

Hillsborough Education Association BOE Election Newsletter

October 14, 2019

The Hillsborough Education Association proudly represents over 1,000 dedicated professionals employed in the Hillsborough Township Public Schools.

The information in this newsletter has been collected directly from each candidate's questionnaire. All candidates were given the opportunity to participate. This information can be shared with members of the New Jersey Education Association, as well as the public. **Candidates are listed in random order. This newsletter by no means serves as an endorsement of any candidate and should be used solely to educate voters on the positions of all candidates.**

Candidates Seeking a 3 Year Term*

- John Oliver
- Greg Gillette
- Paul Marini
- Joyce Eldridge-Howard
- Jean Trujillo

(*Three Seats Open)



**General Candidate
Information**

John Oliver

How long have you been a resident of Hillsborough?

35+ years

Do you have children/grandchildren who attend Hillsborough Township Public Schools? If so, which schools?

Two daughters, 15 and 16

Gregory Gillette

How long have you been a resident of Hillsborough?

26 years

Do you have children/grandchildren who attend Hillsborough Township Public Schools? If so, which schools?

One child currently at Hillsborough High School

Paul Marini

How long have you been a resident of Hillsborough?

9+ years

Do you have children/grandchildren who attend Hillsborough Township Public Schools? If so, which schools?

Two daughters, 10 (ARIS) and 8 (HES)

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

How long have you been a resident of Hillsborough?

12 years

Do you have children/grandchildren who attend Hillsborough Township Public Schools? If so, which schools?

No, I don't have children attending the Hillsborough Township Public Schools; however I have one son. Michael is now an adult who attended

the Glen Ridge Public Schools. He's a college graduate and he continues to do well in his career, due to the foundation received through a public school education.

Jean Trujillo

How long have you been a resident of Hillsborough?

I am a 17-year Hillsborough resident.

Do you have children/grandchildren who attend Hillsborough Township Public Schools? If so, which schools?

I have 3 children and they attend HHS (11th grade), HMS (8th grade) and ARIS (5th grade).

Why are you seeking a position on the Board?

John Oliver

Why are you seeking a position on the board?

I have sat by watching this current Board make irrational and uneducated decisions that have impacted the wellbeing of our students. Unfortunately the current Board does not seem to care about public perception and the simple focus is to raise taxes. When the referendum to do so was defeated they appeared to have thrown up their hands slashing front line jobs and cutting programs impacting the education of our students. They need to work the problem and become fiscally responsible.

Gregory Gillette

Why are you seeking a position on the board?

I am very honored and humbled to have been elected to serve the residents of Hillsborough and Millstone as a school board member. As I look to the challenges that face this school district in the near future, I feel that there is no other person running more qualified and prepared to meet these challenges with leadership, insight, and most importantly integrity. My long experience on the school board makes me uniquely qualified to serve the people of Hillsborough and Millstone. In 2010, after a multi-million dollar reduction in state aid led to dozens of teachers and other employees being laid off, I helped bring the district back to prior staffing levels through diligent financial oversight and cost-saving strategies. As we face

what could be an even greater financial crisis, I am again prepared to not only "lend" my knowledge to the board, but to "lead" the way back.

Paul Marini

Why are you seeking a position on the board?

To ensure the focus of the board is that which is in the best interest of the students and teachers of Hillsborough without the burden of political alliances. In addition to address the irresponsible financial practices which have led us to the recent events regarding massive cuts to teachers, classrooms, and other student impacting functions.

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

Why are you seeking a position on the board?

I was elected to the HBOE last year to fulfill an unexpired one year term from January through December 2019. Although this has been a difficult year, there have been many recognitions and achievements. As a sitting and prospective Board member with the goal of serving a three year term, it is my intent to continue to problem solve on committees, maintain open communication with my fellow Board members, and provide knowledgeable input as a seasoned educator.

Throughout my life, it has been my belief that giving back to the community is of utmost importance. My successful years as a public school educator have provided me with a solid knowledge base and meaningful experiences that I can bring to the Board. My career path as a teacher, guidance counselor, vice principal, principal and Director of Elementary Education demonstrates my commitment to education. I was awarded the Governor's Teacher Recognition Award and I was also recognized by Who's Who In America and Who's Who of American Women. Under my leadership as a principal, my school was designated as a national visitation site for the school's overall achievement with the Whole School Reform Model, Success for All. I then went on to become the Director of Elementary Education. After retirement, I developed an educational consulting service. The business focused on professional development for teachers and school librarians K-12. My community involvement includes being a *former* member of the Hillsborough Library Board, the Vice President of the Hearthstone at Hillsborough Community Board, member of the Education Committee for the HBOE, alternate member of the Somerset County Educational Services Committee, and the Board Liaison.

I've always enjoyed educational challenges. I'm an independent thinker and I thoroughly question all matters. I'm knowledgeable, caring, and most dedicated to completing tasks, providing ideas, and/or problem solving. During my many years as an educator, I have been recognized as

effective, genuine, and hardworking. The importance of student achievement and teacher effectiveness are the core tenets of every school district. It is because of my achievements and educational understanding, I believe that I would continue to be a positive asset on the Hillsborough Board of Education, especially during these times of changes “on the table” that will affect all stakeholders.

Jean Trujillo

Why are you seeking a position on the board?

In 2016, in response to this question on the HEA questionnaire, I wrote: “I’m running for the school board because I want to improve communications, have more transparency in decision-making and engage the public in the conversation of its priorities.”

I am running for re-election because these reasons still stand. I am fully invested in Hillsborough as a parent, homeowner and fellow resident. I care about kids and I want to do something good for the school district. I believe I can do this most effectively as a member of the school board.

What do you see as the top three education issues our Board must address?

John Oliver

What do you see as the top three education issues that our board must address?

- Fiscal Responsibility
- Hiring and retaining good Teachers
- Bringing back programs that we have lost because of cuts

Gregory Gillette

What do you see as the top three education issues that our board must address?

The number one educational issue is the class size increases due to the financial state of the district. The second issue is the condition of the school buildings which can make for a challenging learning environment. The third is better addressing the needs of our special education students.

Paul Marini

What do you see as the top three education issues that our board must address?

- The restoration of responsible budgeting
- The restoration of responsible student to teacher ratios
- A renewed focus on student safety

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

What do you see as the top three education issues that our board must address?

1. Settling the teachers' contract.
2. Infrastructure and safety which includes addressing the overcrowding of classes throughout the District, especially at the high school level.
3. District funding/ Budget

Jean Trujillo

What do you see as the top three education issues that our board must address?

Academically, we are a highly ranked district. Three areas that could use additional focus are (1) finances, (2) student & staff mental wellness and (3) communication.

The board must reconcile its educational philosophy with fiscal reality. Blaming Trenton won't balance the 2020-2021 budget and not settling the contract with the district's largest bargaining unit is counterproductive. The board can accomplish a lot with its \$130M budget but it can't do everything and will need to prioritize programs.

Mental wellness is important for both students and staff. Without it, anything else the board does is less effective. In 2016, I proposed two ideas – delayed school start times and a balanced school year schedule. In 2019, I am happy to share that Somerset County school districts are beginning the conversation about teenage sleep cycles and seriously considering how later high school start times might work.

The board must be a communications leader and meet the community where they are. The school district does great work, but without effective communication, how can the community know and support the district? Is the community A.W.A.R.E.* of the partnerships between the school

district and township to support students? You can learn more at www.boroaware.org and find out more at our monthly meetings. The next meetings are Friday, November 1, 2019, and December 13, 2019 at 9am in the Hillsborough Municipal Building conference room.

* Advocating Wellness through Addiction Resources and Education

**What do you see as
the greatest
strength/weakness
of the school
district?**

John Oliver

What do you see as the greatest strength of the district?

Our Parents, Students & Teachers

What do you see as the greatest weakness of the district?

Financial planning and facilities.

What would you do as a school board member to sustain the strength and address the weakness?

Working with the HEA to create a fair contract to ensure we are hiring & RETAINING the best teachers.

Review contracts to ensure we are getting the best quotes and services.

Review spending to ensure we are not overstaffed or overpaying for administration at the expense of our teachers...

Gregory Gillette

What do you see as the greatest strength of the district?

The greatest strength of the school district is its strong educational program which is due wholly to the district's greatest asset - our dedicated teachers and educational support professionals.

