



## 2021 LOCAL VOTING GUIDE

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The Verona Community Group reached out to all candidates for Verona Borough Council and Riverview School Board on April 15, 2021 and asked them to respond to 6 questions each. Their responses can be found below and are in the order in which the candidates will appear on the ballot. Responses are verbatim from the candidates and were not edited, aside from light formatting. 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.

**Where to vote:** Find your voting place by visiting [www.votespa.com](http://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>

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## MAYOR

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Four-year term. Vote for no more than 1. Mayor Ricupero is running unopposed

**Age:** 64

**Profession:** Landscaping family business

**Years lived in Verona:** lifetime resident

*I agree with the answers we wrote together as the endorsed VDC candidates and have added some thoughts to the questions.*

*\*\*See Verona Democratic Committee Endorsed Candidates Joint Response*

### 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?**

*Mayor Response* - Continue to work together as a board

**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?**

*Mayor Response* - Hiring more full time officers for officer safety and residents' safety. To gain more officer presence through out the borough.

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

*Mayor Response* - Unfortunately Verona has limited space for expanding the number of homes and businesses in the town. Current zoning exceptions have been made to bring new business into town.

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

*Mayor Response* - Residents need to continue to be vigilant in their neighborhood, join the community block watch and community group to learn about updates on things that are happening in our community.

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

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for many in our community due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the borough should have as we recover from the pandemic?**

*Mayor Response* - Continue to follow CDC guidelines

## VERONA BOROUGH COUNCIL

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### 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?

*Special Note: several candidates who received the Verona Democratic Committee endorsement decided to answer the questions as a group, and some added their own individual comments to their responses. Although this was not part of our instruction, we are sharing with you for transparency and to explain why you may see repeating answers. VCG does not endorse any specific slate of candidates.*

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RAYMON S. SUCHEVICH

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This candidate did not respond to our request.

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VINCENT J. FLOTTA

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**Age:** 47

**Profession:** Graphic artist

**How long have you lived in Verona?** Resident of Verona for 36 years

#### **Personal Statement from Mr. Flotta:**

I still feel very uncomfortable with answering the current questions because I do not think that they provide a fair assessment of what I stand for or what I can do for Verona. I also would not want any

candidate to receive an unfair advantage over any other candidate because they do not answer the questions. I do however support the viewpoints of the Verona Democratic Committee endorsed candidates. If any resident of Verona has any questions about my viewpoints or what I stand for, then they can feel free to contact me directly and I would be more than happy to discuss them.

*\*\*See Verona Democratic Committee Endorsed Candidates Joint Response*

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RHODA G. WOLF

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**Age:** 70

**Profession:** Teacher & business owner

**How long have you lived in Verona?** 55 years

**If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served?** Previously served on Verona Borough Council from 2009 – 2017.

**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?**

I have two initiatives. (1) Budget revisions, and (2) Comprehensive Plan.

**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?**

Infrastructure improvements/alleys/streets

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

Zoning classifications. To avoid single family homes to be converted into multi-units.

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

Surveys seem to be very effective.

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

Yes. With refuse services, police and fire, code enforcement, and location of winter salt deposit.

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for many in our community due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the borough should have as we recover from the pandemic?**

1. Continue encouraging CDC and PA State guidelines.
2. Reintroduce park activities.
3. Reinstate in-person Borough Meetings in the Council Chamber

*\*\*See Verona Democratic Committee Endorsed Candidates Joint Response*

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NANCY A. CARPENTER

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**Age:** 66

**Profession:** Retired Physician

**How long have you lived in Verona?** 13 years

**If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served?** Completing first term which began in January 2018

**Personal Statement from Dr. Carpenter:**

*The answers to the questions below are a combined effort of the VDC endorsed candidates for Council and the endorsed candidate for Mayor. I agree with and stand behind the answers we present below to show our unified approach to working together and for the community. The importance of working together in unity can not be underestimated and this will definitely benefit Verona as we move forward.*

*I have added a short personal note to a few of the 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?**

*Carpenter Response* - As an incumbent on Council during the immense changes facing Verona, I have been involved with the hiring of a new accounting firm and a new payroll company. We are also continuing our search for a new Borough manager/secretary. I have learned more than I ever thought I'd know about all things financial and, with the tremendous help of our VP & finance committee chair Dave Matlin, we have worked to "right Verona's financial ship" so we can move into the future confident of our financial position.

