

SOUTH KITSAP SCHOOL DISTRICT

SKSD school board candidates address district needs

LWV forum gives community a chance to hear varied voices

By Bob Smith

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PORT ORCHARD — In something of a primary free-for-all, three candidates hoping to become the District 2 representative of the South Kitsap School District board of directors faced off in a forum July 15 sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Kitsap County.

Candidates Robert Lamb, Glenn

Compton and John Berg held down the left end of the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners panel at the County Administration Building as they shared opening and closing statements with the audience and answered written questions posed by the onlookers. The current director for District 2 is Keith Garton, who chose not to run for re-election.

On the opposite end of the panel were candidates running for the District 5 seat, now held by incumbent Greg Wall. Challenging Wall are candidates Jill Boltz and Jeff Daily.

District 2

Lamb, who is a retired personnel director for defense installations in Alaska and Virginia, touted his experience and responsibilities in overseeing schools in remote Alaskan locations, including Kodiak. He also was involved with school boards and advisory committees in Virginia.

The plain-spoken Lamb said one of his main goals as a school board member would be to restore honesty with the South Kitsap community.

“I think one of the problems we face is that our taxpayers do not believe us,” Lamb said. “If we put out a request for funding, [a funding statement would include] a second page showing what we asked for last time and what we spent it on.”

Glenn Compton, a medical-assistant program instructor with Olympic College and a parent of seven children, said she’s running for the school board seat as a way to pay back the community for what the school system has given to her family.

“I will provide a fresh perspective to the school district [particularly] in career readiness,” she said.

When asked about South Kitsap’s infrastructure needs, Compton said she

was unsure whether the district really needs more funding for that purpose.

“From what I’m hearing with McCleary and the levy cap, there should be money coming in,” Compton said. “The question is, where is the money going? I think we probably have to do some more research and ask more questions to see where the money is actually going.”

The third District 2 candidate is John Berg, a retired real estate appraiser and professional parliamentarian who is an expert in the Robert’s Rules of Order procedural lexicon used to run and facilitate meetings. Berg said he has been attending board of directors meetings as an observer for the past two years.

“I believe I have a unique set of skills that can make our schools more responsive to the needs and values of the community,” he said. “The purpose of the school board is to represent parents, the taxpayers and the community in meeting the educational needs of the students.”

Berg said educational decisions for the school district should be made locally “and not dictated from Olympia or Washington, D.C., or from any other organization.”

One initiative the school board needs to take on, Berg said, is to do a better job of educating the public about the school system and its needs, particularly how voting outcomes for capital levies and bonds differ.

In the District 5 directorship race, the incumbent Wall, who has been an attorney for 42 years, has been a board member for eight years. A South Kitsap resident since 1978, he said many changes have occurred in the district during his time on the board of directors.

“Things have changed considerably: academically, programs, rigor and we have increased the number of programs in our schools,” he said.

“We’ve improved technologically in the schools, introduced International Baccalaureate, AVID and ‘Project Lead the Way’ [STEM education] at the elementary level. These programs are important because they attract people to the schools. The idea that you can cut programs and still have people that want to be part of the district is incorrect.

“No one wants to join a sinking ship.”

The incumbent added that it is important for the district to continue to improve the quality and variety of programs and services in the high school, including addressing its capital needs.

Boltz, a 30-year South Kitsap resident and South Kitsap High grad, said she’s simply a citizen who wants to serve the community. Currently the clerk of the Kitsap Transit board of directors, Boltz also spent 20 years in the city clerk’s office in Port Orchard and Poulsbo.

“I pride myself in providing the public with information in plain talk and

in the most transparent manner,” she said. “I would provide a strong voice on a decision-making board who is not afraid of asking tough questions.”

Boltz pointed to her experience in providing staff support for elected officials and in ensuring government agencies stay compliant with the Open Meetings Act and public disclosure statutes.

While she believes the new funding levy cap change by the state Legislature addresses some funding inequities around the state, Boltz said there remain pockets of disparate funding among school districts.

Daily, who is a retired military officer and a former school teacher, taught special education at South Kitsap High for 12 years. He highlighted his financial education background as a critical skill set badly needed by the school board.

“My focus is academic excellence. That’s the job of the district employees,” he said at the forum. “There’s nothing more important to our community than what our community can do for our children.”

Like Boltz, Daily said he would push the board for more transparency. He said one of the jobs of each board member is to inform the community what the board is doing and “how it’s spending your hard-earned tax dollars.”

He also advocated for a fresh look at how the school district is spending its money.

“There are different accounts for different things,” Daily said. “However, the question remains, why year after year have we not been able to improve our buildings? The answer is that we need to find out where the money is going. But academic excellence remains the number-one focus of the district.”



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