

Trio of candidates for two open board seats includes outspoken critic of benefits paid to district teachers

Three candidates, including one who has been critical of teacher benefits, have registered to run in the April election for two open seats on the Port Washington-Saukville School Board.

The candidates are Earl Kelley, who recently called teacher retirement benefits “ridiculous,” and Brenda Fritsch and Michelle Mueller, both of whom have children in the district and said they want to be more involved in a school system they hold in high regard.

The three are vying for two City of Port Washington seats being vacated by veteran board members Patty Ruth and Myron Praeger.

The election will bring change to board that has had stable leadership for more than a decade. Ruth will have served on the board for 18 years in April. For 14 of those years, she has been the board president.

Praeger has been on the board for 14 years.

Kelley, 74, who is retired from Patrick Cudahy in Milwaukee, said he was motivated to run by the board’s ongoing effort to create an employee handbook that will replace union contracts.

“Once I found out what type of benefits teachers in this district have, I was absolutely shocked,” he said. “I feel strongly that teachers must have fair wages and benefits, but what they receive now is so much better than what the rest of us get.”

Kelley, who was critical of the board’s decision earlier this year to grant teachers a one-year contract extension, said the board has done a good job managing the district with one notable exception.

“The board has gotten into a rhythm. The whole idea has been to keep teachers happy, and they certainly have done that,” he said. “People seem to forget that teaching is still only a 190-day-a-year job.”

Fritsch, 44, an architect who runs a design firm, is active in school parent groups and serves as chairman of the Milwaukee Area Technical College Technology Advisory Committee. She has three children in district schools.

“I’ve been involved in education for many years and am excited by the idea of being part of such a conscientious and balanced school board,” she said. “I’m very pleased with the board, the staff and the school system in general.”

PW-S school race field grows to three

Written by BILL SCHANEN IV

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Mueller, 43, a technology consultant, said she is also pleased with the education her two children receive in the district and said she would like to use her background to make sure Port Washington-Saukville students are prepared for the 21st century.

“The information age is well under way and we’re a little behind,” she said. “Some of us may be able to eke by in life a little behind, but our kids won’t be able to.

“I get that there are budgets and we have to live within our means, but there are ways of putting technology in the hands of our kids while still balancing the budget.”

Board member Carey Gremminger, who represents the Village of Saukville, is seeking re-election and is currently unopposed. Candidates have until Tuesday, Jan. 3, to register for the April election.

The board is comprised of nine members representing the City of Port Washington and portions of the Village of Saukville and towns of Port, Saukville and Grafton that are in the district.

Members serve three-year terms. The president of the board is elected by fellow board members.