

and 12 new bus drivers that the current school board cut in favor of the pre-k program. My opponent and I differ here – she supported cutting the teachers and bus drivers for a pre-k program that does not provide a single dollar for schools in the Midlothian District. The board of supervisors should not micromanage the school budget – but in this case the current school board erred by cutting teachers and bus drivers in favor of an unproven program which only benefits parts of the county.

Right now, elementary schools in Chesterfield have 493 more students than available classroom seats, but there are 162 trailers being used as classrooms. Should redistricting occur to reduce the number of classroom trailers?

Clover Hill

Bradner: Because this has gone unaddressed for so long, redistricting will have to be a part of any short-term solution. Chesterfield must eventually commit to a building program that will keep pace with the trends of population growth, and the planning tools currently employed to predict enrollment numbers are obviously in need of review. Further, the school board members themselves need to be more visible and vocal about the impact of unrestricted residential growth. Nowhere is this more vividly illustrated than on the campuses of some of our local schools, where “educational cottages” have become the rule, rather than the exception.

Lancaster: Yes, redistricting should occur to reduce the number of classroom trailers. The school board has the authority to establish school attendance zones to alleviate some of the overcrowding in schools. Redistricting initially is never welcomed because it means change and oftentimes abandonment of family devotions. However, in the best interest of children, the board needs to fulfill its obligation of providing safe schools and environments conducive to effective teaching and learning as a priority.

Pettitt: These students are spread out significantly throughout the county. Redistricting would have to be done countywide and possibly

yearly to ensure that no school was overcapacity. School board policy addresses both overcrowding and declining numbers. One of the first options to alleviate overcrowding is the use of trailers. This gives us the greatest flexibility in addressing population shifts and the most



Pettitt

efficient use of taxpayer dollars. If the core facilities of a building are being overtaxed, then we would select additional methods of correction: moving special programs, changing attendance zones, additions/renovations or a new school.

Matoaca

Doland: We have initiated a public engagement process that begins with fair and equitable representation from those communities whose children may be affected by a boundary change. To fill all available seats at the elementary level may require violating our criteria of time, distance and keeping communities together whenever possible. Leaving some room for growth in growing areas makes good sense. First, we need to look at moving special programs, student waivers, population trends and enrollment projections. With public support and input, we may be able to address overcrowding in some clearly identified areas

of the county.
Rajah: That’s a difficult question to answer. It’s definitely an option that needs to be explored, provided we can keep the concept of the neighborhood school and not split up subdivisions. We need to listen to our teachers in terms of what they tell us are their ideal class sizes and the best environment for students to learn in, and recognize that the way to prevent this over-reliance on trailers in the future is through better communication and facilities planning.

Midlothian

Carpenter: Redistricting is only one solution to overcrowding. CCPS looks at the instructional capacity of the neighboring schools prior to moving attendance zones, and what the long-term projections would be for that area. Another solution could be moving special programs, rather than students. Eliminating waivers is another solution. I would not recommend redistricting, unless the core facilities were being affected due to severe overcrowding (i.e. cafeteria, resources, etc.) and started to affect the overall quality of the learning experience. Some of this criterion is part of what we developed during the Task Force for Redistricting I was involved in several years ago.

Finkbeiner: In any growing jurisdiction, redistricting will be necessary over time. But we can do better when it comes to planning. As part of my 12-point policy reform program, I am proposing that the school board, board of supervisors and planning commission meet jointly at least twice a year. These bodies have not met together since 2002. As a member of the school board, I want to be part of the discussion when new residential projects impacting our schools are being reviewed so that our school system can plan ahead rather than having to react to an unexpected influx of new students.



Finkbeiner

How should the Clover Hill High School building on Hull Street Road be used after the new high school opens?

Clover Hill

Bradner: Building sites are becoming more scarce and expensive in Chesterfield with each passing year. The Centerpointe/Tomahawk Creek facility opening in 2008 will be only a short-term solution to middle school overcrowding in Midlothian and western Chesterfield. With these things in mind, there is no doubt in my mind that the existing Clover Hill High School facility should be renovated and made into a middle school as soon as possible after students move into the new high school. This is the obvious choice, it’s the most environmentally-friendly choice, and it’s the most fiscally responsible choice on behalf of our taxpayers.

Lancaster: The renovated Clover Hill High School building on Hull Street Road should become a middle school during the day and a possible alternative night school for high school students.

Pettitt: The school system always has need for additional space. Since we have three years to monitor needs, we will consider multiple options. It could be renovated and used as a middle school, administrative space, an alternative school or another technical center.

