Reilly: Dedicated his life to education

Publisher's note: ***Lake Tahoe News asked candidates for South Lake Tahoe City Council, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Douglas County School District, South Tahoe Public Utility District and Lake Valley Fire Protection District a series of questions. We are running the responses in the order received. All profiles may be found under the Special Projects listing and then the 2106 November Candidate Profiles category.***



Larry Reilly is running for the Area 1 seat on Lake Tahoe Unified School District's board.

Name: Larry Reilly

Age: 63

Job/profession: Retired English and social science teacher/coach

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: I have served on the South Lake Tahoe Little League and Babe Ruth baseball boards. I am a member of Kiwanis International. I taught kids workshops for

LTCC. I helped start the community basketball program on Saturdays for children 5 to 13 years of age. I have taught summer school social science classes for LTUSD. I was the assistant coach for STHS basketball program for 12 years and the basketball camps for 20 years, including international travel with players for several summers.

Why should voters vote for you over another candidate?: I have dedicated my life to education. I entered school at 5 years old and never left until last year when I retired. I have over 39 years of teaching experience. My wife and I have lived in this community for 37 years. I have two children who have graduated from Lake Tahoe Unified School District and are college graduates. I would like to give back to the students of Lake Tahoe Unified and the families in South Lake Tahoe.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: I have worked as a teacher and athletic director/dean of students in my 39 years experience in public education. I have taught civics for over 20 years and understand the all aspects of U.S. government. My students learned the federal, state and local government processes through experiential learning and became informed voters as a result. These experiences uniquely qualify me to serve as a school board trustee.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: The new school board must change the culture in the school district. Communication must be the number one priority. Parents and teachers must understand the strategic plan of the district. Parents, teachers, administrators, and the superintendent and school board must design the best strategic plan for a quality education for all children.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: I am currently studying the budget and am not comfortable answering this question completely.

Do you support current legislation for $15 minimum wage? Please explain: I can see both sides of the issue from the employer and employee position. I support the minimum wage so that people can support their families.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: Yes, I support Proposition 55 because revenues will maintain funding for public schools and colleges. Moreover, Proposition 55 will increase funding into the state's Rainy Day Fund. The passage of Proposition 55 will ensure school districts not having to return to the 2010 funding levels and protect from having to make massive budget cuts, teacher layoffs, larger class sizes, fewer services, and tuition hikes.

Describe three attributes for a successful board: 1) Engage in realistic goal setting and monitor progress.

2) Make data driven decisions to identify student progress and then justify board decisions based on data.

3) The school board must craft a positive working relationship with the superintendent, teachers, administrators, and parents based on respect, honesty, cooperation, and a strong commitment to student success.

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: I support benefits for full time public employees.

Please explain your position on contracting out work normally done by staff: I believe that if employees are qualified, they should be considered for the job.

What is your 10-year vision for the school district?: Continue our high rate of graduating students – Expand the CTE program – Increase test scores, continue to increase in student enrollment, continue to support the TWBI and EL programs, increase literacy, reinstate a six year WASC accreditation for the high school continue to attract highly qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff, maintain quality facilities

at all school sites, strive to have every student feel connected to and engaged in his/her school through programs such athletics, academics, activities, career education and community services.

What one vote in the last four years that the current board made do you disagree with and why?: I understand why the school board eliminated the position of the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction during the lean years. In the last three years the board could have hired for this position. We have fallen behind in Common Core, curriculum implementation, teacher training, and student support. We must have a highly qualified curriculum and Instruction leader who will devise a five-year plan that will give each school the resources for success.

How many meetings have you attended this year for the board you are running for?: I have attended several meetings since January of 2016.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, goals of the school board?: Again, I am currently reviewing the data.

Being on the school board means working as a team. How will you work with the next board for the greater good of the community?: I would use my lifelong years of experience as a teacher and coach to a build a culture of trust and respect on the board. Effective teamwork must be committed to common goals. Respect of others' opinions and respectful intellectual discourse and active listening to all opinions before making decisions will create trust amongst the board for the greater good of the community.

What should be the three main priorities for the board?: Support for teachers and students to effectively implement Common Core state standards. The most important responsibility of school boards is to work with their communities to improve

student achievement. Continue to solicit community input for the LCFF; communication must be our top priority. We must make sure that all parents are aware and informed about the options they have in our schools and forming common goals for our students from that input is essential. Students will have the best educational opportunities when teachers, parents, and community members share their visions and place students needs first.

What do you know about Common Core? What is your opinion about it?: The Common Core State Standards Initiative is an educational initiative adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia that details what K-12 students should know in English language arts and mathematics at the end of each grade. The initiative is sponsored by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and seeks to establish consistent educational standards across states as well as ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter college programs or to enter the workforce. The goal of Common Core is to help students improve critical thinking skills and develop a stronger understanding of concepts rather than simply memorize facts. The district must improve Common Core implementation with a strong teacher-training program. Teachers must have the opportunity to shape their curriculum to best meet their students' needs.

How can the school district partner with the city to improve high school graduation rates?: We already have a high graduation rate (between 92-97 percent over the past five years) in Lake Tahoe Unified School District, but there is always room for improvement. Partnership and student internships in our community would engage students in seeing the culmination of their educational experience through hands-on knowledge of careers and work experience that exist in our community. The STHS and Mt. Tallac High School senior project graduation requirement touches on this somewhat, but engaging students in school to work programs directly through local

businesses would benefit both students and future employers in our community. “Unity” is the key part in community.

What is your opinion about career and technical education at the high school level?: We need to continue to expand our career technical education programs at the middle and high schools and maintain the ones we have already implemented. The CTE program will continue to draw new students to our district from many areas in California and beyond. Our facilities are second to none and we should continue to explore new programs such as hospitality and hotel management, and computer programming.

Do you support the expansion of charter schools? Why or why not?: While I believe strongly in the many merits of public education, I understand why a charter school might meet the educational needs of some families. However, charter schools must be held accountable and meet the same standards as public schools so students have access to a quality education.

What are you thoughts on the accreditation status at STHS?: My understanding is that South Tahoe High School has received a two-year accreditation and is going through an appeal process. While STHS usually receives a six-year accreditation, the current outcome needs to be reviewed so the high school can return to that status. I am interested in hearing the outcome of the appeal so STHS can move forward.

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: I’m pretty much an open book. One thing most people don’t know about me is that I was first in my family to go to and graduate from college.

As a retired teacher, how can the public be assured you will see all sides and not just the teachers’?: My reputation precedes me. I have always been and always will be a student advocate. Decisions I have made as an educator have always been in the best interests of students. I view schools as an

all-inclusive learning environment.