What do you see as the greatest weakness of the district?

The district's greatest weakness is its near-term and long-term financial stability. To a great extent the financial problems the district is facing are not of its own making. State aid continues to decrease at the same time costs for special education, transportation, and health care continue to increase. Having said that, I have disagreed these past two years with some of the district's spending decisions, and will continue to call out

irresponsible financial planning when I see it. In 2018 I warned the board that financial decisions we were making – including changing the way salary increases were budgeted, and proceeding with an expensive Chromebook lease on the same day we had to accept a mid-year state aid reduction – would wind up being disastrous for the district. We all saw what happened next. I will also continue to suggest ways to fix the unfair state aid funding formula (as I have done in the past) and am prepared to lobby Trenton on behalf of Hillsborough's taxpayers.

What would you do as a school board member to sustain the strength and address the weakness?

I was the only board member to specifically ask the board for something – anything – for teachers to be included in the strategic plan. I was met with silence. This is a disgrace. The strategic plan needs to be redone. As for the fiscal issue – since the defeat of the referendum I have advocated for another referendum to increase the tax levy by \$3.5 million – less than half of what was proposed in the failed referendum – to reestablish positions that were eliminated and offset continuing reductions in state aid.

Paul Marini

What do you see as the greatest strength of the district?

The teachers (and students) of Hillsborough

What do you see as the greatest weakness of the district?

Financial planning and facilities. (Discussed throughout this questionnaire.)

What would you do as a school board member to sustain the strength and address the weakness?

Negotiating a fair contract with the HEA and performing a forensic audit of the previous years' spending.

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

What do you see as the greatest strength of the district?

It is difficult to identify one strength of the school district; however, **teaching** (teachers)/**learning** (students) is the first attribute that comes to mind. Additionally, we have great teachers and high achieving students, but the following underlying contributors that also support the schools include effective leadership and a strong curriculum.

What do you see as the greatest weakness of the district?

The lack of a reliable funding source.

What would you do as a school board member to sustain the strength and address the weakness?

Participate in the hiring and/or maintaining a highly qualified superintendent of schools that would respond to the needs of the district with an insightful ability to reach all levels of the district to help ensure that the mission and philosophy are attained. “Any and all weaknesses can be turned into positives”. As a board member, I would work with my fellow board members to help ensure that the superintendent’s expected indicators are met and challenged if necessary, reviewing the district’s strategic plan to ensure that the district is on course, planning and setting policies that affect the students in all areas, especially student achievement. I would want to maintain my participation on the Education Committee since curriculum and student achievement are of great importance to me. My future plan is to enhance my involvement with the schools and future activities at each school principal’s invitation, to see and hear firsthand the positives and concerns that we, as a board should address.

Jean Trujillo

What do you see as the greatest strength of the district?

The greatest strength of the school district is its people.

What do you see as the greatest weakness of the district?

The greatest weakness of the school district is poor communication.

What would you do as a school board member to sustain the strength and address the weakness?

If re-elected, I will work to build trust and nurture positive relationships with all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, staff and the community, so that it is clear the school board truly values its people.

The school board should engage the community by acknowledging and responding to their concerns, and by sharing as much of the “behind the scenes” (i.e. transparency) as is legally possible to build understanding in and trust of the school board.

The community has a lot of good ideas, but it's not easy to share those ideas unless you 1) know one of us personally, 2) feel comfortable speaking at a public meeting or 3) feel comfortable emailing us at boe@htps.us with your name. My idea is to have an anonymous, online feedback form (similar to the budget feedback form) that is always available where anyone can share their ideas, and that goes directly to the school board without any filter. I know the staff have great ideas that could improve the district if they felt someone was listening. I want to listen and then I want to act on those ideas.

Budgeting

John Oliver

What is your philosophy about developing a school district budget?

Long term budgeting. When the referendum failed the BOE had no alternative plan which resulted in elimination of courtesy bussing, activity fees and Chromebook fees, along with the elimination of a great number of positions, and embarrassingly low communication.

Considering the age of several of our schools, how would you prioritize the budget to address infrastructure concerns?

First and foremost, there should be an increased appropriation of federal funds to support these efforts. That aside, this unfortunately becomes an increased burden to the taxpayer.

Do you believe that our school district should budget to cap?

I believe that our school district should budget to cap where appropriate. This should not be done as a matter or standard practice but there are exceptions where this is needed.

What should the board do to gain community support for our schools, and for the school budget?

Communication is the only way. Let the public speak at meetings, go out and meet with groups, go to back to school nights. The answer is not cutting individuals off at the 3 minute mark because you don't like what they are saying.

How accountable do you feel to taxpayers when it comes to budget issues?

As a taxpayer and parent of students, and as a family who moved to Hillsborough solely for the school district reputation, I believe it is the charged duty of the board to ensure our reputation not only is maintained, but improves. That being said the answer is not increasing taxes. The answer is to ensure we receive our fair share of state funding and we spend responsibly

Would you ever consider subcontracting services? If so, what areas?

All services should be based on cost to the Board. All services should be judged independently on their own merit.

What is your position on the failed 2019 referendum? What is your position on the proposed future one(s)?

Unless absolutely necessary, all referendums should be conducted during general elections and not special elections.

Gregory Gillette

What is your philosophy about developing a school district budget?

The school budget should begin with the elected board members who presumably know what their constituents would like to see in the budget. Advice should then be solicited from the school principals, central office administrators, and others as to how we can accomplish the budget goals. And finally, input should be received directly from stakeholders before the budget is finalized. It has always been my opinion that the annual budget should be a product of the elected board members with advice from the superintendent and all of the people and groups named above. Instead, in the last few years, the budget has become a product of the superintendent with advice from the board. I would like to rebalance this in my next term on the board.

Considering the age of several of our schools, how would you prioritize the budget to address infrastructure concerns?

Age alone is not the prime factor in assessing the condition of the school buildings. It is important to look at each building individually, and this is what I have done. We commissioned two reports – one from Aramark and a second from our architect. The reports identified the areas of greatest concern – roofs and other aspects of the building envelope, parking lots and sidewalks, HVAC repairs, and building security - and those will be remedied in the near future.

Do you believe that our school district should budget to cap?

Regarding the 2% tax levy increase cap, when expenses are consistently increasing at greater than 2%, while state aid allocations are decreasing there is no other option but to increase the tax levy by 2%. Since 2013 the full amount of tax levy increase has been levied. In this past year, the tax levy was increased by 2% plus, but because of new ratables in the township, the tax rate actually decreased.

What should the board do to gain community support for our schools, and for the school budget?

The number one thing the school board can do to maintain community support for our schools is to continue to work on school issues – not be paralyzed by petty politics and vanity issues. A close second would be to tone down the angry rhetoric, foster more open communication between stakeholders and the board, and reestablish a good working relationship with the township committee.

How accountable do you feel to taxpayers when it comes to budget issues?

The local property taxpayers contribute an ever-increasing share of our tax levy, and the other part – state aid – is made up of their income taxes. The public schools are a gift that the taxpayers give to our students. Having said that, it is important for us to understand that the average taxpayer is a busy person who cannot possibly know every budget issue. The taxpayer relies on their elected board member to use good judgement to achieve the overall purpose which is to make the schools what the taxpayers want them to be.- outstanding institutions of learning.

Would you ever consider subcontracting services? If so, what areas?

I do not see any areas that are candidates for future subcontracting. In fact, I was very pleased this year, after years of advocating for this, that our maintenance supervision was brought back in-house.

What is your position on the failed 2019 referendum? What is your position on the proposed future one(s)?

My position on the failed March 2019 tax levy increase referendum is that after we learned the full extent of the state aid reductions the referendum should have been two questions, or one question but excluding full-day kindergarten. This was not a possibility as the board members who were most vocal about including full-day kindergarten also insisted on having just one question. Immediately after the referendum failed I called for another referendum to increase the tax levy by \$3.5 million, less than half of the failed referendum, to restore the positions that needed to be reduced

because of the budget shortfall. I will continue to advocate for that this year and next.

Paul Marini

What is your philosophy about developing a school district budget?

Long term budgeting, including as many Subject Matter Experts as possible. The worst possible scenario is what occurred this year with bussing, activity and Chromebook fees, elimination of a great number of positions, and embarrassingly low communication. As the saying goes “a failure to plan, is a plan to fail”. My goal is not to be a permanent board member for the rest of my days, but to instill practices and planning discipline that allow the board to thrive fiscally and reputationally for decades to come, regardless of the individuals.

