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'I am disappointed but not entirely surprised': Ward reflects on slate's loss in U-46

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy



Jeannette Ward

Voters once again rebuffed conservative voices on the Elgin Area School District U-46 school board Tuesday, ousting one-term incumbent Jeanette Ward and three other candidates who shared her views.

"I am disappointed but not entirely surprised," Ward said Wednesday, reflecting on her slate's loss. She attributed the outcome partly to the district's changing demographics and low voter turnout.

"People, perhaps, maybe they don't make the connection (between) the taxes they pay and the government they elect," she said. "Either they don't make the connection or they are not troubled by it."

Incumbents John Devereux and Sue Kerr and newcomers Eva Porter and Kathleen Thommes, who were endorsed by the Elgin Teachers Association, were elected Tuesday to four-year school board terms.

It was a repeat of what happened in 2017 when two Christian conservative candidates lost their bids for four-year seats on the U-46 board. They were among a handful of fiscally conservative candidates who did poorly throughout Elgin that year.

Ward, 45, of West Chicago, said her ouster leaves the U-46 board without a voice advocating for lowering taxes and cutting spending.

Regarding her career on the board, she lists among her early victories being the catalyst for a change in state law allowing local elected officials access to records about closed sessions that happened before their tenures. She also credits her advocacy for the existence of the Elgin Math and Science Academy Charter School.

However, Ward's positions on various school board policies have ruffled many feathers. Almost regardless of the reason, she consistently voted against increased spending for more staffing and new programs, such as full-day kindergarten and expansion of dual language curriculum. She fought against the adoption of high school social studies textbooks that she believed promoted politically left-leaning biases, communist ideology, "global warming pseudoscience" and "anti-American bias." She also criticized the district administration's decision to allow a transgender middle school student access to the locker room and restroom corresponding with the person's gender identity, triggering heated school board meetings.

Ward said her primary goal was bringing such issues to the public's attention and starting a dialogue.

"I think that all citizens should pay attention to what's happening at their local school boards," she said.

She pledged to continue participating in school board meetings as a district parent and citizen. She said she would still advocate for "academic freedom and diversity of thought, parental choice, privacy and safety for all students, and respect for the taxpayer."

Bartlett Fire District chief retiring in June

By: Eric Peterson



Bartlett Fire Chief Mike Falese is retiring after nine years in the top spot and nearly 12 years with the district altogether.

Bartlett Fire Protection District Fire Chief Mike Falese is retiring in June following nine years as chief, nearly 12 with the district, and 38 in the fire service altogether.

Fire District Board President Jim McCarthy issued a statement this week commenting on the imminent change of leadership and what it will mean inside and outside district headquarters.

"The district is going to miss the chief tremendously," McCarthy wrote. "He is a highly respected figure in our district and throughout the surrounding departments. While at

Bartlett, he developed a unifying culture and strong work ethic among the dedicated men and women of our fire district.

"On behalf of my fellow board members, our administration and all of our personnel, I want to thank the chief for his exemplary leadership, his consummate professionalism and for his selfless devotion to public service," McCarthy continued.

As a retiree, Falese will spend more time with his family and take in more White Sox games, McCarty added.

Falese was named Fire Chief of the Year by the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association in 2014. During his time in Bartlett, he served as a director of that association in 2010, vice president in 2011 and president in 2012. He also serves on the DuPage and Kane County Fire Chiefs Associations.

Among the other responsibilities Falese has taken on in the community are his service on the Elgin Area School District U-46 safety committee and the board of advisers for the department of public administration at Northern Illinois University.

Falese also is past president of Bartlett Rotary Club and is a two-time Rotarian of the Year. He currently serves on the nonprofit Ignite the Courage to help people in need.