**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?**

*Carpenter Response* - I think our group answer above says it all. My only addition would be that having to reduce our budget in many areas was disappointing, However I do feel hopeful that Verona can have a balanced budget in the near future and all projects will be funded in the next few years.

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

*Carpenter Response* - the [joint response] answer captures my thoughts on this topic.

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

*Carpenter Response* - the [joint response] answer captures my thoughts on this topic

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

*Carpenter Response* - the [joint response] answer captures my thoughts on the topic.

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for many in our community due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the borough should have as we recover from the pandemic?**

*Carpenter Response - the [joint response] answer captures my thoughts on the topic.*

*\*\*See Verona Democratic Committee Endorsed Candidates Joint Response*

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PATRICIA LYNN HREDZAK-SHOWALTER

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**Age:** 37

**Profession:** Laboratory Manager

**How long have you lived in Verona?** 6 years

**If you are an incumbent, how many terms have you served?** Appointed Jan 2021 to complete Pat McCarthy's term

**Personal statement from Ms. Hredzak-Showalter:**

*While the interest in voter education is appreciated, for several reasons outlined previously the majority of candidates disagree with the specific questions and process presented by the VCG. As a result of the complexity of the situation but still wanting to share with our community, several candidates worked together to express our shared vision for Verona. We believe that our ability to work together creatively is one of our strongest assets for the benefit of the community, and each one of us strongly encourages anyone in the community to reach out to any of us for more specific information.*

*\*\*See Verona Democratic Committee Endorsed Candidates Joint Response*

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VERONA DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE ENDORSED CANDIDATES JOINT RESPONSE

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**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?**

While we are a mixed group of incumbent(s), new candidate(s), and returning candidate(s), we are all in support of a better tomorrow. The initiatives that we are most proud of and will continue to make a priority are building a stronger foundation by adopting policies and procedures to secure our future.

**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?**

Given the financial challenges recently brought to light, choosing only one line item is very challenging. Clearly things like infrastructure, code enforcement, and blight mitigation are very important, but so are community initiatives and prioritizing our budget to allow for the growth and safety of our community. The recent sweeping budget amendment will allow us to continue to make progress towards establishing and maintaining a rainy day fund and having more responsible fiscal management.

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

Many policies in our community are out of date and are in need of updating. Updates to our zoning code could be resolved through an analysis of current and future land use. One zoning issue that is lacking is the preservation of our beautiful riverfront area, as well as the preservation of historic structures so that their historic significance is maintained through routine renovations and updates.

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

We extremely value residents' input. There has been an ongoing effort to improve the timely availability of agendas and meeting minutes on the website, as well as more opportunities for public comment during meetings, and increasing our frequency of social media engagement. As our borough strives for increased transparency and residents are more informed about what's going on, it is our aim that they will be more likely to participate in the decision-making process. Our future council will also make a more committed group effort to support our local community groups and events.

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

Yes! Already we have begun sharing resources where it makes sense (e.g. sharing salt with Oakmont), and the recent hire of BIU to handle both Oakmont and Verona's building inspection needs. Additionally, in the past several years, representatives from Verona have partnered with adjacent communities on a project to develop a multi-municipal trail system connecting our riverfront area with Boyce Park. Furthermore, the Oakmont and Verona Parks and Recreation Boards have been in close communication on possible collaboration.

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for many in our community due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the borough should have as we recover from the pandemic?**

Safety will remain a priority and we will continue to follow CDC guidelines including mask wearing and social distancing while thoughtfully planning for outdoor activities. We will also make supporting our chamber and local businesses a top priority.

## RIVERVIEW SCHOOL BOARD

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Four year term. Vote for no more than 5

There are 6 candidates running for 4 slots. All candidates will appear on both the Republican and Democratic ballots.

### Candidates:

- Stefani Garibay
- Brian Hawk
- Jeanine Hurt-Robinson
- Laura Jacko
- Arlene Loeffler
- Wendy Wilton

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### STEFANI GARIBAY

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**Age:** 32

**Profession:** Homemaker/ Part-time Co-operator at Etta's Blvd Doggy Daycare

**Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there?** Verona 3 years, Oakmont previously for 10 years

**Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past?** Yes, one student at RHS, and 2 future RDS students (toddlers)

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

A well-rounded education, complete with as many subjects, programs, and innovative ways of learning as our staff can offer our students. We have always had these things, but I would like to see them strengthen and grow. I would like to stop shaving away at our curriculum and programs, as "insignificant" as it may be in current settings, when faced with an ultimatum during budget season, these decisions do have future repercussions.