Considering the age of several of our schools, how would you prioritize the budget to address infrastructure concerns?

First and foremost, there should be an increased appropriation of federal funds to support these efforts. That aside, this unfortunately becomes an increased burden to the taxpayer. This will need to be handled through a well-planned, well-communicated, and well-informed referendum during a general election. I look forward to working with state legislators to ensure our positions are heard by the School Development Authority to work to reduce the burden on our taxpayers.

Do you believe that our school district should budget to cap?

I believe that our school district should budget to cap where appropriate. This should not be done as a matter or standard practice but there are exceptions where this is needed.

What should the board do to gain community support for our schools, and for the school budget?

As mentioned above, this will need to be handled through well-planned, well-communicated, and well-informed marketing of our processes.

How accountable do you feel to taxpayers when it comes to budget issues?

As a taxpayer and parent of students, and as a family who moved to Hillsborough solely for the school district reputation, I believe it is the

charged duty of the board to ensure our reputation not only is maintained, but improves.

Would you ever consider subcontracting services? If so, what areas?

All services should be based on cost to the Board. All services should be judged independently on their own merit.

What is your position on the failed 2019 referendum? What is your position on the proposed future one(s)?

Unless absolutely necessary, all referendums should be conducted during general elections and not special elections. If necessary, greatly increased “marketing efforts” are required to ensure the public not only votes, but even greater care needs to be taken to ensure residents are aware that a vote is taking place. The previous referendum was unknown to the majority of Hillsborough residents.

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

What is your philosophy about developing a school district budget?

As a Board member, my philosophy about the development of a school district budget is to be cognizant of the schools’ and district’s budget priorities, funding sources, restrictions, policies, and finance operations. Additionally, I always maintain an awareness of the Hillsborough taxpayers’ investment in the community and its schools.

Considering the age of several of our schools, how would you prioritize the budget to address infrastructure concerns?

It is an expectation that all schools are safe, clean, and structurally sound for all students, teachers and support staff. Therefore, facilities should be a high priority. The District’s Building and Grounds Infrastructure report was prepared and reviewed at two Board meetings. It identified many necessary building improvements, safety concerns, and air quality issues which require additional funding outside of the budget. A facilities referendum is being planned in order to address these identified concerns and capture state funding for up to 40% of the projects’ costs.

Do you believe that our school district should budget to cap?

Yes. Our district not only budgeted to cap this year, but also qualified for a variety of waivers to stretch available funds.

I believe that the school board has been fiscally responsible in the development of the budget by setting priorities and analyzing the finances needed to achieve the district goals. Unfortunately, the Board faces many budgeting challenges such as increasing enrollment (especially in the area of special education and students who are at risk), decreasing state aid based on fluctuating calculations of fair share, and tax abated/exempted new development in our town.

What should the board do to gain community support for our schools, and for the school budget?

Communication is the Key. The Board should communicate its actions to the community through posted Board Updates distributed in the library, businesses, and other strategic locations as well as the website and social media; attend Back to School Nights and other special programs/events in the schools and provide information about the schools to members of the community. The public has spoken vehemently and the Board is listening.

How accountable do you feel to taxpayers when it comes to budget issues?

I believe that I am quite accountable to the taxpayers for the following reasons. Public trust should be of great importance to any candidate or Board member. As one of the newest board members and a taxpayer in Hillsborough, I strongly believe that transparency and accountability go hand in hand. All taxpayers deserve a clear, concise explanation of the annual budget and if emergencies should occur, then a see through accounting and its impact should be made public. Keep it simple, so that all can understand.

Would you ever consider subcontracting services? If so, what areas?

The cost of providing food service for the students and busing throughout the district, if not subcontracted, would require the need for greater staffing, equipment, and buses which could result in a tremendous spike in the budget. This would then impact the instructional program negatively. Outside food services are the norm in the majority of the NJ school districts due to the nutritional requirements, menu development and preparation, serving, equipment needs etc. In many districts, the food service employees are residents of the town with the exception of the administrative services, which have been outsourced for the above reasons. Busing in Hillsborough requires large resources due to the

number of students and the geographical size of our school district. Many private contractors are utilized in addition to a small amount of district-owned buses for backup.

On the other hand, as a parent and former educator, I would oppose any proposal to privatize custodial service positions or instructional aides. I strongly believe that hiring of any person interfacing with our students in classrooms should be reviewed and approved by our board. Instructional aides especially are in direct contact with our students, especially those students with special needs. These students need continuity in the classroom and by outsourcing, there could be frequent staff changes and quality issues which could interrupt a child's educational progress.

What is your position on the failed 2019 referendum? What is your position on the proposed future one(s)?

I am disappointed that the referendum failed for several reasons that are most evident to many members of the community. The failure of the recent referendum affected the entire district and community as it relates to the reduction of teaching staff, increase in class size, reduction in busing, and new fees. Sadly, state aid reductions in the amount \$5.3 million will continue for a period of approximately 6 yrs. This is a reduction of approximately 21%.

The last referendum, if passed, also would have included the implementation of full day kindergarten. Within 2 to 3 years state funding would have been an ongoing supplement to the budget. Presently the state allocation for one child attending half day kindergarten is half of the state monetary allocation for that one child. The same child attending a full day kindergarten would warrant, by the state, double the amount of funding. We remain among only 10% of school districts in our state that does not have full day kindergarten, despite the fact that state educational standards are geared to a full day program.

The next referendum that has been proposed would, if passed, address the infrastructure and safety/security needs in all schools within the district. Due to the times that we are living in, school safety and planning are key to every school district. Preventive security measures in all of the schools are a top priority along with the maintenance of the identified infrastructure problems and air quality issues throughout the District.

Jean Trujillo

What is your philosophy about developing a school district budget?

A budget reflects the district's priorities. Why does the school district exist? As a gedanken experiment, let's consider a district that educates only one child. What is needed? I posit, you'd need a teacher who teaches

math (to think logically), English (communication), Social Studies (civic engagement), science (life skill) and gym (physical activity is important to long term health), and a classroom. Then, as the number of students increases, teaching staff can specialize and you'd also need additional support services. My point is that the core of a budget should be the student and the teacher. This is what I meant when I talked about budgeting from zero. Start with the core subjects and then add what you can afford. I encouraged the board to have this discussion during the 2019-2020 budget cycle, but was rebuffed as being "too late."

Despite the job losses of the last budget cycle, what has changed? Costs are still rising faster than the board's ability to raise the tax levy. Therefore, the board needs to map out plans for the 2020-2021 budget or in April 2020, we will be in the same position of cutting more jobs.

And when making budget cut decisions, my idea is to cut the "stand-alones" that can be more easily re-instated when the money is available.

Considering the age of several of our schools, how would you prioritize the budget to address infrastructure concerns?

I acknowledge that going to referendum for infrastructure improvements gives the district the benefit of state debt service aid and allows the district to handle repairs at the same time.

However, I would have done it differently, similar to my personal finances, by saving money each year and paying for projects as we go, thereby saving interest payments. Previous boards made the decision to prioritize saving jobs over infrastructure investments, which I understand. However, growing the district's programs, such as adding Chinese and sign language and the one-to-one Chromebook initiative (vs. bring your own device), feel irresponsible given our aging infrastructure. I would have prioritized core subjects (jobs), then infrastructure (with a long-range plan), then extras if money were available. That's how I run my household. I think that's why the community gets so angry about the board asking for yet more money because they don't think we budgeted our finances appropriately.

Do you believe that our school district should budget to cap?

The law currently allows school boards to raise the local tax levy by 2% plus specific waivers. Given that costs which are out of the board's control, such as health insurance premium increases and special education costs, are rising faster than the 2% tax levy, the board really has no choice but to use all the available funds. So yes, I believe the district should budget to cap each year. If the 2% number changed, then I would need to

re-consider. Please note, the board can only increase by 2% the portion raised by local property tax and not on the entire budget, which includes state aid.

What should the board do to gain community support for our schools, and for the school budget?

