

Candidates share views at local forum

By Travis Gulbrandson

travis.gulbrandson@plaintalk.net

Area residents had the opportunity to interact with candidates from two of the upcoming races last week during a forum sponsored by the VCDC Legislative Affairs Committee.

Central ward city councilor Jenny French and challenger Kelsey Collier-Wise both were present, as were current school board member Dave Stammer and hopeful Tim Schwasinger.

Mark Bottolfsen, the other school board incumbent, was unable to attend.

VERMILLION CITY COUNCIL

One of the major topics addressed by the city candidates was affordable local housing, which French called one of her main priorities.

Simply put, the city can not grow if more options do not become available, she said.

"We can't offer jobs if we don't have the appropriate housing for the job categories," French said.

The issue puts the city in "a tough position," she said, because "we don't want to be in competition with private businesses and developers."

At the same time, French said there needs to be an option available for people with \$15-\$20 an hour salaries who don't want to live in the same buildings as college students.

Collier-Wise said that the city has acknowledged the housing issue, but "recognizing that it's an issue doesn't really solve the problem."

She said the city needs to take a stronger role in zoning to decide what kinds of buildings can be built, and where the construction should take place.

"A lot of that is going to be dictated by a plan going forward that recognizes the kinds of people and businesses we want to draw here, and what this town is going



COLLIER-WISE

to look like at the end of it," Collier-Wise said.

French said this process already has been initiated.

"We are working with Vermillion NOW! and the chamber and development company (distributing) surveys to find out exactly what kind of housing, what size, what price range will work," she said. "It's just kind of keeping the push on, trying to get some developers working with Steve (Howe) at the chamber, just to try and move forward."

Collier-Wise is a long-time resident of the community, attending both Vermillion High School and the USD School of Law.

She said she wants to promote greater community involvement, along with sustainability.

"(I want) to improve communications between the city council and the citizens," Collier-Wise said. "I feel like a lot of people don't really know what's going on at the city level, and really don't care. ...

"Unfortunately, I think we lose out on a lot of new ideas and new possibilities because we don't have that feedback from



FRENCH

the community," she said.

French came to Vermillion as a student in the late 1980s, and has served on the Chamber of Commerce, as well as the planning and zoning commission.

She said the community has seen many positive changes over the past four years, from the arrival of new businesses to the current library expansion and the plan to construct a new swimming pool. "There's just a lot of positives going on," French said. "I feel our current city council has worked well as a group. We've also worked well with other groups."

VERMILLION SCHOOL BOARD

Financial discussions were on the table between the school board candidates, with both Stammer and Schwasinger agreeing that proper budgeting is imperative.

A question was put forth regarding the possibility of spending some reserve funds in FY2013.

Stammer said the board has been budgeting reserve funds for the past couple of years.

"One of the things our staff is great about is, we budget high and we spend



SCHWASINGER

low, and that's the way you're supposed to do a budget," he said.

He added that he thinks the board is actually going to spend into its reserves this year, and is "quite certain" the same thing will happen next year, as well.

"Our reserves are healthy, but they're not overly healthy," Stammer said. "We do have 20-21 percent of our reserves, but that's what our reserves are there for. "These times right now are difficult to make our budgets meet. So, if you're having the money, spend it as long as you're still financially sound, and right now we are financially sound," he said.

Schwasinger said he agreed with Stammer's philosophy.

"If you have too-healthy reserves ... it would lead to a lot of questions," he said. "Times are tough, so now's the time to (use them) if that's what it takes to offer programs to our children, and to attract businesses to our community."

The candidates also spoke of how they plan to strike a balance between academic and activity budgets.

Schwasinger, director of patient accounts at Yankton's Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, said cooperation needs to take place between the state and local level.



STAMMER

"We at the education level have to continue to work with our state legislature, help them find ways to help us find successful ways to get funding, and then made local decisions on what to fund," he said.

Stammer, who has lived in Vermillion since the early 1990s and worked with such organizations as the Girl Scouts and Special Olympics, said the school's current activities budget is about \$330,000.

"It sounds like a lot of money, but in the grand scheme of our budget, it's probably about three to maybe five percent," he said. "Five percent is probably pushing it. It's not a huge percentage amount, but it is something that you have to look at when you're a slowly-shrinking school."

A lot of the school's funding is determined by population, and the number of students has been shrinking "the last decade or more," Stammer said.

He said he hopes that with the expansion of local businesses, more families will be drawn back.

The forum was moderated by Ted Muenster of the USD Foundation.

Three candidates vying for two positions on school board

Voters in the Vermillion School District will be asked to choose two of three candidates seeking election to the Vermillion School Board in the June 5 local election.

The Plain Talk asked the school board candidates about their views on local issues and what has prompted them to seek office.

