

OPINION

EDITORIALS

School Board candidates earn our vote

If the current collection of candidates for the Fairfield-Suisun School Board is any indication, the future is bright for our schools.

The candidates have shown a universal concern for students, teachers and performance. But only four seats are available on the seven-member board.

Ivan Meadows, Pat Shamansky, Susan Heumphreus and Helen Tilley have the skills and experience needed to fill those seats at a critical time for the school district.

Ivan Meadows deserves to return to the board. He understands schools from every level and has detailed knowledge of programs, budgets and state and federal mandates. He has been a good steward of the district's fiscal condition and his willingness to keep fighting to improve our schools during these challenging times is commendable.

Pat Shamansky deserves a full term of her own. The board appointed her to fill an empty seat last spring. In that time, Shamansky has demonstrated that she is clear thinker who is dedicated to improving the quality of education while at the same time working to improve the relationship between teachers and the district office.

Susan Heumphreus took the unusual step of leaving the School Board in the 1990s to enter the classroom as a teacher. She would bring to the board considerable knowledge of what goes on in the classroom and at the district level.

Those experiences put her in the unique position of seeing issues from both sides of the table, giving her a perspective that no else brings to the race.

Helen Tilley would be a newcomer to the board, but she isn't a newcomer to education in our community. She's been active at local schools, has a sharp legal mind and the desire to seek practical solutions to problems as well urging better communication and planning in the district.

All four of these candidates recognize the challenges the district and the community face, including the importance of hiring a superintendent who will move this district forward in a positive and productive manner.

We believe they are up to the daunting challenges this school district presents.

EDITOR'S VIEW

It's time for teenage boys to show some muscle

The other day I was telling a co-worker that my wife and I were planning on celebrating my son's 18th birthday, and I couldn't decide what to get him to honor his transition from boy to man.

As I was talking to Larry, my mind was churning through gift options: money, computer games, latest iPod, or television. The more I thought about it, the more pressure I was starting to feel. I didn't want to give my son the wrong gift, one that failed to adequately show how much I loved him, or worse yet embarrass him when he told his friends about it.

"When I turned 18," said Larry, an Air Force veteran, "I was thinking of Nam."

That comment struck me with the force of a mortar shell and led me to reflect on the current state of teenaged boys. While there's still some who are willing to fight for their country or face the challenges of growing up in other ways, there's a whole bunch of them that are going soft even as they look up their



Pat Butler

noses at the parents who have allowed all this technology to invade their homes and empower their children.

You know what I mean. They complain if their parents won't buy a 52-inch plasma television or if they won't install wireless Internet that allows them to enjoy endless hours of gaming at light speed with friends and strangers. They want the newest generation of everything as soon as it's on the store shelves or they believe their parents are lame or cheap.

They are technologically rich and with that comes the same snob appeal you see with old money. Parents, they nod condescendingly, are such relics of the past while they are the gifted generation that has become one with technology. With their ability to manipulate images, manage music, have instant contact with friends and travel effortlessly through the cyber universe, they have become gods of their own worlds without leaving their bedrooms.

As they sit in their rooms gaming or go to "sleepovers" where they have video-game orgies that can last all night, I can't imagine this group doing what it takes to keep this country from becoming a third-rate world power or their muscles from turning into jello.

A couple of years ago, I did not accept the notion that illegal immigrants were doing work that Americans would not do. Now, I'm starting to believe that is the case. Teenaged boys don't want to get their hands dirty and they believe hard work is below them.

Instead of reveling in the raw power and physical prowess of youth, they wear earrings, get their lips and eyebrows pierced, dye their hair and decorate themselves with tattoos that make them look tough, which is so much easier than actually being tough. They also spend more time than ever shopping, which represents a significant change from my day when boys didn't know the brand name of anything they wore with the possible exception of blue jeans.

Before you dismiss my observa-

tions take a close look at what is going on around us. Last year, my publisher, Bill James, and I interviewed eight or nine high school students for a Daily Republic scholarship. All but one of those bright, enthusiastic and impressive students were girls.

The boys, I imagine, were either locked in their rooms gaming or primping in front of the mirror to see if they looked "bad" enough, since the outlaw-wannabe look seems popular on the street.

The college advisers I talk to tell me far more women are pursuing journalism careers than men. In the applications I see from recent college graduates, that seems to be the case.

So, what's it all mean? Are the guys who fought in Vietnam better men than teenaged boys are going to be? I'd say it's too early to tell but not too early to worry about the next generation of men.

Pat Butler is managing editor of the Daily Republic. Reach him at 427-6929 or pbutler@dailyrepublic.net.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Gore's Nobel Prize proves critics wrong

Our three main news spinners of the Republicans have been embarrassed by Al Gore, our newest Nobel prize winner.

Limbaugh, O'Reilly and Beck (LOBs for short) have ridiculed Gore's world-wide renowned warnings regarding the cause and effect of global warming.

Now that the scientific world has vindicated Gores concerns by awarding him the Nobel Peace prize, the LOBs are scrambling for spins, even denouncing the importance of such a prestigious recognition.