Communication. Communication. Communication. We don't do enough communication and residents' not knowing what is happening in the town and the school district is difficult to combat. An idea is the board could design a six degrees of separation kind of phone chain as a matter of course. The school district is the town's largest employer and the school board should be a community leader. If this kind of information sharing system were implemented before it were needed, it could really improve the way residents view its school district.

Another idea is to improve communication is invite a member of the Association and a member from the community to participate in committee meetings. This would add another level of transparency in the decision-making process. Other school districts have included the community in their committee meetings, so I would look to them for best practices.

How accountable do you feel to taxpayers when it comes to budget issues?

I do feel accountable to taxpayers. The district cannot spend money it doesn't have. But I balance the taxpayer with what the students need. Given the projected loss in state aid, I have advocated on Hillsborough's behalf that we be allowed to take a waiver to go above the tax levy cap in order to meet the state's definition of local fair share. Depending on ratables, etc, if granted, that likely means a tax increase.

Would you ever consider subcontracting services? If so, what areas?

In 2016, in response to this question, I wrote: "One of the district's core competencies is to educate students, so I am not against the idea of subcontracting services that are not in the district's core competency. However, without analyzing the budget, I'm not convinced the district would achieve long-term benefits from subcontracting services."

My points still stand. Here are some additional thoughts: I did a line-by-line review of the proposed 2019-2020 budget and I'm not convinced the district would save money by additional subcontracting. There's benefit to the district in hiring its own employees. Also, it's important to me that our employees have health insurance and can support their families because that is concrete evidence that we believe our people are our greatest asset.

What is your position on the failed 2019 referendum? What is your position on the proposed future one(s)?

I acknowledge that some feel I hurt the district with my opposition to the March 2019 referendum. Please allow me to defend my position. The referendum ask sounded great in theory, but it was not well designed because there were too many assumptions of things that had to occur perfectly for the solution to be successful. It was risky to assume full increased state aid for changing the weighting of half day kindergarten students, counted as $\frac{1}{2}$ a student, to full day kindergarten students, counted as a full student. The problem is the state does not fully fund the state aid formula and underfunds the state's portion by approximately \$1B. Once the state calculates a district's fair share, to apportion state aid across the 581 school districts, it uses a multiplier to assign each district its lesser state aid. Which means that Hillsborough wasn't guaranteed to get the full benefit of its new full day kindergarten students because there is only so much money to be distributed.

Secondly, this referendum was only part one of the roll-out. Permanent space for FDK required additional space. What if the community did not approve a second referendum? Would the district continue FDK or would future boards decide to scrap the plan and allocate the money elsewhere? That is why I said the referendum was not well engineered.

Months later, I stand by my original comments. I am very sorry real people lost their jobs, but if the referendum had passed, the district would have simply postponed the pain for approximately three years and the layoffs would be even worse in three years. The district definitely needs more money. I had an alternative proposal to temporarily eliminate programs that could more easily be re-instated if the community agreed to fund them via a targeted tax levy referendum.

As I respond to these questions, the board has already decided to reserve the December 10, 2019 date for an infrastructure referendum. I voted no on the December date because I wanted to have this referendum at the November 5th, 2019 General Election because of greater voter participation. I do support the infrastructure referendum in theory but I disagree on the timing and I have not decided yet how I will vote on the referendum wording.

Negotiations

John Oliver

What is your perception of the negotiations process that presently exists? Is there anything you would change?

The number one issue at hand is the public posturing of the current board in what appears to be a public shaming of the HEA for wanting something “well beyond fair and equitable”, but leveraging questionable “facts” in public forums.

What are your views on completing contract negotiations before the contract expires?

While these scenarios are sometimes unavoidable, best efforts should be made to avoid working on expired contracts. Currently, there is little motivation for the BOE to negotiate beyond public pressure.

Gregory Gillette

What is your perception of the negotiations process that presently exists? Is there anything you would change?

Each side has to be very tough, but advocate their positions with honor and integrity. Were negotiations ever to be wrapped up too quickly, Hillsborough residents would despise one side and resent the other in equal measure.

What are your views on completing contract negotiations before the contract expires?

While completing contract negotiations in a timely manner is a goal I would always hope to achieve, it is more important to sign a contract that is fair to the bargaining units than it is to adhere to a timetable. I would also like to add that there is great value to the community in having a new three-year contract in place, and although I am not currently on the Negotiations Committee, I will take my re-election as a mandate to assert myself to the greatest degree possible in order to settle the contract.

Paul Marini

What is your perception of the negotiations process that presently exists? Is there anything you would change?

The number one issue at hand is the public posturing of the current board in what appears to be a public shaming of the HEA for wanting something “well beyond fair and equitable”, but leveraging questionable “facts” in public forums.

What are your views on completing contract negotiations before the contract expires?

While these scenarios are sometimes unavoidable, best efforts should be made to avoid working on expired contracts. Currently, there is little motivation for the BOE to negotiate beyond public pressure.

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

What is your perception of the negotiations process that presently exists? Is there anything you would change?

The Hillsborough Board of Education and the Hillsborough Education Association are presently engaged in negotiations while I'm serving on the Board. I believe it would not be appropriate for me to comment on this matter at this time; however, here are some general comments from my experience as a former teacher, principal, and someone who was on a negotiations team. Collective bargaining is/can be challenging. The education of the "whole child" is of great importance during this process and the teacher is important to the children. It is my hope that both sides will come back to the bargaining table and not leave until there is an agreement. Bargaining is a give and take. Everyone loses when negotiations linger.

What are your views on completing contract negotiations before the contract expires?

It is my belief that contract negotiations should be completed before a contract expires. Completed contract negotiations help to ensure that all schools function at the expected high quality of teaching/learning and morale is maintained at its utmost level throughout the district.

Jean Trujillo

What is your perception of the negotiations process that presently exists? Is there anything you would change?

I'm a member of the negotiations committee. In 2016, in response to this question, I wrote: "I don't understand why contract negotiations take so long. Prior to starting negotiations, it would be helpful for the BOE and HEA to communicate with the public the top issues and their budget impact.

I understand the BOE's position that it represents the community and therefore must vigorously negotiate the contract. However, I disagree that

the BOE must achieve the lowest possible tax increase. As a community, we should remember that this is a contract with people who spend most of the waking day with our children. Teachers and staff do an amazing job and they deserve a fair contract.

Not being on the negotiations committee, I may be way off target in my criticism. But that circles back to my point about increased communication so that the general public understands the issues.”

My points still stand. Here are some additional thoughts: The board needs to repair its relationship with the staff and community. One way to do this is to approach the % salary increase as a way of signaling the board’s positive intentions, rather than as a philosophical “line in the sand” that cannot be crossed. Regardless of where the contract settles, I predict there will be additional layoffs for the 2020-2021 school year, for reasons unrelated to the contract. Specifically, costs, such as health insurance and special education, are rising faster than the board’s ability to raise the tax levy.

Realistically, there are very few “knobs” left to address the budget shortfalls. The board has already implemented fees, increased class sizes, reduced staff and eliminated programs. The last “knob” that hasn’t been considered is self-insurance of health insurance and is a radical idea that could be a win-win for both board and staff. Other school districts have done this and I would look to them for best practices. Specifically, my idea is there would be no change in level of care, and reductions in health care use that result in savings to the district would be shared with staff. Extremes in health care needs would be covered by stop loss insurance. From personal experience, I know the stress and the importance of health insurance. For this idea to have a chance of success requires a working foundation of trust.

Here’s another radical idea. Take one person to represent the board and one person to represent the Association, stick them in a room and don’t let them out until they hash out a new contract. I think there’s compromise to be had outside of negotiation by committee.

What are your views on completing contract negotiations before the contract expires?

This is the goal. However, the BOE and HEA started meeting approximately 7 months before the contract expired and could not reach agreement.

**Educational
Quality**

John Oliver

With an eye to maintaining top-quality education and innovative programs, what do you think is a reasonable class size?

<25

What is your position on the fees that have been implemented for student activities, sports, etc?

So long as fees go to the club and not the general fund.

What is your position on using fees, Chromebook protection policies, etc as a source of revenue for the district?

Using these fees as a revenue source is not acceptable in my mind and should be pass through only.

How important are athletic and fine art programs to the overall success of the educational process and why?

Extremely important as this lends to a sense of belonging, school spirit, and team work.

What is your position on charter schools? What experience, if any, have you had with them?

Charter Schools can be effective, however I have not had a tremendous amount of experience with them.

