

## **Press Clippings 03/12/2019**

**---Daily Herald---03/12/2019**

### **U-46 candidate forum set for March 14**

**By: Elgin Area School District U-46**

Members of the public who want to learn more about the men and women running for a seat on the Elgin Area School District U-46 Board of Education are invited to attend a candidate forum on Thursday, March 14.

The Citizens' Advisory Council is hosting the event ahead of the April 2 Consolidated Election. The moderator will be Madhu Krishnamurthy, a senior staff writer and education writer for the Daily Herald.

The board is responsible for determining the policies which guide the operation of U-46. Elected members serve four-year terms and are not paid for their services. It is a nonpartisan position.

The U-46 board has seven members, along with a nonvoting student adviser. Four seats are up for election on April 2; voters in U-46 will choose up to four candidates on their ballots for the board. The top four vote-getters will be elected.

A total of eight candidates filed in December to run for a seat on the board. They are: incumbents John T. Devereux of Bartlett; Susan E. Kerr of Bartlett; and Jeannette Ward of West Chicago; as well as Daniel Hancock of Hanover Park; Eva J. Porter of Hanover Park; Tina Rio of Bartlett; Ina Silva-Sobolewski of Hanover Park; and Kathleen (Kate) Thommes of Elgin.

The candidate forum is organized by the CAC's Candidate Forum Ad-hoc Committee. A Spanish interpreter will be available at the event.

It will be held in the auditorium of the Dream Academy, which is adjacent to the Educational Services Center, 355 E. Chicago St., Elgin. Attendees should enter through the ESC main doors, and they will then be directed to the auditorium on the second floor.

The forum will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 14. Those attending are asked to arrive a few minutes early to find seating and get settled before the forum gets underway.

### **Candidates for Elgin school board discuss contract talks**

**By: Daily Herald report**

Eight candidates are vying for four seats on the Elgin Area School District U-46 school board in the upcoming election. Incumbents Jeanette Ward of West Chicago and Sue Kerr and John Devereux, both of Bartlett, face newcomers Tina Rio of Bartlett, Kathleen Thommes of Elgin, and Eva Porter, Daniel Hancock and Ina Silva-Sobolewski, all of Hanover Park, seeking 4-year terms on April 2.

The Daily Herald asked candidates to respond to a questionnaire about local issues. Some of their responses are below. For complete election coverage, visit [dailyherald.com](http://dailyherald.com).

**Q.** Are you currently employed by or retired from a school district, of so, which one? Is any member of your direct family – spouse, child or child-in-law – employed by the school district where you are seeking a school board seat?

**Devereaux.** Neither I, nor any member of my family, is currently employed by or returned from a school district.

**Hancock.** I am not employed by any school district. I did work in U-46 as a substitute teacher for a few years.

**Kerr.** No to all of the above.

**Porter.** A am a former teacher of U-46 (years) and retired from Schaumburg School District 54

**Rio.** No to all of the above, however I was a lunch mom while my kids were in school.

**Silva-Sobolewski.** No

**Thommes.** I was a teacher in U-46 from 1998 to 2003. Since 2006, I have taught at Elgin community College. No one in my direct family works for U-46.

**Ward.** No to both questions.

**Q.** As contract talks come up with various school employee groups – teachers, support staff, etc. – what posture should the school board take? Do you believe the district should ask for concessions from its employees, expect employee costs to stay about the same as they are now or provide increases in pay or benefits?

**Devereaux.** Teachers and related support staff are responsible for the very significant tasks of educating and tending to the well-being of our nearly 40,000 students on a day-to-day basis. As a result, I believe they deserve our appreciation and respect. Further, as in nearly all situations, I believe attracting, empowering, developing, and retaining a top-tier workforce is critical to the success of our collective efforts. However, there are certainly economic limitations and we are further subject to regulations, restrictions, and mandates from the state. Further, the board, administration, teachers, and other district staff have a shared responsibility to be good stewards of community resources. With all of this in mind, during contract discussions, each side will need to make concessions in a way that is deemed fair for all constituent parties and in a way that best serves the interest of the students.

**Hancock.** The contract talks should consider the average wages with comparable workers in the area. The current economic conditions should be considered when determining whether concessions or increases are considered. It is the tax payer that is paying the salary of school employees.

