Name: David Liss (Inc.)
Age: 34.
Address: 1202 Fifth Ave.
Family: Single, no children.
Occupation: Sales, Recognition Specialists, Grafton.
Elected offices: Village Board, 2006 to present.
Organizations: Grafton Lions Club, Grafton Area Live Arts, Sons of Rose-Harms American Legion Post, Ozaukee County 4-H (leader).

Name: Susan Meinecke (Inc.)
Age: 42.
Address: 519 Greenfield Dr.
Family: Married, two children.
Occupation: Stay-at-home parent.
Elected offices: Village Board, 2008 to present.
Organizations: Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Grafton, children's ministry, congregational care.

Name: Lisa Uribe Harbeck
Age: 52.
Address: 907 17th Ave.
Family: Married, two adult children.
Occupation: Registered nurse, Aurora Advanced Health Care oncology clinics.
Elected offices: None.
Organizations: Save the Dam Association, Oncology Nursing Society.

Andrew Dziedzic

Name: Alan Richards
Age: 63.
Address: 161 Maple St.
Family: Married, two children.
Occupation: Retired business owner.
Elected offices: None.
Organizations: Rose-Harms American Legion Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Grafton Lions Club, Grafton Area Chamber of Commerce.

Name: Carl Stier
Age: 48.
Address: 1411 13th Ave.
Family: Married, four children.
Occupation: Environmental construction, Go Green Contractor LLC.
Elected offices: None.
Organizations: None listed.

Two incumbents, four challengers square off for three Village Board seats

Divergent views on the future of the Bridge Street dam, redevelopment projects and municipal fees are among the issues fueling a six-person race for Grafton Village Board in the Tuesday, April 6, election.

Incumbents David Liss and Susan Meinecke have been joined by four challengers — Andrew Dziedzic, Lisa Uribe Harbeck, Alan Richards and Carl Stier — in a bid for three two-year seats as trustees.

Liss has served on the board since 2006, Meinecke since 2008. All of the other candidates are making their first try for public office except Stier, who ran unsuccessfully for the same post last year.

At least one new board member is ensured in the election because trustee Scott Volkert chose not to seek re-election.

The Bridge Street dam's fate will be decided in a binding referendum Tuesday, when residents are asked if the village should save the structure until at least 2019. The dam has become one of the major issues of the election.

Uribe Harbeck, a member of the Save the Dam Association, said she favors preserving the 90-year dam, which association members argue is a landmark that enhances the community historically, aesthetically, recreationally and commercially.

“There is a lot of information out there, and we have until 2019 to make a decision,” she said. “We need to slow down and take out time.”

Liss and Meinecke said they were both glad the decision on the dam’s future will be made by voters rather than trustees.

“The dam has been here forever and is an important part of the downtown,” Liss said. “It’s good that voters get to decide and not just seven members of the Village Board.”

Meinecke concurred but said village officials would also face tough decisions about how to pay to preserve or repair the dam if it isn’t razed.

“From a financial perspective, we need to be responsible, too,” she said. “The board will have to make some difficult decisions down the road. We have to be prepared for that.”

According to Richards, his “position on the dam is irrelevant since the issue is going to referendum,” which he said is the best way to reflect the will of Grafton residents.

Stier said he has talked “to hundreds of people on this issue,” leading him to hope the dam “stays rather than taking it down.”

Dziedzic said he is also pleased the voters will have a say in the dam’s future.

“If it is worth that much to the community to keep it, we’ll find a way to do it,” Dziedzic said. “But I think if we could have had a larger survey of the people, we could have avoided a lot of the unpleasantness.”

All six board hopefuls expressed their views on the dam and other issues during a candidates forum March 18.

Liss and Meinecke both cited their experience as trustees and active roles in

community groups as reasons they deserve re-election.

Liss, who was recently named chairman of the Grafton Historic Preservation Commission, listed redevelopment projects as a major priority for the village.

“I will continue to work to develop the downtown and south commercial district,” Liss said.

Meinecke, who described herself as “fiscal conservative and a social moderate,” said it’s critical that elected officials “don’t make decisions without getting all the facts.” She cited her master’s degree in business management and experience as a
technologies project coordinator as relevant qualifications.

Dziedzic, who did not respond to Ozaukee Press requests for biographical information, said other candidates in the race had better qualifications but he has “good listening skills and personal skills.”

“I’m just happy to be part of this,” Dziedzic said. “I want Grafton to be as good as it was when I grew up here.”

Richards, a decorated Vietnam War veteran and retired former business owner, cited his 38 years as a Grafton resident and active roles with Ozaukee County and state veterans groups as evidence of his leadership skills.

“I believe I’m a qualified candidate,” he said. “I know how to get things done.”

Uribe Harbeck, a registered nurse, said she prepared for the election by attending many village meetings and discussing issues with residents and officials.

“One of my strengths is exploring and presenting different viewpoints,” she said.

If elected, Uribe Harbeck said, her priorities would be saving the Bridge Street dam, promoting downtown revitalization and fiscal responsibility and preserving historical structures. She also listed completion of the Aurora Hospital as a key development project.

Stier, an Army veteran who works in environmental construction and cleanup, cites his leadership role as spokesperson for a citizens group in Michigan that

stopped construction of a prison.

“I feel my experiences in the military and around the world have prepared me,” he said. “I feel I have good judgment.”

As his top priorities as a village official, Stier listed maintaining high standards in schools and holding the line on taxes.

All six candidates said they are reluctant to have the village accept federal stimulus funds for development projects because of concerns over rules and regulations that force local governments to adhere to guidelines and restrict the use of money.

“With the federal government, things come with strings attached,” Richards said. “There is no free lunch.”

The candidates differed on whether the village should charge a $20 annual fee for residents to use the public works department’s new brush drop-off site.

Liss, Meinecke and Richards all said they favored the new policy as a necessary way for the village to cover operational costs.

“I believe we should,” Liss said. “If we could not charge the fees, our taxes would go up.”

“Access is actually increased at the new site and it’s more convenient to use,” Meinecke said.

However, the other candidates said they opposed the fee, which Stier said could have been avoided if the village had trimmed other costs in the design and construction of a new public works facility on Hickory Street.

“The DPW just spent $80,000 to $90,000 on a mini excavator that they could have rented for less than $2,000,” Stier said. “I think there are places where they can save a little money.”

“It would have been nice to take some of the money to build the DPW and use it to cover the fee,” Uribe Harbeck said.