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

-When it comes to academic priorities, I'd like to see thoughtful decisions made for our Special Education. We constantly find ourselves doubling the duties of our Principals, and not putting focus on the education for our most vulnerable. There should be consistency in the education we offer on all fronts.

-The current curriculum, and as far as I have experienced with my own son at RSD for the last 10 years, provides an excellent STEAM environment. RSD has invested their time applying for and receiving grants for teacher training and incorporating that training into teaching our students. Continuing this support and efforts for continued training in STEAM will strengthen our current STEAM curriculum. Also, I know I am currently involved in this organization for the last 3 years, just know I wouldn't be a part of it and trying to keep it going without believing in its ability to help our district, especially since the mission is to

encourage STEAM education; utilizing The Riverview Educational Foundation would benefit these efforts by providing our teachers with the money to obtain the necessary materials to help further their applications of their training that isn't available in our budget.

\*\*Should I be elected, I will have to resign my position at The Riverview Educational Foundation, and there may not be a foundation if we do not obtain more volunteers soon. We would be losing something valuable to our district, as many others, if not all districts around us have them. Let us not take them for granted, they are and can be an even greater asset to our district.

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

-I believe many of us are here because of the small class sizes, and the sense of community and inclusion with the students. I have been so impressed over the years by the actions and kind words from students that my son has encountered in his journey through RSD.

-Prior to my move to RSD, I attended a rather large district in Federal Way, WA where I spent my first years of Secondary education at Thomas Jefferson High School, Home of the Raiders (evidently I was always meant to be a Raider). I remember not being able to be in band if I wanted to participate in sports and vice versa. There was always a conflict so it was hard to be involved in multiple activities. But when I attended RSD, and later when my children started attending, I found that there was an encouraging environment to be involved in multiple activities throughout the year. I've always admired this about our district. It provides our students with experience in time management, multi-tasking, goal setting, and planning.

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

-Our budget, we continuously shave off of our budget to avoid a tax hike. And then we have to have a greater hike in later years or cut more programs/teachers, resulting in unhappy residents, parents, students and staff. This is a revolving door that I would like to further look into and learn how other districts in our caliber function. I also understand that the funding in recent years has not been there for public education. But I believe that if we strive to build a stronger district, young families will want to keep their children in our schools, and we can break this cycle of hikes and shaving off our education. We have a lot of children in our district, but we are seeing some of these students go to charter, parochial schools, etc. which can affect the budget. How do we encourage enrollment so that we keep those students? We should be looking to provide more for our students in the district to maintain steady enrollment. Or look into tuition students (with the mindset of keeping student-teacher ratio at its optimum). I don't agree that it is what it is, that tax hikes and budget cuts are the only answers. I'm sure this is easier said than done. However, we can't afford to take more hits like what we took with our music dept in recent years.

-Finding stability in our principals at Verner and Riverview, in 14 years I think I have seen 3 principals at Verner, 3-4 at Riverview along with multiple Vice Principal, while Tenth St does not seem to have this turnover. Having consistency among our staff is important to providing stability in the work environment for our teachers and for our students.

-Communication from the board to our residents, parents, and students is also a priority of mine. All too often the board members have been unapproachable and sometimes unresponsive. Leaving some out of

the equation and unheard, whether intended or not. Everyone should have a voice, and the board should make every effort to listen, give thoughtful responses and be as transparent as possible.

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

I hope we can open more transparent lines of communication from the board to the public, accomplish growth in our district, firm our budget, and provide advantageous curriculum and opportunities for ALL students.

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for the district and its students due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the school board should focus on as we recover from the pandemic?**

It is my opinion that our current board has done wonders in an unprecedented time, I hope to continue following in their footsteps by including our parents and our staff in decisions to keep everyone safe, healthy and happy. I am open to all ideas, suggestions, comments and concerns. So, though I may see on the surface that things seem to go seemingly well, doesn't mean that there aren't more pressing issues and thoughtful solutions in the future as we continue to move forward and try to recover.

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**BRIAN HAWK**

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**Age:** 47

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

**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?** Son in 10th grade virtual, Daughter in 7th grade virtual, Daughter preschool age and back to school in the fall.