**Kerr.** We have settled contracts with a number of our employee groups in the past 18 months and are currently in talks the teachers and food service employees. Because of that, and because I am currently a board member, I cannot go into any more details.

**Porter.** Most employees should be working under a contract as we are a union district. I believe we must restore the faith and confidence in our working relationship with our teachers and staff. I believe that the contract negotiations with the transportation department should continue and our bus service should not be outsourced. I am a lifetime member of the NEA/IREA, and I believe in abiding by the rules set in place after fair negotiations and working with a contract that will be beneficial to all parties involved.

I believe the district has a duty to fairly compensate all employees. I believe their compensation should be consistent with industry standards and competitive enough to attract the best talent. Contracts and pay scales should always be honored. Working under a pay freeze is not best practice.

**Rio.** Teachers and support staff are the greatest resources the district has. They should be treated with respect and fairness. The district should negotiate with the interests of the taxpayer in mind. After all, teachers and staff are taxpayers too.

**Silva-Sobolewski.** As a trustee elected by the constituents of U-46 the posture of the school board should be to negotiate the best contract terms that fairly address and balance the needs of the employees and the community. As I have yet to be directly involved in U-46 contract negotiations. I will need to consider the current environment regarding pay and benefits. Typically increases in pay or benefits in any sector is based on merit.

**Thommes.** I feel strongly that teachers and the Board of Education should be partners. We should all have the same goal of educating each student while providing a safe and nurturing environment. Contracts between administration and Unions should be compromise. That being said, our teachers, paraprofessionals, various staff and our custodians all work hard, continue their education and training, and have immeasurable value to our District and its families. They deserve cost of living raises, raises related to more training and education, and benefits like insurance and 403Bs. We do need to balance that with the needs of our taxpayers, but successful students and schools are good for communities in multiple ways like raising property values and an area's reputation.

**Ward.** I believe pay increases for teachers, who are public sector union employees, like the private sector, should be tied to merit. Pay increases should be contingent on excellent performance, and not automatically granted, as they are currently (e.g., "step and lane"). Given that U-46 has added 54 new positions (which I did not support) there is no way costs will be reduced unless a significant change in direction is taken.

**Q.** If your district has a superintendent or other administrator nearing retirement, would you support a substantial increase in his or her pay to help boost pension benefits? Why or why not?

**Devereaux.** It is well-understood that the state of Illinois faces significant financial difficulties due, in part, to pension liabilities. As a result, I believe that late-career salary adjustments that serve to substantially boost pension costs is not a financially sound course of action. Practices such as those presented in the question here should be carefully scrutinized and, if they put additional undue pressure on pension liabilities (and/or area property taxes), they should be avoided.

**Hancock.** No, they should not get a substantial increase – it is the tax payer that is paying the pensions. None of the nongovernmental workers get any kind of boost in benefits before retiring.

**Kerr.** No, I do not support end-of-career salary boosts to increase pension benefits. Most people in the private sector no longer receive pensions and I do not think taxpayers should be asked to fund such pay increases.

**Porter.** No, I would not support a substantial increase to boost pension benefits nearing retirement. U-46 should pay fairly and competitively during a superintendent's or other administrator's tenure with the district and not provide "golden parachutes" on the way out the door. The positions for Superintendents and Cabinet members are highly competitive positions and we want to attract the best to our district. U-46 is a complex, difficult district to work in and we must have experienced, top-notch administrators. A scare isn't best practice for some positions.

**Rio.** I would NOT support any such activity. I consider that to be a breach of public trust and unacceptable.

**Siva-Sobolewski.** No. This practice has resulted in absurd payouts to superintendents in various district and higher education institutions throughout Illinois, including in the past in U-46. Current compensation and benefits are more than adequate.

**Thommes.** I do not support a substantial increase in pay for a retiring superintendent or administrator. I do believe they should receive the standard increases they would receive were they are not retiring. Superintendents and administration from a large district such as U-46 should be compensated fairly along the way, meaning a substantial increase is unnecessary. The skills and responsibilities of these jobs demand a fair and equitable salary.

**Ward.** I do not support pension spiking in any form and I voted against two employee contracts that included 6 percent pension spikes as provisions in the contracts. The board majority, including another board member seeking re-election, voted for them. The private sector does not enjoy this kind of perk. It is entirely unsustainable fiscally and is one of the reasons Illinois is in the financially disastrous situation it is. At the state level, the Illinois budget was presented to voters as balanced, but a different, more truthful story was presented to bond investors. There is a "structural imbalance," which means deficit, in this year's state budget of at least \$1.2 billion. There is \$129 billion in unfunded pension liability. This imbalance at the state level cannot continue forever. Eventually there will be stark consequences. Local school boards cannot continue the practice of pension spiking.

