school district by all taxpayers within our jurisdiction.

2. What are your academic priorities? How would you incorporate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) into the curriculum?

Priority: All districts must balance giving struggling kids the attention they need, while challenging capable students, and not ignoring those in the middle; this is never easy, but something we must focus on as a small district, such as through future teacher hiring, budget plans.

STEAM: One way to encourage student interest in STEAM is through hands-on experiences (such as taking kids into the outdoors to learn science, or doing group arts exhibits in town).

3. What are 2-3 strengths of which our district can be proud, and why?

- 1) For a small district, we still have many of the academic, arts, and athletic offerings of some larger districts.
- 2) Many of our kids are able to walk to school, and we offer buses for those who cannot.
- 3) We are still able to offer small classes where most students know each other and most of their teachers know them.

4. What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address, and why?

- 1) We can and must ensure our students are healthy in body and mind; this entails decent nutrition and behavioral health efforts, in cooperation with parents and others.
- 2) We can and must ensure our students, teachers, and staff are physically safe at school; this does not mean armed guards, but it might realistically mean other practical, noncoercive measures for students, and oversight of adults interacting with kids.
- 3) We can and must consider evenhandedness in upcoming contracts on the part of both teachers and residents.

5. If elected, what do you hope will be key accomplishments of the board during your years of service?

My hopes are to secure adequate and fair state and local funding for our district's needs, to provide: curriculum options for various types of student learners; resources for teacher development and success; maintenance and upgrades of existing facilities; assistance to families of truant students so they can be involved with their kids; and cooperation with other area districts to share programs we cannot run on our own. I also hope to involve more community members in district meetings.

TARA JEAN SCHAAF

Age: 41, soon to be 42

Profession: Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)

Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there? Verona for 15 years

Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past? One daughter in 9th grade at Riverview. She went to Verner for elementary school.

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? Technically an incumbent, serving one year to finish the term of a member who stepped down and was appointed in December after interviewing with the Board at a public meeting.

1. What is your vision for the future of education in the Oakmont & Verona community?

I would like to see us regrow and offer more classes in the arts and music, and some other electives that students may wish to take. I would like us to be able to offer more languages, either in school or online, beyond French and Spanish, to help prepare them for the global community they will venture into.

I'd like us to be able to bring back some of our charter school children, with the hope of being able to someday provide for all students who don't succeed in the mainstream setting. By offering more online options those who don't do well in the classroom setting or need to be able to work at their own pace can, but still be part of Riverview. I'd like us to bolster our special education so that we may provide further services and allow for those of our students who have to go to outside support can come to us instead.

I would also like to see us partner with colleges to either offer more classes outside the normal high school academics, whether they offer college credit or not, so that we can expand our class offerings in a financially responsible way but still offer our students MORE. There are many programs out there, we just need to search for them and have the communities help with finding them. I know many parents have investigated different programs and I would like them to be able to bring what they have found forward to help other students in our district expand their horizons and increase their talents and abilities.

2. **What are your academic priorities? How would you incorporate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) into the curriculum?**

My academic priorities are to make sure we have strong foundation classes, see our programs streamlined (do we need English and Reading classes in the junior high and high school level when there is so much overlap between them), and make sure we are staying at the top of all these programs. We have great schools in our district, landing on some of the lists of “Bests”, but we could do better, there is no reason we couldn’t become number one, we have to look into what these other districts offer that we don’t, some of them are just slightly bigger than Riverview and score much better than we do and better than some of our larger counterparts. I think we do a good job at incorporating STEAM into our school and classrooms, but there is always room for improvement Unfortunately this takes money, so we need to try and find more grants and creative ways to fund these items. We’ve received grants before through the hard work of our teachers and administrators. This is also another area a partnership with a college or university could help us expand. We have spectacular robotics, computer, and engineering programs at our local colleges that we should be tapping into. We could also reach out to them for additional arts programs as well.