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

I currently fill the seat vacated by Mrs. Aughenbaugh after the 2019 election. I ran for school board in that election and lost by 3 votes. I am currently a member of the finance committee.

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

Flexibility. If we have learned anything from this unprecedented pandemic year, it is how resilient and flexible the students, teachers, families and administration can be. With the flexible learning models that we have employed this year, we should work to keep more students in our district and cut down on the \$700,000 (3% of the budget) we pay to send students from our district to charter schools.

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

As I said in the past, 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 ensure 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 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?**

Our strong academic focus (and successes) with our broad list of class offerings that get our students involved in more than just the standard Math, English, Social Studies and Science curriculum.

Our parents and families are engaged and passionate about their children's education. This showed through during this past year during the remote learning, hybrid options and quarantine scares. The parents in this district are always willing to donate their time and efforts to make all of the student's experiences second to none.

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

Funding of Public School Education. With the time I have spent on the school board finance committee I have been shocked at the public school funding model. There are so few budgetary line items that a board can control due to the state mandates with less than 30% of the funding coming from the state or federal government. I will continue to fight for a fair and more balanced funding model, while trying to understand and bring transparency to budgetary problems that we face.

Safety of our students. From battling pandemics to physical renovations, making sure that the facilities and environments are high quality learning environments.

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

The public school budgeting framework is so standardized that provides for very little modification and line items that the board has control of adjusting. Our parents and community need to understand the struggles that our district and the public school system face as we move into the future. Out of the \$24.4 million budget for next year 57% is instructional cost, 32% is support services, 8% is financing and 3% is non-instructional. That 3% is really the only piece that we go through with a fine tooth comb every year.

I hope to continue seeing more student engagement with the school board. I feel that interaction between the board and student groups 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.

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for the district and its students due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the school board should focus on as we recover from the pandemic?**

Doing our best to keep the students attending school in person as safely as we can. Everyone who can be vaccinated does get vaccinated, so we can minimize the potential quarantine issues if and when they pop up this coming year.

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**JEANINE HURT-ROBINSON**

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**Age:** 46

**Profession:** Accounting Clerk in Oakmont

**Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there?** I have lived in Verona for 12 years with my husband of 23 years and our daughter.

**Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past?** My daughter has been in the district since Pre-k and is currently in 7th grade.

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

I was appointed to the Riverview School Board in 2016 and elected to a four year term in 2017. I was elected Vice President of the School Board in December 2020.

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

My vision for RSD is for the district to be a model for other districts to follow by delivering a high quality education with a well rounded curriculum that prepares our students, and puts them in a position for success when they graduate.

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

My academic priority is to make sure each of our students receives a high quality education that is enriched and supported according to each students needs. Riverview just moved from #109 last year to #98 according to Pennsylvania's top 100 in US News and World Reports Top High School rankings. We must continue to support our teachers, enhance our curriculum and build on our current S.T.E.A.M programs.

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

1. Teachers, Staff and Administrator's - They genuinely care about each student. Our district has a small and our students are not just a number.

2. Academics - Riverview continues to deliver a quality education.

3. Arts; Music; Athletics: Riverview students are given the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities.

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

Like all districts you have to be forward thinking.

The sustainability of the district through fiscal responsibility while being accountable to the tax payers.

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

Riverview continues to make strides. If I am re-elected, I would like to see the board continue to make decisions that allows us to continue to improve upon the growth that we've already achieved.

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for the district and its students due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the school board should focus on as we recover from the pandemic?**

I think our priorities related to recovery from the pandemic should include keeping our students and staff safe by continuing to adhere to the guidelines and ensuring that our teachers and parents have the necessary tools to help the students who have learning loss associated with Covid-19 challenges.

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LAURA JACKO

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**Age:** 35

**Profession:** Nonprofit and fundraising professional

**Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there?** I have been a Verona resident for 8 years

**Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past?** I have a little boy who will be entering kindergarten next year

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

I think we are fortunate to have a great school district which has already worked to attract new families to the area (such as myself). I want to see that continue and to maintain the aspects that make us special; a small town feel, excellent teachers, and a quality public education for all children in the district.