Matoaca

Doland: I would recommend we utilize the building as a central administration building. Having all central administrators

and specialists in one facility would enhance communication. We could sell the Fulghum Center, Central Office, Watkins Annex and stop leasing office space from Ukrop’s. The money received could be used to refurbish the building. Some alternative education programs may also fit within this complex as space allows. Any acreage not needed for parking could be used for a county park for this rapidly growing part of the county. Use as a middle school is problematic due to traffic congestion in this area.

Rajah: I believe it should become Clover Hill Middle School in order to relieve overcrowding at other schools in that part of the county.

Midlothian

Carpenter: Certainly a consideration would be a traditional school building, like a middle school. In view of the growing industry, I see a vast need in technology and those types of careers that we currently do not emphasize or serve. This could be a new school designed around this type of technology. This too could be open 16 hours a day to offer programs to all students and staffed by not only educators, but business leaders and health care professionals. The possibilities are endless on how you prepare the children for the 21st century job market they are about to enter.



Carpenter

Finkbeiner: As a graduate of Clover Hill High School, I want to make sure it remains a viable facility in our county. My vision for Clover Hill would be to create a school focused on preparing our students for the 21st century economy. Students would be trained and educated in computer network and Internet certifications, wireless and fiber-based communications deployment and maintenance, and software development. This would provide our children with the option to go on to pursue engineering degrees or use their training for well-paid jobs right out of high school.

What qualifies you to become a school board member?

Clover Hill

Bradner: The most important factor is the high level of current involvement I have with children, schools, families and the community. My wife and I have six children – two high schoolers, one middle schooler, two elementary schoolers and a newborn. I am a member of the PTA/PTSA at four different schools. I am active in youth-related organizations and in other areas of public service. I pay attention to what goes on in county politics – both in and out of the public meeting room. I listen actively to people’s concerns, and often I am directly involved in seeking and implementing solutions.

Lancaster: I am a retired educator with 35 years of experience in Virginia. I have effectively served as a master teacher, curriculum specialist, testing coordinator, principal, assistant principal, mentor, department chairman, program director, club sponsor and an ambassador for our country in educational studies abroad. These opportunities have afforded me valuable experiences with people of diverse cultures, socioeconomic statuses and educational backgrounds. Having served as a practitioner in rural, urban and suburban school settings has allowed me to build a reputation of successfully advocating for all children, school employees and public education. Service to children is

Pettitt: I believe that an attitude of unselfish service is a basic requirement for a school board member. The role requires a great deal of time, energy, commitment and willingness to be continuously learning, often through reading a great deal of diverse material and always through a lot of listening with an open mind. Honesty, accepting criticism, treating others with respect, accepting differences and working well with all types of people are essential traits that I have demonstrated. Controversial and difficult decisions require courage and keeping one’s primary focus on the benefit of public education to all children and the community.

Matoaca

Doland: A psychologist is trained in childhood development, and I have served children from ages 2-21 in both regular and special education. I worked at all grade levels and provided assessment, counseling and consultative services. My responsibilities as an administrator have given me an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the educational system. Since being elected, I have focused on accountability and assessment of teachers and administrators. We have implemented a public and employee engagement process that empowers these individuals to assist us in the decision-making process. Our interfaith clergy and business partnerships are very appreciated.

Rajah: I’ve been a teacher in the Chesterfield County Public Schools, and am currently a teacher for the Department of Justice. In fact, I’ll be the first public school teacher



Rajah

ever elected to the school board from the Matoaca District. Beyond that, I’m a father in the public schools, so I have a vested interest in keeping our education system as strong as possible. I’ve also been very involved in efforts to fight the growing problem of gang activity in Chesterfield County schools, and organized the county’s first ever gang awareness training conference.

Midlothian

Carpenter: I have been working with CCPS for the last five years. I chaired the Bond Referendum in 2004, which passed with the largest percentage in the history of the County – 87.3 percent. I am a substitute teacher, was on the Task Force for Redistricting, co-chaired Homeowners for Quality Schools, a grassroots organization that challenged county officials to examine the assumptions they were using to project growth in the county. This is my second term as a PTA president, and I was vice president for two terms prior to that. I have been listening to parents and the school community for years.

Finkbeiner: I have 20 years experience working with all levels of government. As a longtime resident of Midlothian and a graduate of Chesterfield’s public schools, I am prepared to take what we have learned and offer new solutions to continue to improve our great schools. My children are in the public schools in Midlothian, so I have a vested interest in their long-term success. The reforms I have proposed are evidence of my qualifications because I have a track record of leadership working with local and state budgets, policy development, and responding to the needs of constituents.