What is your position on full day kindergarten?

I support full day Kindergarten

What steps do you think should be taken to maintain a reasonable class size?

Staffing

What is your position on courtesy bussing and how it was implemented?

The elimination and the timing of this was a travesty. It was a knee jerk reaction the BOE made because of the failed referendum. Parents were not given sufficient time for alternative measures and in cases where children walking was unsafe due to no sidewalks or crossing busy intersections they were not given a reasonable time to request a waiver.

Gregory Gillette

With an eye to maintaining top-quality education and innovative programs, what do you think is a reasonable class size?

This is an interesting question because it actually contains another question – how can the district maintain top-quality education and innovative programs without any money? As budgets permit, I always advocate for smaller class sizes at the K-6 level where studies show a smaller class will have the greatest impact on student achievement.

What is your position on the fees that have been implemented for student activities, sports, etc?

I am absolutely not in favor of any fees being charged for clubs or athletics at the high school. This has been my consistent position for more than 12 years and I was very disheartened that those fees were implemented this year. Our community will absolutely support high school students participating in the full high school experience without a burden of additional fees.

What is your position on using fees, Chromebook protection policies, etc as a source of revenue for the district?

This is a difficult question. I am not sure that the whole community of taxpayers would be happy about paying for lost textbooks, and, consequently, those costs are placed directly on the student. Likewise, should the community pay for replacing Chromebooks that haven't been properly cared for? And understanding that a Chromebook is expensive for an individual student to replace, insurance is offered.

How important are athletic and fine art programs to the overall success of the educational process and why?

I have stated many times that athletics are an integral part of the school experience. Sometimes when board members speak of “other options” for closing budget gaps, or “eliminating non-mandated programs” they are actually speaking about eliminating high school and middle school athletics. I have consistently opposed this. Likewise, as the only school board member with a background in the fine and performing arts I can assure you that I know firsthand the value of these programs.

What is your position on charter schools? What experience, if any, have you had with them?

I have had no personal experience with charter schools. General interest charter schools do not serve any purpose in a well-performing school

district – and special interest charter schools are, in my opinion, merely private schools in disguise.

What is your position on full day kindergarten?

It is my principled position that we should not be adding students – in this case ½ students - to our schools until we have done all we can and provided all the resources necessary for the students we currently have. And here I am primarily thinking of our special needs students who we send out of district by the dozens because we do not have the programs available in district. Having said that, I am more than willing to let the public decide if they want full day kindergarten and will work to efficiently implement any decision on that matter.

What steps do you think should be taken to maintain a reasonable class size?

There are additional steps that can be taken to help control and even reduce class sizes at the elementary level. Most of these involve redistricting and limited grade-level schools. Whether or not these steps should be taken is a question that will need to be addressed soon.

What is your position on courtesy bussing and how it was implemented?

Hillsborough began bussing students to school around 1929, and almost from the beginning there were issues with courtesy bussing – who would receive it and why. Courtesy bussing in its current form began at the time of the last major redistricting about 18 years ago. State law says that high school students living more than 2 ½ miles and students in lower grades living more than 2 miles from school must be provided transportation to and from school. Courtesy bussing is the name given to transportation which is provided to students who live closer than those distances. There have always been students in Hillsborough that have been provided courtesy bussing with the last major change in “walking” areas prior to this year coming around 2001. The recent changes to courtesy bussing still provide transportation to many students – including all students pre-k to 6 – that live within the state mandated distances.

Having said that, my position on courtesy bussing has been clear and consistent for over a decade. Bussing is the most efficient way to transport students to school. Period. Many board members and stakeholders over the past decade have advocated for reductions in courtesy bussing to help close budget gaps. I have always argued against it. This year, facing the loss of 70 staff unless cuts were made in other areas, I relented. I was pleased to be able to advocate for and defeat the proposal to eliminate some courtesy bussing at the elementary schools, and will look to redraw the lines on courtesy bussing as finances permit.

Paul Marini

With an eye to maintaining top-quality education and innovative programs, what do you think is a reasonable class size?

<20

What is your position on the fees that have been implemented for student activities, sports, etc?

So long as fees go to the club and not the general fund, and that family financial limitations are considered, reasonable fees are acceptable.

What is your position on using fees, Chromebook protection policies, etc as a source of revenue for the district?

Again, reasonable fees can be deemed appropriate. Current fees exceed what could be deemed reasonable.

How important are athletic and fine art programs to the overall success of the educational process and why?

A balanced student is a complete student, and these programs should be prioritized.

What is your position on charter schools? What experience, if any, have you had with them?

Like all other options, charter school can be effective if planned for appropriately.

What is your position on full day kindergarten?

Support FDK, voted YES on the previous referendum.

What steps do you think should be taken to maintain a reasonable class size?

Reasonable staffing.

What is your position on courtesy bussing and how it was implemented?

Like the majority of the decisions over the past year plus, the implementation was haphazard at best. This decision appears to have been made solely due to the poor financial planning of the previous boards, without enough focus on the safety of the Hillsborough students. Also, the cost seemed to be unreasonable with insufficient time to plan and decide for impacted families.

Joyce Eldridge-Howard**With an eye to maintaining top-quality education and innovative programs, what do you think is a reasonable class size?**

I am aware that criteria has been set in Hillsborough as it relates to class size. Research has shown that class size can have an impact on student achievement and programming. A reasonable class size for K-2 - 21-22 students; middle grades- 23-25 students; and high school 24-25. At the high school level, a lot depends on the subject. Class size could vary depending on the subject. At the middle/high school levels, I am also aware that there is overcrowding. It is believed that this overcrowding could be due in part to the new communities that have been built and the older generation selling their homes and younger families moving in with their children and also the failed referendum which has impacted class size in grades three and up.. There have been discussions and visual presentations during public Board meetings about the overcrowding, especially at the middle and high school levels. Unfortunately, due to the failure of the referendum this year, some class sizes are above the targeted class sizes outlined above.

What is your position on the fees that have been implemented for student activities, sports, etc?

The implementation of fees to pay for after school sports and student activities was never what I wanted to see happen in Hillsborough; however, after realizing the shortfall, after the referendum had failed and looking at the alternatives, it was the decision to implement these fees, instead of having to eliminate the much needed programs for the students. All possibilities were researched and it was found that a growing number of districts in NJ are affected by the reduction of state aid. Students on free and reduced lunch are exempt from these additional costs; however, I am aware that the additional charges can be a burden for those families caught in the middle.

What is your position on using fees, Chromebook protection policies, etc as a source of revenue for the district?

I've never been in favor of charging additional fees as a source of revenue for the district; however, the past two years have been extraordinary due to the budget shortfall by the state and unexpected infrastructure needs. I realize our state allocation will be cut by about one million dollars each of the next five years. These additional charges will go towards future teachers' salaries.

How important are athletic and fine art programs to the overall success of the educational process and why?

Very important for the following reasons. Athletic and fine art programs are absolutely important in the schools for many reasons. Let me first begin with the athletic program attributes: Research has found that offering athletic programs to the students teaches life lessons like discipline, responsibility, self-confidence, accountability, and teamwork while at the same time, it helps to improve overall healthier brain function.

I'm well aware that the arts in education is of tremendous importance as well. Some people might think that art in the schools may just focus on drawing painting and sculpture; however fine arts in education also includes music, theatre, and dance. The involvement of students who are engaged in art programming in the schools will develop and enhanced critical/higher level thinking, creativity, academic achievement, problem solving, motor and language skills, invention development etc. Statistics show that "students who participate in the arts in some way for three hours a day for three days are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, will participate in math and science fairs or will win an award for writing an essay or poem than children who do not participate".

What is your position on charter schools? What experience, if any, have you had with them?

I do not condone the support of charter schools in districts that are experiencing academic success and have a strong, progressive, and successful curriculum model. Charter schools in the suburbs are not needed. It has been noted that the vast majority of charter schools can be found in districts where public schools are not achieving academically at the state passing rate.

What is your position on full day kindergarten?

I am totally in favor of full day kindergarten in all districts. It should be a requirement. Keep in mind that the NJ State Standards are for full day kindergarten and not half day kindergarten. Not only was I a successful kindergarten teacher for 6 years, I was a principal of a school with full day kindergarten and I remember that those students truly thrived.

