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U-46 board appoints Bartlett actuary to vacant trustee seat

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY

The Elgin Area School District U-46 school board has appointed John Devereux of Bartlett to fill the vacancy created by the departure of board member Traci O'Neal Ellis.

Ellis resigned her seat April 23 after seven years of service.

The vote Monday was 4-2 to appoint Devereux, chief actuary for a Chicago-based firm. He was chosen from among 17 candidates who applied to fill the vacancy. The school board pared the list to 10 candidates who were vetted in open session meetings last month.

School board members Jeanette Ward and Phil Costello cast the dissenting votes.

Ward cited "substantial philosophical differences" with Devereux as the reason she could not vote for him. She added, she appreciated Devereux reaching out to her to suggest ways in which they could work together.

"I hope to work toward a productive and collaborative relationship," Ward said. "The discussions we had were productive and collaborative, really, truly, in both open and closed (sessions). I was disappointed that a candidate on whom the whole board could agree was not able to serve because of legal and employer-related restrictions. There remained no other candidate on whom the whole board could agree."

Costello echoed Ward's sentiments about the board's selection process and the expertise of many candidates who applied.

"I think (Devereux) has good expertise but not what I was looking for in a independent voice," Costello said.

Devereux, and wife, Niki, have lived within U-46 boundaries for 25 years. Their two children attended district schools and their youngest son graduated last month from Bartlett High School. He has served in leadership roles on the Bartlett High School Band Parent Organization for seven years and coaching teams for the Bartlett Park District for about 15 years.

Devereux was unavailable for comment Monday and not present at the meeting due to being on vacation. He will be sworn in at the June 18 school board meeting. He will

complete Ellis' remaining term, which expires after the spring school board elections in April.

Board member Sue Kerr said among the applicants, there were many candidates whom she hoped would consider running for the board.