

## CFF Ferndale School Board Candidates Forum

Sunday, April 25, 2010 from 1:00 – 2:30 pm

at the Kulick Center

Election: Tuesday, May 4, 2010

### 1. Basic Information

Name \_\_Nancy Kerr-Mueller

Address 434 East Lewiston, Ferndale

Phone and/or E-mail address where citizens can reach you

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### 2. Introductory Information

#### 1. Did your children attend Ferndale schools? Why or why not?

My sons both currently attend Roosevelt, which is in the Ferndale district. I have one in 1<sup>st</sup> grade in the open classroom and one in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

#### 2. Why are you running for the School Board?

I am running for school board to encourage discussion about our schools, influence policy changes that will foster solid improvement, and work hard to ensure the Ferndale Schools remains a full service school district. I believe in open communication and building bridges, and this forum is one way to do that.

#### c. What specific experiences have you had that would prepare you for this position?

I have been working in School Districts since I graduated from The University of Michigan in 1996. I have worked under grants in local school districts as a social worker,

instructor, art teacher, and I am currently employed at the Madison School District as a career development facilitator. In my career I have developed curriculum, managed budgets, directed events like career day and senior mock interviews, and I have developed working relationships with communities businesses. As a volunteer in Ferndale I have worked to help educate young families in our community about the wonderful opportunities our school district provides and I have worked with students to provide programs that would otherwise not be available through our parent volunteer programs.

### 3. Issues that Face the Ferndale Schools

1. Our teachers and support staff continue to work without contracts. I'd like to see them better supported.
2. I plan to tap into our community stakeholders to increase volunteerism.
3. I'd like to see the School Board elections moved to November. It would save the city money and would increase community involvement in the election process.

1. Give your assessment of how the middle school/high school/one building arrangement is working out.

I recently had a tour of the High School with the Ferndale District Ambassadors and was very impressed with how they have managed to keep the two schools separate while ensuring both schools have access to the many resources at the building.

b. What changes/challenges will the Ferndale Schools face due to changes in state funding?

State funding is not reliable right now. The Board and Superintendent have already created an innovative system to bring in other sources of funding. (Like starting UHS and looking into providing consulting services). Next year we are looking at the possibility of loosing another large sum per pupil. It is our number one priority now to ensure that any budget cut will not effect our district services and our employees that work valiantly to give our students the best education.

c. Is the university/high school program living up to expectations?

I believe it is not only living up to expectations but also exceeding them. I had the opportunity to substitute teach there and was very impressed with the level of work that is being done there.

d. What effect has the “Schools of Choice” program had on Ferndale schools?

School of Choice has enabled us to maintain our full service district. Keeping the limit to 15% is smart and I support it. On the downside I think people get scared by the idea of “Schools of Choice” and many parents have chosen to take their children to other districts. This is a problem we need to be honest about and talk more about.

e. How should the success of a school district be measured? And how do you see Ferndale ranking, based on that criteria?

A district should be measured by the services that it provides its students, by the satisfaction its students and parents share for the district, by the care the administration and teachers take in ensuring the best education for its students, and by the level of improved achievement our students show as they mature and grow. I do not like that standardized test scores are such a large measure of the success of our district, and that should not be the only criteria. Based on this criteria, I believe that Ferndale schools is outperforming most schools in this very competitive county. We need to educate and market our district to provide the right information to our community. Yes, MEAP scores are one way to measure performance, but there is so much more to our district than these scores.

f. Should the curriculum be the same for all students? Why or why not?

Children learn in different ways, at different rates, and have different environments that effect learning. That being said, I do believe that there should be standards that we need to ensure every child should reach, but how they get there is why we choose the best teachers and administrators for our schools.

g. Please list the three (3) most positive things you can say about our school district.

1. I have worked in 3 different districts and can say without a doubt that we have much more parental involvement across the board here in Ferndale.
2. Our school district has made the hard choices to do unpopular things to make sure our school district stays solvent. Financially, our district is sound.
3. Our teachers and staff are committed to this district and care about the students. I am so proud my children are in this district.

h. Please list the three (3) issues that you see as problematic or that definitely will be addressed by the Board in the next two years.

1. We need to get back to the negotiating table for our teachers and staff.
2. We need to build bridges with the community and get the word out about all of the wonderful things happening. The stakeholders need to be tapped into so that they will have a bigger stake in what happens.
3. I'd like to see the relationship we have with the city government strengthened. It would behoove us to work together – we both will rise.

#### 4. THE BIG ONE

Why should I send my child to Ferndale Schools?

Ferndale schools are vibrant and diverse. They prepare our children to excel in a global world. When your child is in the Ferndale Schools they are not just a part of a school system – they are part of a community (and so are you). This community is growing in its desire to serve the district and ensure that all of our students are experiencing the best in education.

Return this questionnaire to Kat Bruner James at 263 Vester St or email to [kbruner@albion.edu](mailto:kbruner@albion.edu).

Thanks!