What steps do you think should be taken to maintain a reasonable class size?

It had been my experience that during the course of the school year, monthly schoolwide attendance reports by grade level and class are recorded and sent to the principal and central office representatives including the Superintendent. The Board of Education also receives these reports. The first two months of the school year are times when enrollment may spike due to new residents moving into Hillsborough, although new construction can bring an increase of new students at all times of the year.

The district standards by grade level should be compared to the identified class size. If it is found that classes exceed the standard, then a plan of action should be put in place to either reorganize if there is space, reassign available teaching staff, if it's budgeted during this emergency. If not, it is the responsibility of the Superintendent and the Business Dept. to reexamine our reserves or make transfers from one line item to another if feasible. Another resort would be to provide a teacher aide to support the classroom teacher and students which would have less of a burden on the teacher and would provide the students with the additional needed academic support.

What is your position on courtesy bussing and how it was implemented?

Although, it would be my preference to maintain the past practice of transporting students, the current school budget would not allow it. The change in bussing was due, as we all know, to the failure of the last referendum. Courtesy busing is necessary for the younger students enrolled in the K-4 elementary schools. The middle and high school students have been able to navigate in their identified walking areas. According to state law, middle school students who live 2.0 or less can walk to the Hillsborough Middle School and high school students who live 2.5 miles or less, can walk or drive to the Hillsborough High School. Of course those areas of town without sidewalks, which would cause students to walk on the narrow streets have been taken into consideration.

Jean Trujillo

With an eye to maintaining top-quality education and innovative programs, what do you think is a reasonable class size?

In 2016, in response to this question, I wrote: “Intuitively, small class size seems like a good idea. However, similar to full day kindergarten, my research shows mixed evidence and that the largest impact is for lower income families. Also, smaller class size seems to be more important in the lower grades (kindergarten through 3rd grade). The question is what’s the most effective use of our limited educational dollars? For example, does class-size reduction generate as much return as raising teacher salaries or offering additional teacher professional development opportunities?”

What is your position on the fees that have been implemented for student activities, sports, etc?

I am against “pay to play” and voted against the board majority to implement activity / sports fees. I think the reason these fees are so frustrating is that after academic subjects, clubs and sports are the most visible to parents and the community. That’s how the community knows and interacts with the school district – through football games and the marching band, to the drama productions and robotics team, to name just a few. It’s frustrating because as club parents know, there’s not equity in how clubs are funded vs. how sports are funded. To sports parents, it’s frustrating because they already support the school district through booster clubs.

On the topic of clubs, I would really like to find a way to fund more clubs at ARIS so that every student can participate in at least one club, if they want. Also, I would like to find a way for every club advisor to receive a nominal stipend vs. many that are supervised by volunteer advisors.

What is your position on using fees, Chromebook protection policies, etc as a source of revenue for the district?

I think it’s unfair. I understand the district needed to raise revenue in order to not let go as many staff. However, on principle, it’s unfair that the district gives every student a Chromebook to use for the year, but then tells families they could pay \$60 to insure against damage for this “privilege.”

I’d rather buy the Chromebook outright and pay SquareTrade \$75 for a four-year protection plan.

How important are athletic and fine art programs to the overall success of the educational process and why?

They are important, but secondary to the core subjects of math, English, Social Studies, science and gym.

What is your position on charter schools? What experience, if any, have you had with them?

I do not have personal experience with charter schools. Based on my research back in February 2017 when the Franklin school board asked for Hillsborough's assistance in passing a resolution for a moratorium on charter school expansion, I am against charter schools in a strong educational district like Hillsborough because it pulls money away from Hillsborough schools.

What is your position on full day kindergarten?

Let me share the reasons full day kindergarten (FDK) is not my highest priority. I have grappled with this issue as I have three children who have gone through half-day kindergarten. My analysis of FDK is the greatest benefits are to low-income students and that long-term academic benefit is unsupported by the research. There are reasons to invest in FDK, such as improving non-academic skills that may raise overall achievement. However, if this was a priority for previous boards, they could have re-allocated money from the general fund to implement.

What steps do you think should be taken to maintain a reasonable class size?

In 2016, in response to this question, I wrote: "I don't know. We've already separated our 5th and 6th grades into the intermediate school and our 7th and 8th grades into the middle school. This arrangement offers more flexibility in averaging out class sizes whereas the six neighborhood elementary schools have less flexibility. I like the K-4 set up and I am less interested in the idea of a K-2nd and 3rd and 4th grade specific school.

The research I looked at indicates that the largest benefit comes from reducing a class size of 22 to approximately 15 and it's not clear the community would support such a small class size. There is a much smaller benefit by reducing class size by only 1 or 2 students."

These points still stand. However, as the board discussed future plans for the district, we learned there is a significant cost savings in moving to schools with K-2 and 3rd-4th grade, which would allow averaging out class sizes.

What is your position on courtesy bussing and how it was implemented?

My understanding is that the communication to specific families who would no longer receive courtesy busing was rolled into the same email as subscription busing information. Although parents may have known there was the possibility of losing courtesy busing, combining the two related, but separate items, was confusing and poorly communicated.

Reducing courtesy busing does not mean students have to walk to and from school. What it means is that the responsibility of transporting some students to and from school shifts from the school district to the parents. The high school took the brunt of the budget cuts this go-around, from the majority of courtesy busing loss to new sports and activity fees. Though I am not opposed to the reduction of courtesy busing because it allows the board to keep teaching positions, I would have included a smaller radius around the high school and implemented a pilot program for the three elementary schools that are walkable, specifically the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to these schools.

**Staff Morale and
Development**

John Oliver

What ideas do you have for enhancing staff morale?

Communication and fair and competitive salary and incentives.

What is your understanding of the role of education support professionals in our school community?

I have found the Teachers of Hillsborough to be outstanding. They communicate with my wife and I when our child is struggling and offer up all the assistance.

Gregory Gillette

What ideas do you have for enhancing staff morale?

School district staff needs to feel that they are appreciated at all times. One great way to accomplish this is for administration to consult with employee leaders when changes to anything that might affect work conditions are being contemplated. Surprise is a trust killer. If we recognize that generally teachers are overworked and underpaid considering their awesome responsibility, and we also recognize that the financial situation is dire, then the only way to alleviate that is to seek

ways to unburden teachers from obligations that have nothing to do with teaching. I have advocated for years to reduce the paperwork and other obligations that teachers endure, but it seems like this is constantly going in the other direction. In consideration of the longer work day for our high school staff compared to the other schools, I have proposed shortening the high school day by 10 minutes and giving this time (30 hours per school year) back to our staff to be a volunteer advisor for a school club 45 minutes a week, offer extra help to students, catch up on other work, or do any of a number of things they are already doing!

What is your understanding of the role of education support professionals in our school community?

Education Support Professionals are essentially those staff members who are not certificated, essentially, non-teachers. But if you think ESPs don't play a significant role in the success of our district and in student achievement, and, indeed, "teach" you are dead wrong. When a former superintendent proposed balancing the budget in 2009 by immediately eliminating 30 classroom aides – in fact making that the first line in his presentation to the finance committee – I fought hard to turn that around, called him out on it in public, and won back those positions. I have profound respect for our aides, secretaries and clerks, custodial and maintenance staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and all who make Hillsborough Schools great.

Paul Marini

What ideas do you have for enhancing staff morale?

From my previous interactions with staff, I have seen very few morale issue beyond those related to receiving a fair compensation. Staff take-home pay increases, no matter the reason, should never result in a pay reduction.

What is your understanding of the role of education support professionals in our school community?

Teachers of Hillsborough provide value well beyond that given in a standard school day or that which is *required* of them. As a resident and parent of two children in the district, I could not be happier with the education my children receive, especially so given that class size has ballooned beyond what should be considered capacity.

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

What ideas do you have for enhancing staff morale?

A positive solution to promote staff morale would be to first identify the causes of staff morale issues throughout the district. This survey could be developed by the Board's Communications Committee, and reviewed, discussed and shared with the Board for additional input while in their respective committees. After further discussion, a survey will be developed and sent to the principals for distribution. A District Committee would be created to include: BOE members (3); central office (1); HEA members (3). There would be a kick-off where the group would participate in an initial morale training workshop with an outside expert. The committee would meet every other month to share and exchange ideas for the greater good of the district and come up with positive strategies for implementation to promote staff morale throughout the district. Additionally, as a Board member, I will make a point of visiting the district schools throughout the school year, as my schedule permits. I'm almost sure that my fellow Board members will also participate according to their schedules as well. Knowing that a Board member would take the time to visit during special programs throughout the school year will send a positive message that the work of the teachers, students, staff and principals makes a difference for our students and they matter.