3. **What are 2-3 strengths of which our district can be proud, and why?**

- a. **First:** We have very successful, hard working students. Many have been to regional, national, and even international competitions and won in multiple areas. We have had winners in chorus, band, science, academics, and Model UN. They are forces to be reckoned with.
- b. **Second:** Our size. Our students are lucky to have small classes. They can choose a curriculum that is individualized to them, in most cases, which helps to move them forward on their chosen paths and keep them interested in learning.
- c. **Third:** Our core values. I know there have been issues with bullying, and like any parent I find it disheartening, and yet our district tries so hard to instill a sense of community in our children. We do have antibullying programs in elementary school and I have seen children stand up for each other against their peers, which is so hard at any age. I have heard of students going to teachers and administration to stand up for what they believe in or to get something changed in the district. I never went to a school which had community days where the students are encouraged to go out and do volunteer work to help improve and brighten the lives of those in their communities. They are encouraged to donate their time and effort, not just money, which is so much easier. They are being taught to think of others and not just themselves, which for any child is hard, but which will help them to go out and improve the world once they have moved on from school.

4. **What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address, and why?**

- a. **First:** we need to stop our declining enrollment. We need to get the word out about how wonderful our school is, so we encourage new families to move into our district. Most people have never heard of Riverview, let alone how great our district is and can be. Many young families have started to move into the district, but we need more, and we need to keep the ones we have here, so we need to listen to what they want from their school as well. While there have been issues the last few years, they are not insurmountable, and we have many wonderful things in our district that need to be told the world.
- b. **Second:** Communication. I have heard it many times over that people feel our district lacks communication at every level. Plus, there is not always a balance in what is disseminated: minor items seem to be distributed in excess, whereas more important announcements get lost or aren’t given to the people affected the most.

- c. **Third:** keeping our art and music programs, as well as our small class sizes. The more we find ourselves having to cut programs or teachers, the more our children suffer. We're lucky to have small classes when other districts have 25-30 students in each one. Plus, art and music are important in every aspect of life, it helps kids to think outside of the box and see the world in a different way. Music has been shown to help with math skills and art helps with other skills such as motor and social.

5. **If elected, what do you hope will be key accomplishments of the board during your years of service?**

I'd like to see the Board become more accessible to the community. I'd like to make the meetings more available by either having a Facebook Live feed during the meetings or maybe a podcast, something that can also be saved for later viewing or listening and linked through the Board's section on the Riverview website.

I'd also like to see more public involvement with the Board meetings. There are meeting where only one or two community members come and I'd like to see more faces there. It would make getting accurate and timely information out easier and would also give the community a larger voice in the Board's decisions and also see what we have accomplished. I'd like to know what would make it easier for people to get to meetings, be it childcare or just scheduling, which is also why I'd like to see us do some kind of live feed so the community could at least hear the meetings even if they can't participate.

I'd like us to start our own cyber charter school. We already offer online classes in conjunction with another school district, but I'd like to see us expand these options so that we can bring back some of our students instead of them using outside charters. If we could grow a cyber school for our students, we could one day offer it to other districts to help increase our income and help other struggling districts that are hit hard by charter tuitions. We could combine with other school districts that have online classes already so we all could offer the best that we have, thereby creating a co-op which could have a large number of classes to offer, save all the districts money, and let our students have a wide variety of options, while also meeting students from other schools in our area.

MAUREEN W. MCCLURE

Age: 71

Profession: Professor, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh

Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there?

- Oakmont
- 29 years

Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past?

- No

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served?

- 2

1. **What is your vision for the future of education in the Oakmont & Verona community?**

- a. Safety is the top priority.
- b. Staying together as a small district is essential.
- c. Our kids are smart in different ways. Small school districts can help support their strengths created by their differences.

2. **What are your academic priorities? How would you incorporate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) into the curriculum?**
 - a. Riverview parents and community members, for the most part, want our children to have a well-rounded education.
 - b. This means helping our students learn that STEAM topics are deeply integrated in the working world. Small schools have more room for student success across all of these topics, and I would add in athletics, too.
 - c. STEAM also needs to be integrated into our history and civics courses related to learning how to inherit our democracy.
 - d. Our children are growing up in an increasingly international economy. Support for learning about other cultures and languages is increasingly important.

3. **What are 2-3 strengths of which our district can be proud, and why?**
 - a. The support given to the school district, given that about 80% of its households do not have children under 18.
 - b. Visibility for the values of empathy. I recently attended the senior awards night. What stood out most for me was the level of caring and support the students who were there offered each other. We don't talk much about the values of empathy, but this night, the district's strengths in this area were on display.
 - c. Teachers have room to be creative, despite all the state mandates for standardized testing. This is not always true in other districts.

