

A Message from the Holmdel Township Board of Education

This is the last issue by the 2010-11 Holmdel Board of Education since the Board will be reorganized in mid May with existing and newly elected board members. While we are looking forward to another productive year, it is time for us to look back and reflect upon certain things. Therefore, I have invited Mr. Michael L. Collins, who had initiated the idea of having this HBOE column, to share his experience on the Board and offer his thoughts about serving. I would also like to express our appreciations to Mike for his service, and wish him good luck in his study in law and future endeavors.

Dr. Ray Tai, President

With May bringing the Board of Education's annual reorganization, it means the time has come for members whose terms are expiring to bid farewell. Fondly, I write this column in my final days of service. This bittersweet reality comes after three rewarding years, and I am indebted to you, the citizens of Holmdel, for providing me this opportunity.

Serving in local elected office is truly a privilege, as each member of our board would attest. As members, we share in an awesome responsibility – ensuring an over \$50 million budget efficiently provides a quality education for over 3,000 students. Board service requires a hefty commitment, as members meet upwards of six times (between committee meetings, ad-hoc meetings, and public meetings) per month. But there is an immense reward for this effort, knowing that your work is for the benefit of our children and the community.

Given this benefit, people are often curious about serving as a board member. Some ask whether they have the requisite experience, while others inquire if they have the right viewpoint for the job. In response, I always say that as long as you have the best interest of the kids and community at heart, you can make a good board member. To this end, I hope that by expounding a bit on board service, it will help spur interest in this worthy calling.

BACKGROUNDS

When residents decide to run for the Board of Education, there is no litmus test requiring a certain background to seek office. Given the makeup of the boards I have served on, the voters have continually entrusted the job to a very diverse group of people. And given the success of our schools, there is reason for confidence in the system.

Our members come from all walks of life. Some members have experience as parent advocates, while others are experienced classroom educators. Some are attorneys versed in the law, while others work in law enforcement. I, for one, joined the board as an 18-year-old college student and Holmdel High School graduate.

This variety of backgrounds helps create a diverse range of knowledge that helps address the myriad of topics a board encounters. Those in finance are especially beneficial to the budget process, while those in education contribute greatly to curriculum review. As a 2007 graduate of Holmdel High School, I have been proud to offer the viewpoint of a former student, with an intimate knowledge of the school system we have in Holmdel. Former New Jersey School Boards Association President Kevin E. Ciak, who himself served as a school board member as a teenager, intriguingly calls this “a customer prospective.”

If backgrounds illustrate anything, it shows that anyone who cares strongly about education can provide meaningful perspective to a school board. Each person’s background provides a unique perspective, and that always proves beneficial to the process. Let your background, regardless of what it may be, encourage you to run for the Board of Education.

VIEWPOINTS

In our role, our Board deliberates, debates, and decides a multitude of issues. From policies governing student conduct to contract negotiations and personnel appointments, board members take action on a wide range of items that have a direct impact on students.

In consultation with administration, board members regularly brainstorm ideas that are given ample consideration. This oftentimes leads to discussion in which board members candidly offer their opinions and viewpoints on the issue. Whether the board ends up in agreement or disagreement, this dialogue is important, as this marketplace of ideas helps foster an informed outcome. Such a debate also demonstrates how the Board of Education does its due diligence and takes decision-making seriously.

Prospective candidates should see the Board of Education as a place to serve where your thoughts count. Individual members have had great influence with their ideas, such as the creation of this monthly column, the new “State of the District” presentation, and specific district goals. Also, by expressing opinions, board members continually play an active role in answering difficult questions that are of the utmost importance to the community. Let your ideas and views in support of public education encourage you to run for the Board of Education.

CONCLUSION

The membership on the Holmdel Township Board of Education changes year after year, but the high-achieving status of the school district stays constant. I encourage anyone who wishes to benefit the children in our community to consider board service. By attending a Board of Education meeting, you can learn more about this perennially rewarding opportunity.

In this light, I wish newcomer Victor Desario, incumbents Phyllis Pascucci and Barbara Garrity, and the rest of the reorganized 2011-2012 Holmdel Township Board of Education the best of luck this coming year and in the years to come.

Respectfully,

Michael L. Collins
Holmdel Township Board of Education
Member, 2008-2011

There are two easy ways to stay informed of district/schools happenings. Please visit the district website at www.holmdelschools.org for event updates, school announcements, district progress reports, board meeting information, and much more. You can also subscribe to our E-Alert at <http://www.holmdel.k12.nj.us/home/joinlist.shtm> to receive email alerts on your choice of topics, such as school security alerts, committee notes, parent support group minutes, the district calendar, career opportunities, and school lunch menus.