



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 hope to increase current efforts to improve equity of opportunity and support across the District. I want to change both internal and external perceptions of our District: by addressing the very real achievement gap between African-American and white students, and by providing alternatives to the State Report Card which show successful educational outcomes. We know that high stakes testing measures family SES and education better than it measures anything. Our District has steadily improved its programs to keep children from dropping out, to provide more rigorous courses, to offer a wide range of academic and extra-curricular choices. If we measure success by our District's ability to meet each child's individual needs, then every family will see public school as a sound option for their children.

We can attract more young families to the District by adding more high quality pre-school programs to elementary buildings where possible, and by reviving Kindernet. Once parents see the caliber of education CH-UH schools offer, they will not automatically assume the nay-sayers are correct.

The State legislature in Columbus has undermined public education for the last decade or more through its adoption of policies which syphon public tax money off towards private and parochial education. This is not about school choice, but about destroying the separation of church and state. I want to work in a concerted way with other local school boards to change public education funding policy at the State level.

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

No one currently on the Board has children attending our schools. My children are currently in high school (they began in pre-school at Milliken) and I have been active in every level of the District. I understand the concerns of current District families; I know how to research policy and translate government-ese into English; I solicit and listen to differing opinions; I understand how to balance competing interests and keep the larger goal in sight.

In my previous career, I worked in professional theatre as a designer, technical director, and production manager. Besides its artistic and technical aspects, this highly collaborative work involved: strict adherence to schedules and timelines; very tight budget & personnel management; union contract negotiation; and, **especially**, balancing competing interests within limited resources & maintaining a congenial work environment in stressful situations. If elected, I would bring these skills to the Board.

I know that there are no easy solutions when it comes to issues of finances, testing, and accountability. I continually educate myself about national and state education policy and understand that local school boards can no longer focus solely on their own districts. CH-UH must work with other school boards in the region and state to change the way politicians in Columbus undermine public education.

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

I spent my childhood moving around because both my parents were journalists. I learned several languages while young and had to adapt to various social and cultural environments. As an adult, I continue to broaden my horizons. Hence, I do not assume that others share my experiences or points of view. But I believe strongly that people with differing opinions can come to agreement to further the common good. And strong public education is undoubtedly part of our common good.

My career in theatre design and production management taught me the value of the collaborative process. It—and my current work as a landlord—ingrained in me the importance of problem solving and just doing the work needed to accomplish a goal. I am able to break down large problems into manageable tasks and keep pushing forward.

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

School related:

- Founding member of Early Childhood for the Heights Organization (ECHO), which worked to maintain NAEYC accreditation when pre-school programs were moved from Milliken to Gearity. Advocated for additional pre-school programs.
- Two term treasurer of Fairfax PTA. Tutor with Many Villages at Fairfax for several years. Collaborated on District-wide Summer Blast-Off events at Fairfax. Production Manager for 5 Fairfax Cabarets.
- Two term treasurer of Roxboro Middle PTA. Sat on parent committee for International Baccalaureate at Roxboro Middle.
- Currently Treasurer of HH PTA. Manager for Heights Cross Country team.
- Formed and chaired the Career and Technical Working Group (now Advocacy Group) for three and a half years. CTE WG researched state CTE regulations and then-current CH-UH practices, wrote a comprehensive CTE Improvement Plan, presented it to Administration and BOE, and have monitored its implementation since.

Other:

- Currently serving on the Board of Directors for Home Repair Resource Center and on the Program Committee. Also teach plaster repair classes at HRRC.
- Involved for over 5 years with Fairmount Temple's Congregational Based Community Organising project, which led to the creation of Greater Cleveland Congregations.
- Joined the GCC Education team and participated in a GCC project to improve literacy and lunch-room climate at Anton Grdina Elementary in Cleveland for 2 years.

5. How will you raise funds for your campaign?

I am soliciting donations through my website and FaceBook page. I am also soliciting directly from friends and family members. I plan to hold several get-to-know me fundraising events in the near future.

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

We cannot undo what has already happened, but we must learn from previous mistakes and improve the process going forward. Without question, our children should have safe, pleasant, and energy efficient buildings. Our community should have schools which reflect the value we place on education. As we continue the facilities improvement process, I want to review the demographic assumptions underlying the original plan. I also want to look at grade configuration options to see whether we can use our buildings more fully, more efficiently, and more equitably. While I wanted this to be done 5 or 6 years ago, it is not too late to improve how we finish what we have started.

- d. Achieving an effective relationship between the Board of Education and the various unions with which it negotiates.

The most recent contract negotiations seem to have been marred by lack of trust on both sides. The School Board needs to work to restore relations and get past any sense of personal betrayal to a productive working relationship. District staff are without question our most valuable resource: teachers need to feel valued on a daily basis. I believe that future negotiations must be less adversarial in tone and will work actively towards that end.

- 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.

Each local government is inextricably linked with our District. Our communities and our schools reflect off of and on each other. Property values determine income for both school districts and city governments. Furthermore, CH-UH payroll is a large component of University Heights' city revenue. There is a poor history of city governments undermining school funding through landbanking and granting developers TIFs (Cedar Center, for example). As hard as it is to ignore past mistakes or perceived betrayals, it is very important for all four entities (CH-UH, CH, UH, SoE) to recognize their interdependence and work collaboratively for everyone's benefit. I want to see city governments actively promoting our public schools and our public schools actively marketing themselves to new residents.