4. **What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address, and why?**
 - a. Staying safe. Last year a community member got up and said something to the effect that bad things couldn't happen to us. This is a terrible way to think. We need to be as prepared as possible, without going overboard. It's not easy and needs a lot of cooperation. We have been very lucky, given the support from our local borough councils and police departments.
 - b. We have smart and caring teachers. We need to make sure they have the technology, equipment and materials they need to continue to support our students' creativity, critical thinking and empathy. It's tough competition out there, and our kids continue to need to be prepared for a rapidly changing world.
 - c. Staying small, but not too small. The one thing we can't do is ignore our current enrollments. They need to be stabilized. We can stay right-size small by staying together. New Edgewater money isn't enough to cover our growing state mandates, in part because, the wealthier the district becomes, the less money we receive from the state. Even so, we need to strengthen our tax base by doing what we can to help support community development efforts in both Oakmont and Verona. They are much more hopeful than they were just a few years ago.

5. **If elected, what do you hope will be key accomplishments of the board during your years of service?**
 - a. Keep both Verner and Tenth Street together and open as walking schools. This is a great selling point as we compete for young parents moving into the district.
 - b. We have had great support for the district from those without children in school. We need to keep that.
 - c. Get the word out that Riverview is a hidden gem with lots of advantages for families seeking a well-rounded education for their children.

JANE MILLER

Age: 52

Profession: Music Director – 2015 to present

Public Relations Consultant – 2002-2015

Corporate Communications Consultant – Highmark – 1989-2002

Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there?: I have lived in Oakmont for 10 years

Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past? No

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? Not an incumbent

1. What is your vision for the future of education in the Oakmont and Verona Communities?

I hope that students at Riverview can continue to thrive by having access to a wide-variety of curriculum that will stimulate them as they rise through the grade levels. I would also like to see how our community could assist in our students' education. There is a lot of talent within our own Verona and Oakmont communities; perhaps that could be used by developing a bank of community volunteers who could participate in a mentoring system.

2. What are your academic priorities? How would you incorporate STEAM into the curriculum?

I think a well-rounded student should be given the opportunity to have access to science, technology, engineer and math as well as the arts. The arts are just as important as STEM and can provide deep opportunities for creativity.

3. What are 2-3 strengths our district can be proud and why?

Our district can be proud of both elementary schools. Verner and 10th Street Elementary Schools have test scores that are above those schools who compare similarly. Both schools are gems in the Oakmont and Verona communities and are well regarded for providing a solid elementary education. We can also be proud of the fact that as a small district, we are able to provide a well-rounded education for our students that include extra-curricular activities and sports.

4. What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address and why?

We need to look at ways to better manage our budget. I have experience and background in business including working 12 years for a health insurer. My master's degree in Health Education, bachelor's degree in Journalism along with my experience in Corporate Communications provides both business and real-world experience.

5. What do you hope will be key accomplishments of the board during your years of service?

I hope that Riverview School District would be considered as one of the premier districts in the state for the size of the school that it is. I plan to work at creating better communication with our communities about issues the School Board faces. Often there is very little participation or attendance from the community at School Board meetings. I would like to see more public meetings offered where community members could express their concerns in a more direct setting. I hope that I can be regarded as a Board member who listens to the needs of the community.

JENNIFER K. CHAPARRO

Name: Jennifer K. Chaparro

Age: 40

Profession: Marketing Strategy Manager, UPMC Health Plan

Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there? Oakmont, 8 years

Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past? Yes, two children currently attending Tenth Street Elementary

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? Not an incumbent

1. What is your vision for the future of education in the Oakmont & Verona community?

- a. I hope we can increase our enrollment by retaining current families in our district (especially after elementary school) and attract new families to our boroughs.
- b. Offer a well-rounded educational experience for all children no matter what background they come from and what they are interested in doing. I believe that art and music need to be a part of a well-rounded education as well.

2. What are your academic priorities? How would you incorporate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) into the curriculum?

- a. Incorporating more hands-on STEAM activities especially in the younger grades is very important (especially more science and technology/engineering) and continuing technology-focused coursework in the upper grades will serve our children well after graduating. Art should be a constant. Making math fun and engaging for the kids is key, especially as it gets more challenging.
- b. I would also like to see foreign languages offered in younger grades and making sure it remains a focus in the high school as well.

