



Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Candidate:

This questionnaire is a prerequisite for consideration for endorsement by the Cleveland Heights Democrats at our endorsement meeting at 7:00 p.m. on September 13, 2017 at the Cleveland Heights Community Center, One Monticello Boulevard, Cleveland Heights, Ohio. You are encouraged to attend this meeting, and if you choose to do so, you will be given an opportunity to speak to the Club prior to the voting on endorsements.

With respect to the endorsement meeting, only club members who are in good standing and on the official membership roster for forty-five or more consecutive days prior to September 13, 2017 may vote on the endorsements. A majority of those members in good standing present and voting make an endorsement for office.

Please complete and return this questionnaire to Screening Committee Chair Katura Simmons at katuras414@yahoo.com, 1736 Wood Road., Cleveland Heights, 44121, no later than September 4th at 5:00 PM.

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By completing and returning this Candidate Questionnaire, I affirm the following:

1. I am a registered Democrat.
2. I agree to comply with the purpose of the Club as stated in Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution, that is:

The purpose of this organization shall be to provide a means by which residents of Cleveland Heights can organize to promote and develop the highest principles of the Democratic Party, to improve the administration of government, and to work for the good of all citizens. This organization shall endorse and support for public office all candidates whose election will, in the judgment of the membership, best advance the Purpose. In pursuing its Purpose, this organization may also cooperate with the

National, State, and County Democratic Committees, and pursue other programs of benefit to the community.

3. I agree not to openly oppose any Democratic nominee in a general partisan election.
4. I agree not to openly support any opponent of a Democratic nominee in a general partisan election.
5. I have not violated the above 1-4 during the past five (5) years.

If you cannot affirm as to numbers 2-4 please explain your reasoning below.

1. What do you hope to accomplish on behalf of the community as a member of the Board of Education?

I'm running for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education because our community depends on strong schools.

The painful situations our community has gone through with school closings and reductions are a direct result of declining enrollment. I believe we can change this trajectory. As a member of the Board of Education, I hope to accomplish my Plan for the Future:

1. Attract and retain families by:
 - Marketing the district's 5-star-rated preschools which are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
 - Reaching out to pediatricians, realtors and daycares to communicate our educational offerings and programs.
2. Improve communications from the district with:
 - Families, teachers and staff, and the community at large by creating a formal communications policy that outlines consistent guidelines for communicating specific news and identifies media and timeframes. (The BoE's current communications policy covers the dissemination of flyers only.)
3. Ensure fiscal responsibility by:
 - Acknowledging our district has limited resources and making fiscally disciplined decisions.
 - Asking tough questions on how proposed expenditures will improve educational outcomes and benefit children.
 - Partnering with other organizations to provide programs more cost-effectively.

4. Collaborate with Cleveland Heights, University Heights and South Euclid cities and other government agencies to:
 - Attract Millennials to our cities so our communities grow and become stronger.
 - Provide programs for the safety and well-being of our students.
 - Bring our schools into our community and our community into our schools so all benefit from our public assets.

2. What qualities, skills, insights, or perspectives do you possess which would be of value as a member of the Board of Education?

I'm a 22-year resident of University Heights and a parent in the district. My son attended Gearity and Boulevard Elementary Schools. He attended Monticello Middle School last year and is a 7th grader at Heights Middle School—Monticello this year. I'm the only candidate running who brings a perspective from the east and north ends of our district. And, I'm the only candidate who is from University Heights. As a resident of University Heights who has a good relationship with UH city government, I believe I can be a bridge that strengthens the relationship between UH and our schools.

I've been involved in our schools for the last eight years in several capacities. I've been active in PTA at every building my son attended and have held the following leadership positions:

- PTA President
- Kindernet Representative
- Recording Secretary
- Box Tops Coordinator (fundraising)

Also, I've been active on several district-wide committees including:

- Lay Facilities Committee
- Gifted Education Taskforce
- Committee to Select the Architect and Construction Management firms for the new High School
- Several parent focus groups that provided input for the selections of elementary principals and the superintendent

In addition, I've helped teachers by volunteering in classrooms and as a parent chaperone on many field trips, including a two-night trip with middle school students to Columbus for Ohio Model United Nations.

3. What education, employment, and/or life experiences have prepared you to serve as a member of the Board of Education?

I have more than 25 years of professional experience in marketing and communications which I believe is a key skill required for attracting and retaining families and improving communications. I'm a businesswoman, so I'm used to making thoughtful and actionable decisions to achieve goals, managing a budget, and operating within the confines of limited resources. As the manager of the marketing communications department for a Fortune 500 company, I'm responsible for hiring and

managing a team. I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Public Relations from Kent State University and a Master's degree in Business Administration from John Carroll University.

4. Describe your recent community, professional, charitable, and political involvement. Please provide an example of a situation where your participation made a difference.

The community and political involvement I'm probably most well-known for is helping to build a coalition of residents across University Heights, Cleveland Heights and South Euclid to save our elementary school in University Heights. I, along with several other Gearity parents, gained support to oppose the school's closing by reaching out to residents, community groups, churches, long-time school supporters and our city governments to communicate the importance of retaining a public elementary school in the city.

As a member of the Board of Education, I'd like to be part of a team that builds similarly strong coalitions that will: communicate the value of public education, attract and retain families to our district and our communities, and align community resources and organizations to provide programs for the safety and well-being of our children.