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

My academic priorities are STEAM education (so I am very happy to see this particular question here) and opportunities to connect to recreation and the outdoors for students. I would like to help our teachers, as best as I can, to be able to incorporate the arts into the curriculum, as I feel that the arts are an integral part to learning any other discipline. Arts programming is a vital part of education, not an extracurricular, and I'd like to see it be treated as such. Additionally, I would like to do what I can to help provide outdoor learning opportunities for the kids in our towns. We are all so connected to technology that it's becoming increasingly important that we learn how to put down our screens and connect with the outdoors. I hope to use my connections in local environmental, outdoors, and recreation organizations to help facilitate these possibilities.

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

I think we can be proud of our small town, neighborly feel. This is something that is increasingly special and offers our children a personal connection with their teachers, friends, and neighbors. I think we can also be proud that our school district tends to score high compared to its peers across PA, and I'd love to see us continue to move upwards in school district rankings.

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

Working on increasing enrollment numbers and recovery from COVID. Generally, enrollment numbers are often tied to factors outside of the district's control (such as charter schools, vouchers, and overall birth rates in the US), but they are vital to our district's funding, so we have to do what is within our power to help counteract the forces that are beyond our control. And of course COVID has been the thing on everyone's mind this past year and it has changed so much of how we live, with some of the most profound changes happening in schooling experiences. It will continue to cast a shadow on our efforts I am sure for a long time to come, so we need to openly and transparently deal with COVID related issues as they arise.

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

I would love to see us continue to increase in school district rankings and bring more sustainability measures to the district to help save money while lessening our environmental impact. I would also want to see increased arts and outdoors/recreational programs available to students.

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for the district and its students due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the school board should focus on as we recover from the pandemic?**

The health and safety of our students and teachers comes first. It should be a priority that everyone has access to a safe learning and teaching environment. What this looks like may change depending on the trajectory of the pandemic, but safety should be top of mind. Additionally, I think it should be a priority that students and teachers alike have access to mental health services to help cope with the extreme stressors of this past year.

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ARLENE LOEFFLER

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This candidate did not respond to our request

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## WENDY WILTON

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**Age:** 49

**Profession:** Physical Therapist

**Do you live in Oakmont or Verona, and how long have you lived there?** Oakmont resident for almost 20 years

**Do you currently have children in the district or did you have children in the district in the past?** I have 2 children at Riverview Jr/Sr High School

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

Riverview will provide opportunities for success in academics, arts, athletics, trades and extracurricular activities. Riverview will embrace the diversity of our student body by making sure every student feels safe, acknowledged and respected. Riverview will provide the resources for success for children on all levels of the academic spectrum. Riverview School District will remain an independent and financially viable community school district that produces students ready to move forward in life, whether to college, trade school, the military or the workforce.

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

It is important that we have faculty that are highly qualified in multiple areas in order to provide a diverse curriculum in all STEAM programs. With such a small student population, we need to provide opportunities for our faculty, to obtain education and certification in additional areas so we can continue to provide a diverse curriculum for all ages and learning levels while keeping our costs in check.

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

Despite Riverview's small size, our district is able to offer AP classes/college readiness courses and in 2020 73% of our students scored 3 or higher, which may translate into college credits. Our ACT/SAT trends show Riverview scoring higher than the state and national averages over the past 5 years. Riverview music department, a personal favorite, continues to teach our children from elementary years to the highschool level, confidence on stage and love for the arts. Our music students have excelled at the local, state and national levels.

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

Riverview enrollment has been shrinking over the past decade. We must continue to push exceptionalism in our programming, to keep Riverview appealing to young families moving to Oakmont and Verona. At the same time, we must be sensitive to the local taxpayers and businesses that carry most of the financial burden supporting a small school district.

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

I am optimistic about the future of the Riverview School District. I also understand these are very difficult times financially for public schools. I have been dedicated to attending school board meetings for the past 4 years to educate myself on the issues affecting RSD. My goal is to see our children and community thrive by keeping Riverview independent, academically appealing and financially stable.

**6. 2020 has been a difficult year for the district and its students due to COVID-19. What priorities do you think the school board should focus on as we recover from the pandemic?**

As a healthcare provider, I have seen the physical and mental devastation that COVID-19 has had on my patients. As we slowly come out of this pandemic and our children return to a "normal" school day, Riverview School District needs to fill the learning gap that has occurred over the past year. Whether it's after school or summer programs, we can't let children start the 2021-2022 school year behind academically. Riverview must also provide mental health support for children who have struggled through this pandemic. Strong mental and physical health is essential for a child to learn and succeed academically.