

# "Openness and Transparency"

As you may have seen in prior articles or literature **Vote 1-3-5 for District 15** (Manjula Sriram, Scott Herr, and Gerard Iannuzzelli) have put together a platform that outlines three major issues that need attention in District 15. Stop deficit spending, Strengthen the curriculum, and Practice "open" and "transparent" communication. My article today is focusing on being open and transparent when conducting board business.

To be "*open*" and "*transparent*" are policies that should be instilled in all organizations. Although the words are often interchanged in conversation their meanings are not the same. However in order for them to be effective these terms must be practiced together. Before I explain the benefits as it pertains to District 15 let me first outline what I believe are the true meaning of these words.

## "Openness"

The ability to have an open mind while accepting new ideas and criticism from individuals or organizations relevant to the cause.

## "Transparency"

To work on an open canvass that allows the opportunity for individuals or organizations to review your ongoing work without hindrance or obstruction thereby allowing for educated feedback.

## What does this have to do with District 15 and how does it affect you?

Well as a citizen of District 15 we want to feel comfortable knowing that our children or grandchildren are receiving the best education they can and that the district is fiscally responsible with our tax dollars. We should have the ability to express our concerns "openly" and not to have them fall on deaf ears.

We should also be able to review public documents without needing a translator to understand them. We need to have an easy and intuitive way to review the actions by the board and see this information before it is voted on. As an example the \$27 million bond issue last year was held extremely close to certain board members who did not feel the public needed to know. If it wasn't for the concerned citizens who stepped outside the box the bond purchase would have passed and we would have been stuck with a debt that we could not repay. Thanks to our voting public the bond referendum was shutdown by a 2 to 1 vote. This in itself proves that we need to have information readily available so we can help take part in crucial decisions before they escalate beyond repair.

Remember that this is our community and our dollars fund many items on the district budget.

## What about talking to the board?

Currently in District 15 there are few opportunities that allow for the citizens to show their concerns. For example, if you have ever been to a board meeting then you have seen the "5 minutes" that people are allowed to address the board and it is only a one way dialog. This is crazy!

How can a business survive if it is not open to discussing potential problems or new ideas with the people it affects most?

As a board member I would like to see a more open format where any member of the public can question the board and then, hold on to your hats, they deserve the right to hear a reply from the board and open a short dialog. Obviously there are limits to what can be discussed and how long but I would like to see it start somewhere. We should feel comfortable knowing that we can express our thoughts without the impending gavel being slammed every time we have concerns.

## Partnering with the community

In day to day business we talk about partnerships being created to better the business well Vote 1-3-5 stands behind the fact that as board members we are all representatives of the entire community. This includes students, parents, teachers, administrators and seniors as well as many other genre that make up this community. So if we truly are going to "represent" and form a "partnership" with the people then we need to have open and transparent communication so we can clearly understand what would help you feel comfortable when making decisions on your behalf.

Please help us overcome the one sidedness that is currently in place and Vote 1-3-5 (**Manjula Sriram, Scott Herr, and Gerard Iannuzzelli**) for District 15 Board of Education voting all 3 in will guarantee that you will have partnered with a team that will look out for the best interest of the community.

Article by Gerard Iannuzzelli

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