TIM SCHWASINGER

Family: Wife - Patty; daughter - Kristen, will be in her third year at USD next year; daughter - Brooke, will be a senior at Vermillion High School next year; son - Paul, will be a freshman at Vermillion High School next year.

Education: Associate Degree - Computer Programming - National College, Rapid City; Bachelor's Degree - Business Administration, Marketing - National College, Rapid City; MBA - MIS Emphasis - USD, Vermillion.

Occupation: Director, Patient Accounts; Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, Yankton for the past 24 years.

Why do I wish to serve on the Vermillion School Board?

I would like to continue to learn more about how our public education system operates. I bring my ability to be a good listener, a desire to understand and learn more to serve in this capacity.

Identify what you believe are the three biggest challenges facing the Vermillion School District in the next five years, and how you will address those challenges.

Funding - Funding appears that it will only continue to become more challenging for many years to come. I believe we will have to continue to work together as a community and a state to come up with a

better approach to ensuring the top education for our students without dictation by the state as to how the funds should be spent. We will all have to continue to work with our legislators state wide to help them define options and solutions to assist everyone who is dependent upon state funding.

Employee Satisfaction/Employee Engagement - The most important asset any business has are the employee's that work for that business. By ensuring a satisfied and engaged workforce from top to bottom we can ensure that the goals and achievements that we strive for are met.

Economic Development - We must ensure that as a school district we continue to work with our partners in the community so that when employers are looking to move to or expand operations in Vermillion we can support those actions by providing a well rounded, active and progressive education system to assist those that wish to call Vermillion home in the future. By continuing and strengthening the relationships already in place we can ensure we are an attractive community in so many ways.

What makes you the best person for a seat on the Vermillion School Board?

I believe I bring to the position a commitment to doing what is best for the community and district. My ability to work with a large variety of people in attaining a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities that are before us is my best asset. I am at a point in my life that I desire to share by business knowledge in a useful and meaningful way and look forward to representing you on the Vermillion School Board.

MARK BOTTOLFSON

Family: Wife - Beth; children - Stacy, Megan & Blaine.

Education/Occupation: Graduated from Vermillion High School in 1982. Self employed farmer.

If incumbent, years of experience: 15 years

Why do you wish to serve on the Vermillion School Board?

I want to continue to serve on the board to ensure that high quality education is available for our students and provide the best learning opportunities with the resources available to the district.

Identify what you believe are the three biggest challenges facing the Vermillion School District in the next five years, and how you will address those challenges.

1) Teachers and support staff are vital in providing the best possible education for our students. It is imperative that we attract and maintain highly qualified teachers to educate our students. While limited funding presents a challenge, I will continue to support fair compensation for our teachers and staff.

2) Technology will continue to play an extremely important role in the student's future. The learning opportunities we provide to the students must include the latest technology available to us. Technology will be a part of every student's future no matter what path they choose to follow. I will continue to support advances in technology in our classrooms.

3) A significant emphasis must be placed on educating our state legislators on the importance of providing adequate funding necessary to provide quality programs and

the best learning opportunities for the students of our district. I feel children are our future and we will need to continue to urge our legislators to provide necessary educational funding.

What makes you the best person for the seat on the Vermillion School Board?

I want to give the students of Vermillion the best opportunity for education that we can provide. I have enjoyed serving on the board for the past 15 years and am prepared to take on the important challenges that face the district.

DAVE STAMMER

Family: My wife Nikki and my two daughters, Sharrie and Kayla.

If incumbent, years of experience: 6 years (2 terms).

Why do you wish to serve on the Vermillion School Board?

When I was first elected, my drive was to foster new ideas, new perspectives and to ensure that the money that was spent went to benefit our children the best it could. Over the past few years, I have helped with those goals and I will continue to listen to the public and try to find the best possible solution that will be in the best interest of all the students.

Identify what you believe are the three biggest challenges facing the Vermillion School District in the next five years, and how you will address those challenges.

The first challenge every year is funding. How much money will we have, how much will our expenses going to be? We face those questions every year and just like in most of our personal lives we seem to have less income yet expenses continue to get larger. Recently, because

of a weak economy and the reduction in state aid, we asked local tax payers for more and we asked all the great employees of our school for some sacrifices. The way the school funding is set up, if a school is growing they seem to have enough general fund money to grow, add staff and programs at a rate that meets or exceed expectations, whereas if a district is slowly losing students the district has a difficult if not impossible time finding ways to do the opposite.

This is my second challenge for our district, which is student population. We currently are slowly losing students. In the past ten years we have lost an average about 13 students for each year. This population decline affects how much funding the district receives, which amounts to a reduction of about \$57,000/year. Due to fewer students our funding shrinks and therefore so must the budget at a rate that doesn't hurt the superior quality of our school. But, I believe that Vermillion and the Vermillion area are ripe for growth. We have seen a number of new businesses come to town and with that one would conclude that families will follow. If job growth continues and more families do move into our district our schools will need to be able to grow. Our growth doesn't necessarily depend on all the talk about Hyperion, but if it does happen and happen the way we all have heard, then our school district will face many challenges and changes.