3. What are 2-3 strengths of which our district can be proud, and why?

- a. We are a small community within our district and the individualized attention this affords our students is one-of-a-kind experience.
- b. Students can be involved in many different activities, whether it is sports, arts, music, or clubs there is something for everyone and it is accessible.
- c. Parents are generally quite involved and want to volunteer and make the kids experience in and out of the classroom a wonderful one.

4. What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address, and why?

- a. Decreasing enrollment: why are people leaving the district or not continuing to send their kids to the high school after elementary school?
- b. Addressing the budget in a holistic way. We must figure out how to manage our costs for the long term. The situation we've been in the last two years cannot continue to come up year after year.
- c. Continuing to make the arts and music program a priority and not losing what we are so proud of, especially as a small district.

5. If elected, what do you hope will be key accomplishments of the board during your years of service?

- a. Managing the budget, figuring out where we can be creative with solutions to meet our students needs and have the larger community feel confident in our district.
- b. Have a better understanding of how big decisions affect the day-to-day experience of our students, teachers, and staff in our buildings.
- c. Understand what the community's concerns are and what we could be doing to better market our district to the Pittsburgh metropolitan area.

BRIAN HAWK

Name: Brian Hawk

Age: 45

Profession: Engineering & Construction (Area Manager for Nicholson Construction)

Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there? Oakmont, 6 years

Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past? Son in 8th grade, Daughter in 5th grade (10th Street), Daughter starting preschool in the fall.

If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served? Not an incumbent

1. What is your vision for the future of education in the Oakmont & Verona community?

Riverview is a small district that provides great opportunities for our students to become great adults and citizens. I draw from my own personal public education experience to say that my vision is to foster engagement of all our students and families to continue to strive to meet all their needs while providing as many tools as we can to ensure that we keep our district viable and attract more families to take advantage of the unique opportunities that Riverview provides.

2. What are your academic priorities? How would you incorporate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) into the curriculum?

I feel that the school districts main purpose is to prepare our young people for their future, whatever that may be. The district's priority is to insure students are introduced to a variety of subjects and topics that will challenge and stimulate their thinking to help them decide what path they want to follow after graduation. STEAM is the key component to stimulating our students' creativity and individuality. The wide variety of electives and specials offered at all levels provide the mortar that holds all the bricks being the core subjects in place and thus making the foundation for students' successful futures. Continued focus on state of the art engineering, robotics, information technology, music and art help to guide these young minds to successful careers with or without higher education degrees.

3. What are 2-3 strengths of which our district can be proud, and why?

- a. Parental involvement. The number of parents in our district that donate their time and efforts to be involved and support school activities, community functions and extracurricular athletics is staggering. From the PTO, community groups, the RAA sports and the Twin Boro's soccer our parents are very supportive at all levels.
- b. Small community. With the size of Verona and Oakmont we are able to keep our small-town appeal and a more personal feel to our interactions socially and professionally.
- c. Performing arts and music programs. The number of students that participate in our chorus, bands and the musical have impressed me every year I have lived here. Riverview's ability to

develop and nurture students in the performing arts is second to none with the impressive talent pool that we can maintain year after year.

4. What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address, and why?

- a. Financial sustainability and budgeting. This is obviously the toughest task that the school board deals with year after year. We owe it to our student body and community to be fiscally responsible while meeting the needs of our teachers, staff and administration. Maintaining a diligent focus on the districts strategic plan and milestones without jeopardizing the sustainable future of our small district.
- b. Innovation. Keeping an open mind toward innovative teaching techniques and technological advancement to provide our teachers and students with the most cutting edge improvements to benefit all of their futures. This comes in the forms of computer classes with using software that I use in my career or even the iPads and smartboards that they are exposed to everyday in their classes.

5. If elected, what do you hope will be key accomplishments of the board during your years of service?

A standardized budgeting framework that provides our parents and community transparency and understanding of the struggles that our district and the public school system face as we move into the future.

I hope to see more student engagement with the school board. I feel that interaction between the board and student councils of our three schools to discuss key issues from the students' perspective and the board's perspective would provide both groups with a better understanding of the struggles we all face and a greater level of respect and caring throughout the district.