Editorial: LTUSD board – Davidson, Turnbull

Publisher's note: ***The following endorsement is from Lake Tahoe News after a team of seven community members gathered to discuss who should be on the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board.***

This will be the first election in which Lake Tahoe Unified School District residents vote for board members based on areas – aka, where they live – instead of everyone being at large. Two contested races are going on, with a third area only having one filer.



Bonnie Turnbull



Annie Davidson

In choosing who to endorse *Lake Tahoe News* gives a great deal of thought as to the total makeup of the board. Normally, building a cohesive, well-run board is the goal. But with this election we believe it's time to shake things up a bit.

For too long the LTUSD board has been a puppet for Superintendent Jim Tarwater. He controls the board instead of the board controlling him. After all, the board is his boss, which is often lost on these electeds. This is not to unequivocally say what Tarwater and the board are doing is bad. What we are saying is that those who disagree with him have found themselves silenced in some manner. This is never a good thing.

All entities need to have open dialogue, be able to agree to disagree without being disagreeable, and to welcome new ideas.

Two of the more innovative ideas to recently come into being in LTUSD — two-way immersion at Bijou Community School and growing domes at Sierra House Elementary School — were the inspiration of parents. Tarwater was initially against them and started to lead the board that way. But the parents were tenacious. Eventually they won, and therefore the students were the ultimate beneficiaries.

Tarwater also did not bring the issue of the community play fields to the board, but instead made it a staff decision not to be a partner with the city and Lake Tahoe Community College. While the outcome may have been the same, a stronger board likely would have demanded the topic be agendized for discussion and a vote.

Lake Tahoe News believes Bonnie Turnbull for Area 3 and Annie Davidson for Area 1 are the change the LTUSD board needs.

Turnbull, while she can be aggressive and difficult to work with, is a woman with conviction who has tremendous ideas. We hope she will be able to temper her personality just a bit in order to be a productive member of the board, while at the same time challenging the status quo.

She would be replacing Mike Doyle, who admits he is the quietest board member. At meetings he appears uninterested, unengaged and a rubber stamp for the administration. The

community deserves better representation. He also chose not to respond to *LTN*'s questions by the deadline, saying he was too busy.

While Davidson and Larry Reilly are both well respected in the community, Davidson brings more to the table. In August she had already read the district's Education Technology Plan, the 2014-15 and 2015-16 budgets, Local Educational Agency document, Local Control Accountability Plan and Measure G bond projects information. And she said she was able to discuss any of them in detail.

Reilly when asked the same question – What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, goals of the school board? – told *LTN*, "Again, I am currently reviewing the data."

There isn't time for that – we need someone who gets the intricacies of the district now. Being a classroom teacher and coach are much different than being a board member.

Another strike against Reilly is that his wife is a high school counselor. This could present a conflict of interest when it comes to voting on staff contracts and other issues. The district several years ago had this same problem with the Romagnolos – one was on the board, the other a principal. Eventually the board member stepped down.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend Troy Matthews for asking to answer *Lake Tahoe News'* questions even though he is running unopposed in Area 4. This shows he wants people to know who he is, that he is conscientious, and cares about the community and district.