What is your understanding of the role of education support professionals in our school community?

Education support staff members are assigned to support the teachers and children. They are the instructional aides, secretaries, librarians, child study teams, school psychologists, social workers, guidance counselors, nurses, etc. They provide critical services in our schools.

Jean Trujillo

What ideas do you have for enhancing staff morale?

I believe that feeling like you don't have a voice and you don't have control of your circumstances are big morale downers. HTPS staff have a wealth of ideas and suggestions that could improve the district, if anyone asked and listened. On my own behalf as a fellow resident, and not authorized by the school board, I'm asking, and I'm listening: <https://forms.gle/uvftri3kaDmJerTr8> Specifically, I would like to know: 1) What do you like most about the Hillsborough Township Public Schools? 2) What do you like least? 3) What would you change if you could?

I believe that happy teachers equal happy students. It's important for our staff to feel that the BOE is supportive through its actions.

What is your understanding of the role of education support professionals in our school community?

I think education support professionals refer to the school's support staff, such as guidance counselors, custodians, secretaries, nurses, instructional aides, etc. I know they are incredibly important in a well-run school and they are additional trusted adults that children can rely on.

**Responsibilities of
the Board**

John Oliver

When evaluating Superintendent performance, do you believe that areas such as facility deficiencies, safety issues and/or staff morale should be considered?

Yes. The superintendent makes the recommendations to the board for approval. The board should have asked harder questions and made more inquiries with regard to some of those recommendations all board motions are prefaced by the words: "On the recommendation of the superintendent," if elected, will you accept the recommendation of the superintendent without question? If not, what sources of information would you consider when making board decisions? While motions require the superintendent's approval, their recommendations are merely that, recommendations. The BOE is charged by the residents of Hillsborough to ensure those recommendations are in the best interests of said residents, inclusive of the students.

What is your understanding of the role of the Superintendent? How does this role relate to the board of education, the community, students and staff?

The Superintendent is basically the CEO of the Company, reporting to the Board of Directors. The teachers the staff of the company, and the students are their customers. While day to day operations are the Superintendent's responsibility, the Super is accountable to the Board and, indirectly, the residents of Hillsborough.

What qualities do you believe define an effective board of education member?

An understanding that you are first and foremost accountable to the Students of Hillsborough, the Parents and the Teachers.

What defines a successfully board of education meeting? How do you view your role in ensuring meetings are conducted as such?

FULLY understand the public concerns for all educational issues throughout the district. The current position of limiting public comments and proposals to further limit those shows the current boards' complete and utter lack of understanding in this area.

Gregory Gillette

When evaluating Superintendent performance, do you believe that areas such as facility deficiencies, safety issues and/or staff morale should be considered?

Absolutely YES to all of the above. During the superintendent evaluation process I have turned a critical eye to all of these factors and more. Particularly I have given superintendents low marks for finance and for employee retention – in my opinion a strong indicator of morale.

All board motions are prefaced by the words: “On the recommendation of the superintendent,” if elected, will you accept the recommendation of the superintendent without question? If not, what sources of information would you consider when making board decisions?

As an educational professional and leader of the district, the superintendent's recommendation is always valued. But I have NEVER accepted the recommendation of the superintendent without question. I educate myself on the issues, seek input directly from other school district administrators and other employees where appropriate and permitted, and always consider what the people I represent would want for their school district. And this doesn't only go for “board motions”, i.e. votes. I have questioned the superintendent on a number of issues both in private as well as in public. To cite one recent example, I strongly, publicly, opposed the superintendent's full-day kindergarten “talking points” which made no sense whatsoever. There is no reason to believe that I won't continue to be a thorn in the side of any future superintendent in this district.

What is your understanding of the role of the Superintendent? How does this role relate to the board of education, the community, students and staff?

The superintendent enacts the educational agenda set by the board. As state mandates have continually eaten away at what the board can propose for the education of our students, the superintendent's role becomes even more critical to student achievement.

The superintendent is not only the educational leader for the school district, but also the operational leader. By law, the superintendent has authority over many aspects of the district where the board has little or no

power. Chief among these is personnel decisions. The board can hire no one without the superintendent's recommendation, and cannot let anyone go without the superintendent's recommendation. Having said that, the superintendent can take a more dominant role by suggesting and having the board agree to give up its own responsibilities. This is done in such a mundane way as to almost go unnoticed. In the case of Hillsborough – board committees were reduced from eight to three, the superintendent insisted on attending every committee meeting, and board Work meetings were eliminated in favor of having every meeting be a Regular/Action meeting. All three of these changes gave more power to the superintendent, and I opposed all three privately and in public. I would work to reverse these changes and more over the next three years.

The superintendent is also the public face of the district and should at all times strive to maintain good relations with both the staff and the community as a whole. Open communication should be encouraged at all times, as well as participation in community events.

What qualities do you believe define an effective board of education member?

First of all a board member must make themselves knowledgeable on the issues. I personally spend many hours reading and learning about the issues that confront board members. Secondly, a board member must be able to have a good sense of what the people they represent want from their school district, while at the same time having the ability to lead constituents who are searching for answers. Thirdly, a board member needs to know how to work positively with other members of the board and with administration. I have served with many board members over the years who would have been more effective if they had given up some negativity and tried harder to work with others.

What defines a successfully board of education meeting? How do you view your role in ensuring meetings are conducted as such?

The board meeting is where the board performs its mandated functions – voting on personnel, curriculum, finances, etc. It is also where the board discusses public concerns and plans for the future of the district. Meetings are more successful when board members are prepared and ready to contribute. When undue time is spent educating board members on the issues, the meeting itself can deteriorate.

The meeting is also where the public has a chance to address the board directly, and where board members have the opportunity to address each other and their constituents. As Board President in 2017 I never lifted the gavel to shut down any member of the public from speaking and certainly

never prevented an elected board member from speaking. It would never even occur to me to do something like that.

Paul Marini

When evaluating Superintendent performance, do you believe that areas such as facility deficiencies, safety issues and/or staff morale should be considered?

As in any role, there should be basic criteria for job performance as well as “stretch goals” that go above and beyond your day to day job description. These basic criteria should not only be the “company values” or basic norms associated with such a role that a normal organization must employ, but those geared towards those of a best in class educational organization. Like all else, a failure of facilities would be a failure of BOTH the superintendent and the BOE.

All board motions are prefaced by the words: “On the recommendation of the superintendent,” if elected, will you accept the recommendation of the superintendent without question? If not, what sources of information would you consider when making board decisions?

While motions require the superintendent’s approval, their recommendations are merely that, recommendations. The BOE is charged by the residents of Hillsborough to ensure those recommendations are in the best interests of said residents, inclusive of the students.

What is your understanding of the role of the Superintendent? How does this role relate to the board of education, the community, students and staff?

The Superintendent is basically the CEO of the Company, reporting to the Board of Directors. The teachers the staff of the company, and the students are their customers. While day to day operations are the Superintendent’s responsibility, the Super is accountable to the Board and, indirectly, the residents of Hillsborough.

What qualities do you believe define an effective board of education member?

An understanding that you are first and foremost accountable to the Students of Hillsborough. When the students come first, it is hard to fail.

What defines a successfully board of education meeting? How do you view your role in ensuring meetings are conducted as such?

Besides the standards of completing all agenda items, the goal is to FULLY understand the public concerns for all educational issues throughout the district. The current position of limiting public comments and proposals to further limit those shows the current boards' complete and utter lack of understanding in this area.

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

When evaluating the Superintendent's performance, do you believe that areas such as facility deficiencies, safety issues and/or staff morale should be considered?

No, only in one area that I can see. Facility deficiencies are normally the responsibility of a school principal according to policy. Those areas of concern are normally identified at the school level and notification is then sent to the Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds. Typically, school safety issues and security is a shared responsibility between the Superintendent, the Principal and the Board of Education. Presently the referendum going before the public will address the safety and security for every school in the district. Last, but not least, the morale in a school is also the responsibility of the principal. The principal has always been responsible for the feeling tone and/or the morale of their schools. During my visits to six Back to School Nights, I noticed that 95-99% demonstrated a positive attitude while in their school environment. While visiting the libraries and classrooms of some of the schools, one could see positivity throughout the learning and school environments.