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## **Elgin District U-46 official to take over as West Leyden principal**

**By: Deborah Kadin - Pioneer Press**



Patricia Makishima

Patricia Makishima the coordinator of English Language Learner initiatives for Elgin School District U-46, has been named principal at West Leyden High School.

The Leyden District 212 school board approved her appointment at its Feb. 21 meeting.

Makishima, who has worked for Elgin School District U-46 since 1999, will begin at West Leyden on July 1, when she starts mentoring with the current principal and former colleague Tatiana Bonuma. The pair worked together at Larkin High School, where Makishima served as chair of the English as a Second Language department.

The 45-year-old graduate of the Universidade de Sao Paulo said she is excited about the West Leyden position, calling it “the right time and the right opportunity.”

“Leyden is a phenomenal place to work. It has a sense of community, a sense of oneness and commitment to students and families,” she said. “I am committed to all stakeholders, and I will do my best to do good by them.”

Superintendent Nick Polyak said that Makishima and Bonuma worked together at Larkin was a plus. Bonuma also served as a reference for Makishima, and that spoke to her as a person and to her work ethic, he added.

“Part of the draw was how well she meshed with the team at West Leyden during her interviews. She is a wonderfully smart ... exceptional person who has expertise that will benefit the district,” he said.

Bonuma, who began as West Leyden’s principal in July 2015, was promoted to assistant superintendent in December. In July, she will start mentoring with the current assistant superintendent, Beth Concannon, who will retire in 2020.

In all, 47 candidates applied for the principal’s position, officials said.

# South Elgin High School football stadium to get lights, new track, press box

By: Rafael Guerrero



- South Elgin High School's football stadium will get LED lighting, a new track and a new press box later this year. The stadium, opened in 2011, will be able to host Friday night football games, track and field meets and other events for the first time because of the lighting.

South Elgin High School opened its outdoor stadium in 2011 with the inability to host night games, matches or meets — but that is soon to change.

School District U46 officials approved a nearly \$1.5-million bid to install lights, a new track, and press box at the South Elgin venue. As a result, Friday night football, track and field meets and other events will become more common as early as this fall.

Construction is expected to start in April and continue into the summer. The stadium will be ready for South Elgin's first night football game Sept. 13 against Elgin, said Mike Jezioro, the school's athletic director.

The project addresses three areas of concerns. Workers will install LED lighting to illuminate the playing field and bleachers.

Jezioro said officials and South Elgin supporters long coveted lights since the stadium's 2011 opening. The stadium itself was years in the making, opening six years after the high school. It remains a work in progress, as the venue still doesn't have built-in concessions or bathrooms.

"I think under-the-lights activity...it just brings the community together," Jezioro said. "Historically, most schools play Friday night football, and it's a great experience for everyone. You get people from the community, you get the youth in the community, you get them to see what the high school experience is all about."

"More people attend Friday night games, the weather is cooler and the sun is set," added head football coach Dragan Teonic. "Friday nights are more convenient than Saturday afternoons."



- South Elgin football has played its home games Saturday afternoons because it does not have stadium lighting. Head coach Dragan Teonic speaks with players Sam Minnifield (60) and Jakob Johnson during a 2018 football game at South Elgin.

Teonic said he believes homecoming games can become a “great new tradition” on Friday nights instead of Saturday afternoons, similar to other schools.

Workers will also replace the small, temporary press box at the top of the main bleachers. Jezioro said the current press box was meant to be installed for only a couple of years. The new box will be larger, fully enclosed, and feature space for home and visiting team coaching staff, announcers, and news media.

Workers will also resurface and resettle the track. Jezioro said additional work will be done on a portion of the track plagued with poor soil conditions below it. A new and level running surface, along with the lights, means South Elgin can host track and field meets in the near future, he said.

“I feel that being able to host more meets at home, not have to fight to the finish for sunlight, and selling football tickets under the lights will elevate school spirit, the community’s excitement, and parent involvement,” said Tushebra Crump, South Elgin’s head girls track and field coach.