One went so far as to remind us that other past nominees included Stalin and Hitler, which is true, but he failed to add that anyone can be nominated and a committee decides if the countless nominees have any merit.

Perhaps the LOBs should admit that Gore deserves his medal, plus, utilize their airtime to urge our own government to join other nations already unified in combating global warming. We are in a crises, folks.

Cliff Benson
Fairfield

Underestimating trains' speed can be deadly

Twenty-three years ago, I was introduced to the "gray ghost."

No, it wasn't Halloween. I was working for the Southern Pacific Railroad and I had been sent over to the peninsula to work on the tracks that the Cal Train Commuter used.

I had never seen a train like that before. It was short (five or six cars), it was fast (80 miles per hour) and it was quiet. The train was designed to pull the cars one way (the conventional way) and push the cars with a specially designed control car going the other way (real quiet!).

It was a hard train to gage when it came to its speed and it would sneak up on you. That's why we called it "the gray ghost." You never relied on your ears when the ghost was around because if you did you might get run over.



www.dailypress.com/cartoons

Over the years Cal Train has hit and run over a lot of people, including police officers. The railroad has always resisted building a fence because they would have to maintain it (failing to do so could generate a lawsuit).

There has been a lot of effort put into public awareness on the peninsula to try and reduce the number of fatalities.

Now we have our very own gray ghost called "The Capital Corridor" and now with more and more frequent trains in the works the "gray ghost" is sure to kill more people until they are made aware of how swift and quiet these trains are, especially in the fog.

Freight trains rumble the ground underneath you long before they arrive. Not the Ghost.

Beware, stay away, look first and then listen. Don't try to beat the ghost at the crossing gates (he wins

this race often). Warn your kids. This train has a history of death and is deadly.

Thomas Delaney
Fairfield

Can candidates pay for promises?

It's interesting to read that City Council candidate Chuck Timm wants to hire 15 new police officers and build and staff two new firestations plus a new police substation.

Police officers and trainees in Fairfield (with benefits and overtime) cost about \$119,000 per year on average. Those above the basic ranks, of course, cost more. Staffing a new fire station costs around \$1.9 million per year.

Do the math: these additions will cost \$5.85 million a year. How will Chuck pay for them?

Well, it won't be with the \$3.2 million he wants cut out of Fairfield's general fund by advocating for a "no" vote on Measure Q. He'll need to find over \$8.785 million in new money or cut that much in services.

Let's see, we don't need the people who do the "non-essential" services, so why not cut all of the city manager's office, human resources, finance, data processing and community development. That would save \$5.2 million. Now we're only \$3.5 million short. Of course, now there's no one to lead the troops, pay the bills, plan for new commercial and housing developments, hire the cops and so on.

So - we can't touch our police and firefighters. What about our youth and senior programs and public works? Most people like not hav-

ing potholes in their roads. Most like their parks being maintained. Most want the after-school programs for their kids. Hard to cut there.

I talked to several police officers the other day. I asked them why their union didn't support Measure Q. They didn't know. They said, we don't live here. Anyway, cops are important. They won't cut us, they believe and if they do we'll just get a job somewhere else.

When I ran for office four years ago, I was asked by the city's police and fire unions if I supported binding arbitration. I said "no." That's at least one reason I was not endorsed by them.

Binding arbitration means that if the city and the unions can't agree on a contract, an arbitrator makes the decision on how city dollars get spent.

The Oct. 18 Vacaville Reporter notes that the city of Vallejo is currently appealing an arbitrator's Sept. 15 ruling that Vallejo can't make \$4 million in staffing cuts "to shore up a projected \$9 million general fund deficit" (page 3A).

Union negotiations are coming up next year and I'm worried. What will they be asking for? Every increase they get will make our looming deficit worse. If Chuck gets elected, there will be a council majority of three who are staunch allies of the police and fire departments.

Please consider a "yes" vote on Measure Q. It will help ensure the continuation of our current levels of service. Please listen carefully to what the candidates for City Council are promising and decide what it means for Fairfield's future and if that is what you want.

Marilyn Farley
Fairfield City Council

DAILY REPUBLIC ONLINE

PulsePoll

Question of the week:

Do you support the state's desire to take over the day-to-day operation of the Vallejo Baylink Ferry?

VOTE ONLINE AT www.dailyrepublic.com

The results of last week's question:

Is the city of Fairfield doing enough for our youth?

Yes	<div style="width: 11.9%; height: 10px; background-color: #444; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	11.9%	185 Daily Republic Online readers voted
No	<div style="width: 69.7%; height: 10px; background-color: #ccc; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	69.7%	
Don't know	<div style="width: 4.3%; height: 10px; background-color: #eee; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	4.3%	
Don't know	<div style="width: 14.1%; height: 10px; background-color: #eee; border: 1px solid black;"></div>	14.1%	

DAILY REPUBLIC

A McNaughton Newspaper
Locally Owned and Operated
Serving Solano County since 1855

Foy McNaughton
President / CEO

Bill James Publisher
Pat Butler Managing Editor