All board motions are prefaced by the words: "On the recommendation of the superintendent," if elected, will you accept the recommendation of the superintendent without question? If not, what sources of information would you consider when making board decisions?

It has always been my practice to do my own research and to ask questions. My successful experience as a teacher and district administrator helps me to realize the importance of always doing my due diligence which reinforced my knowledge and understanding before meetings, when engaging in decision making, and/or when called upon to comment on an issue.

What is your understanding of the role of the Superintendent? How does this role relate to the board of education, the community, students and staff?

The role of the Superintendent of Schools is multifaceted. A school superintendent is expected to oversee the daily operations and the long-range and short-range planning of their school district. They are expected to know all and see all that's occurring throughout their district through the competent support of their district administrative teams comprised of the assistant superintendents, directors, school/building supervisors, the business administrators, and principals. The superintendent is considered the person in charge for all district concerns. The superintendent's job description is to also supervise the principals and identified district staff, while also keeping the board members informed/involved through key committees which touch every facet of the district i.e. Education, Operations, Human Resources, Communication etc. The Superintendent also must be able to communicate effectively with the entire community of schools i.e. teachers, families, students, retirees, and those not engaged in the schools.

What qualities do you believe define an effective board of education member?

An effective board member should first ask, "What is best for ALL of the students?" This would include student achievement and the review and implementation of policies that would promote success and safety for all students enrolled in the district. An effective board member should also establish the district's goals and vision while measuring the success of the school district and the Superintendent against the established goals.

What defines a successful board of education meeting? How do you view your role in ensuring meetings are conducted as such?

A clear concise agenda; board engagement; an effective and knowledgeable chair; opportunities for audience participation; board attendance; emphasis on student and staff achievement; use of parent friendly power point presentations, as needed

Previous to every meeting, each board member receives a complete Board Agenda. I normally review all items and if I'm not sure about an agenda item, I will reach out to the superintendent, board president or a board colleague. Collaboration is of great importance. One board member cannot implement change alone. I've drawn on my experience and understanding of concepts while also questioning for clarification for the purpose of providing educated responses and votes while a sitting member on this Board.

Jean Trujillo

When evaluating Superintendent performance, do you believe that areas such as facility deficiencies, safety issues and/or staff morale should be considered?

Yes, these areas should be part of the Superintendent's evaluation. The board literally has four jobs: 1) set policy 2) adopt the budget 3) negotiate with its bargaining units and 4) hire and evaluate the Superintendent. That this board did not evaluate the Superintendent is mind-boggling.

All board motions are prefaced by the words: "On the recommendation of the superintendent," if elected, will you accept the recommendation of the superintendent without question? If not, what sources of information would you consider when making board decisions?

I think my voting record proves that I do not accept the recommendation of the superintendent without question. I am active on the state and county level with New Jersey School Boards Association, so I learn about best practices from districts around the state. I also rely on personal experience. One of the most effective tools for analyzing an issue is "thinking through the details, step-by-step," as in how would this proposal work from start to finish? Are some assumptions flawed? Can a catastrophic downside be insured against a predicted upside? This thought process partly explains why I was opposed to the March 2019 referendum.

What is your understanding of the role of the Superintendent? How does this role relate to the board of education, the community, students and staff?

The board sets policy and the Superintendent translates this policy into running the day-to-day business of the school district. The board and the Superintendent are also supposed to set yearly district goals so that there are guiding principles for the school year. Finally, the board is supposed to interpret the will of the community to the Superintendent. I strongly believe Hillsborough is a generous community that cares about its public schools but its residents also want to know their money is well spent.

What qualities do you believe define an effective board of education member?

The day after I was first elected to the school board in 2016, I was at the pediatrician's office. I shared that I had just been elected and the nurse told me she had previously served as a board member for over ten years. She told me when she first started, she was given this advice: the first, "does this benefit the kids?" and the second, "every kid has something they can do. It's our job to figure it out." I keep this advice in mind with every decision I make.

I keep trying to be an effective board member. I talk to board members in other districts to learn their best practices, I advocate for Hillsborough on the state level, I use NJSBA as a resource to keep learning and improving and I make myself accessible to the community as a resource for navigating the school district.

What defines a successful board of education meeting? How do you view your role in ensuring meetings are conducted as such?

Here's an interesting distinction: board of education meetings are meetings that are held in public, but they are not for the public. What does that mean? It means that because the board of education is a publicly elected body, they must conduct their action business in public per the NJ Open Public Meetings Act, aka the Sunshine Law, and set aside time for public comment. The meeting is a time for the public to observe their elected officials conducting the board's business but not comment, except during the specially designated public comment times. I recognize this can be an incredibly frustrating experience when it seems the board is "just voting."

As elected officials, I believe board members should behave respectfully to each other and especially to the public. We are community leaders. I am far from perfect, but I strive to behave where I would not be ashamed to have my actions reported on the front page of the newspaper. Finally, a successful board meeting is one where we did something good for the kids.

**Concluding
Statement**

John Oliver

Education Above Politics is a community led movement that (1) focuses on the students and teachers of Hillsborough, (2) improves our schools without the burden of party affiliation, and (3) prioritizes transparency and fiscal responsibility. Our focus is truly to put Education Above Politics.

Plan for the future.

Be transparent always.

Ensure our educational reputation improves for years to come.

Gregory Gillette

I am a longtime New Jersey resident and have lived in Hillsborough since 1993. I was elected to the Hillsborough Township Board of Education in 2007 and also serve as chair of the Historic Preservation Commission. I have also served on the Hillsborough-Millstone Municipal Alliance and as chair of the Cultural Arts Commission. Along with my wife, Patty, I have also served as co-chair of "Central New Jersey Walk Now for Autism," the local chapter of the international research and awareness organization Autism Speaks.

A music major at New York University, I spent most of my career in the Entertainment Division of the Six Flags Corporation where I was primarily responsible for writing and producing live educational assembly programs for New Jersey school children.

I am currently a full-time stay-at-home dad, concentrating on raising my two children, and on community service. People may know me best as the writer/editor of "Gillette on Hillsborough", a local history blog and Facebook Page that I have been producing since 2007.

I have always been committed to you, my fellow residents, and volunteer for this task for no other reason than to give back to the community that I have called home for the past 26 years and that has been such a great place to raise my family.

You can learn more about me by visiting my Facebook Page at

<https://www.facebook.com/GilletteForSchoolBoard/>

Paul Marini

Education Above Politics is a community led movement that (1) focuses on the students and teachers of Hillsborough, (2) improves our schools without the burden of party affiliation, and (3) prioritizes transparency and fiscal responsibility. Our focus is truly to put Education Above Politics. John Oliver and I have started this movement, but it does not end with us. We plan to continue this in coming years in an effort to replace the board with individuals of similar values:

Disrupt the system.

Plan for the future.

Be transparent always.

Ensure our educational reputation improves for years to come.

Joyce Eldridge-Howard

I would be most honored to have the opportunity to continue to serve as a board member on the Hillsborough Board of Education. I strongly believe that I would continue be a positive asset to the Board and the Hillsborough School District.

Jean Trujillo

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with the HEA membership and the wider community. As I reviewed my responses to the 2016 HEA questionnaire, I am struck by how many points are still true today in 2019.

In 2016, in response to this question, I wrote in part: “I’m an engineer by training and the most important thing I learned in school was to recognize when ‘I don’t know.’ I think that’s why I ask so many questions and try to learn from the answers. It’s also part of the reason I want to represent the Hillsborough [and Millstone] communities on the school board – I think a lot of us have questions we’d like answered.”

I was part of the board that added three elementary school counselors so that each elementary school now has its own dedicated guidance counselor. Also, I was part of the board that added a third student assistance counselor at HHS, approved varsity letters for academic teams and strengthened the vaping policy.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about me and how I think. I don’t know everything, but I listen to residents, I’m accessible and I try to keep the community informed. I’m asking for your vote on Tuesday, November 5th, 2019 in the General Election so I can continue to do something good for Hillsborough and Millstone’s kids.

Hillsborough Education Association

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