This leads into my third challenge, which is our buildings and facilities. We have some very large and expensive projects that are on the horizon. Number of our buildings will need roofs and heating/ventilation systems replaced. Recently, we replaced the heating system in Austin

School. The cost of this project was over \$400,000. It is a lot of money but the cost is pale in comparison to the cost of a new building. Also, this summer our track will be replaced at a cost of about \$250,000 and sewer lines at the middle school that cost \$60,000. These are needed repairs but have large price tags. If growth does occur we need extensive plans for any expansions and additions. If growth does not occur we also need a plan for our current facilities and do we delay a remodeling project in anticipation that our district's growth will change.

I listed only three challenges that the Vermillion School District faces, there are many more, some big others small, some that only take a little time to solve and others that seem to be a challenge every year.

What makes you the best person for a seat on the Vermillion School Board?

I am the best person because just as in my personal life I believe that having a sound financial plan is the foundation. I want our children to have the best education and extracurricular experience that we can offer. I am willing to listen to any suggestions that anyone has to offer to make a sound judgment for our students, staff and schools. I like to take my time and research things when I can instead of jumping into things quickly. I am ready for the challenges that I listed earlier and all other challenges that will face Vermillion. I have enjoyed the years that I have gotten to serve on the board and I wish to continue to serve as I feel I have learned a lot the past few years but feel I still have more to give to our students, teachers and our schools. I believe that we have some of the best students and teachers and I believe that

S.D. Commission on Child Support to hold hearings

The Governor's Commission on Child Support will conduct public hearings this summer to gather input on potential changes to South Dakota's child-support guidelines and related statutes.

The commission is conducting its required four-year review of South Dakota's child-support guidelines and is comprised of representatives of custodial and non-custodial parents, family law attorneys, the Judiciary, Legislature, and Department of Social Services. The commission may recommend changes that reflect adjustments in the costs of raising children, paternity establishment and disestablishment processes and presumptions, and other issues with related statutes. The commission will submit its report and recommendations

to Gov. Dennis Daugaard by Dec. 31, 2012, to be considered during the 2013 legislative session.

In the Pierre area, members of the public can attend the hearing on Monday, June 11, from 6 to 8 p.m. CDT in Conference Room 3, located on the first floor of the Kneip Building, 700 Governors Drive. Members of the public from the Aberdeen area are invited to take part in the Commission on Child Support hearing by going to the Dakota Digital Network (DDN) Studio at Northern State University, in Room 117 of the Library Building, 1200 South Jay Street.

Public hearings will also be held on Monday, July 2, 2012, from 6 to 8 p.m. MDT in the Lincoln Room at the Ramkota Hotel, 2111 N. LaCrosse Street, Rapid City, and Monday, Aug.

13, 2012, from 6 to 8 p.m. CDT in the Palisades rooms 1 & 2 at the Holiday Inn City Centre, 100 W. 8th Street, Sioux Falls.

The hearings are not intended for specific comments or to address

complaints involving individual child-support cases or visitation. Discussions during the public hearings will be limited to potential changes to the child-support guidelines and statutes.

Prime Rate
MOTEL

BARGAIN
Stay

Minneapolis South - Burnsville

- Indoor Pool/Whirlpool/Sauna
- 10 Min. to Mall of America
- Free High Speed Internet
- 15 Min. to Mystic Lake Casino
- FREE Coffee & Donuts
- Refrigerator & Microwave included in ALL rooms
- 10 Min. to Valley Fair
- 2 Min. to Burnsville PAC

\$49.95 per night plus tax

1 or 2 Queen Beds

Valid thru Dec. 31st, 2012
Valley Fair discount tickets available
Not valid with any other offers or discounts
Coupon valid for multiple nights & rooms
Coupon not valid with online reservations

Reservations: 1-800-358-8554 | (952) 894-8554 | www.Primeratemotelmn.com
On I-35W Exit at Burnsville Pkwy 12850 W. Frontage Rd. Burnsville 55337

Innovation comes in all shapes and sizes.

LENNOX
HOME COMFORT SYSTEMS
Innovation never felt so good.™

Whatever the size of your home or budget, Lennox has a home comfort system that's right for you. And because our entire line of products is designed to provide efficient heating and cooling, you could enjoy lower energy bills without sacrificing comfort. Now that's a beautiful thing.

Save Up To \$2375 Now!

Offer expires 6/15/2012.
©2012 Lennox Industries, Inc. See your Lennox dealer for details. Lennox dealers include independently owned and operated businesses. One offer available per qualifying purchase.

Larry's HEATING & COOLING

920 Broadway Yankton, SD • 665-9461 • 1-800-491-9461