5. How will you raise funds for your campaign?

I am raising funds through the traditional methods: sending fundraising letters to individuals who support my plan for the future, hosting a fundraising event and attending several events being held very generously by supporters. I started my campaign with a loan from myself so I could produce my initial pieces of literature.

6. Following is a list of issues facing the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Board of Education. Please choose three or more and briefly describe how you propose to address these issues. You are welcome to write about a different issue, if you like, in addition to writing about at least three of the issues listed in this question.
 - a. Improving the administration of testing and student achievement.
 - b. Improving the image of our public schools and encouraging enrollment versus private school options for families.

Whether we agree with it or not, we are in an era of school choice. This means our district needs to market what we offer to the community. We need to communicate the breadth of our educational offerings and extracurricular programs. We need to ensure that when families are making their choice about schools, they are making an informed choice. We need to engage young families and families new to our cities and invite them to tour our schools and shadow classrooms. When I was a Kindernet representative, we did this very effectively by reaching out to young families and encouraging them to "check us out before ruling us out." We invited young families to open houses, shadowing days, our book fairs, upcoming events and concerts. Sadly, our district has allowed the Kindernet program to fall by the wayside. As a BoE member, I would advocate restarting the Kindernet program. In addition, I'd recommend adding outreach to realtors, pediatricians and daycares, especially to market our 5-star, NAEYC-accredited early childhood program (preschools available at Gearity, Noble and Oxford elementary schools).

In addition to developing a formal communication policy for the district (mentioned in my plan for the future in question 1 above), I would advocate for creating a social media program with our PTAs. As part of this program, we'd train PTA volunteers on social media tactics and encourage them to post, tweet, re-post, re-tweet and share stories. Some parents are already doing this in an ad hoc way, but we would be more successful in getting positive news out if we were more prescriptive and targeted via an organized program.

Lastly, I would support the superintendent in her efforts to deliver programs that target interventions for children who need additional academic support so we can improve our score on the state report card. I realize this takes time. In the meantime, we should produce an additional report to the community that discusses where we are performing well, but may not be reflected on the state report card. And as a Board of Education, we should be working with the BoE's of other urban districts to influence what measures are included on the state report card. (Too many of the existing measures are heavily influenced by socioeconomic status and transiency.)

c. What is your opinion on the bond issue on the November ballot and school facilities improvement plan?

I believe this question may be from a previous year's survey as there is no bond issue on this November's ballot. However, the issue of the school facilities improvement plan is still very relevant. With the new high school complete, but having run well over budget, it means we have very limited funds for completing the two middle school renovations. These renovations will be more modest yet have the same amount of time allotted as the high school (2 years). One of the reasons the high school project went so far over budget is because on the advice of the Owner's Rep firm, the project was started with only 50 percent of the drawings completed. This means, during the construction, we ran into unforeseen issues which resulted in many change orders and cost overruns. As a member of the BoE, I would advocate for waiting for drawings to be complete before starting the middle school renovations. Also, having fewer funds than planned, the BoE will have to make difficult choices on what renovations to invest in. I would push to prioritize items that have a direct impact on the safety and well-being of our children and improve educational outcomes over renovations that focus on aesthetics and historic preservation. This phase of the project has to stay on budget and demonstrate value.

Now that the high school is finished, we need to ensure the community enjoys the use of it so all residents feel they are benefitting from the investment. As a BoE member, I would advocate for inviting the community to use the space. Some examples include:

- Broadly publicizing the community swim times at the pool and cosmetology offerings that are available to the public
- Inviting private schools to hold their graduation/promotion ceremonies in the 1,100 seat auditorium
- Encouraging community groups/private businesses to use the 150 seat smaller auditorium for programs

The community needs to perceive it is gaining value from the high school, before it will invest in another bond to renovate the elementary schools. As a member of the Board of Education, I would look for every opportunity to bring our schools out into our community and our community into our schools.

- d. Achieving an effective relationship between the Board of Education and the various unions with which it negotiates.
- e. Forging a collaborative working relationship with elected officials in the three cities (Cleveland Heights, University Heights, and South Euclid) served by our school district.

The Board of Education needs to have a collaborative working relationship with elected officials in the three cities served by our school district. I'd like to propose partnering with the cities on my idea for outreach to young and new families (explained in Question 6b of this survey). Also, the cities can play an important role in communicating opportunities for the community to use the new high school facilities (explained in 6c of this questionnaire). As a BoE member, I would look for opportunities for the cities and the school district to partner in order to attract Millennial families to our cities. In addition, I would push for the district to utilize many non-profit organizations and government agencies to provide programs for the health and well-being of our students. (For example, the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office offers free workshops on Internet safety, the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center offers training programs on preventing dating violence.) I envision the city governments and the school district partnering to bring these programs to our communities.

In closing, I love the art show the district has held at the Lee Road Library for the past two years. As a BoE member, I would look for more opportunities to showcase the talents of our students. I would propose having the art show then travel to our city halls. Other ideas include having student ensembles perform at city events and showcasing the robots built by our Robotics teams, etc. These are just a few examples of how to bring the schools out into our community and our community into our schools. I believe doing these things would:

- Improve the image of our public schools
- Increase enrollment
- Gain support for additional school improvement projects
- And, provide opportunities to partner with city governments.