

Richland Schools

Office of the Superintendent

Memorandum

Date: 10/27/23
To: School Board
From: Shelley Redinger
Subject: Friday Packet

Enclosed please find the following documents:

- Board Dates to Remember
- Community Events/Activities
- Trunk or Treat Events
- Media



TO: Board of Directors
RE: Event Dates
DATE: 10/27/23

October:

- **10/31...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
 - **5:30-6:30-Ex Session-(only if needed)**

November:

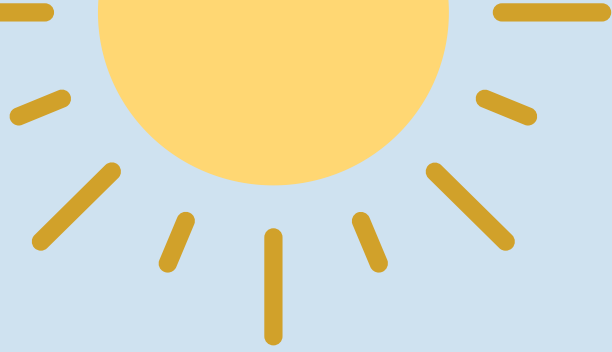
- **11/14...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
 - **5:30-6:30-Ex Session-(only if needed)**
- **11/28...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
 - **5:30-6:30-Ex Session-(only if needed)**

December:

- **12/12...Board Meeting-Board Room-6:30**
 - **5:30-6:30-Ex Session-(only if needed)**

Upcoming Events/Activities

This list is suggestions of RSD and community events to attend as a Board Member. By no means is it a comprehensive list of all activities in the District. Future events will be added weekly.



November

**Thursday
2**

**RSD Facilities
Community Update**
12:00 PM
Zoom

**Thursday
2**

**Careers & Financial Literacy
Mock Interviews**
All Day
Hanford High School

**Friday
3**

Much Ado About Nothing
7:30 PM
HHS Black Box Theatre
www.hanforddrama.org

**Saturday
4**

Twelfth Night
7:30 PM
HHS Black Box Theatre
www.hanforddrama.org

**Friday
3**

Science Night
6 - 7:30 PM
Jefferson Elementary Gym

**Saturday
4**

ALE Career Expo
12:30 - 3 PM
River's Edge High School

**Thursday
9**

Twelfth Night
7:30 PM
HHS Black Box Theatre
www.hanforddrama.org

**Friday
10**

Much Ado About Nothing
7:30 PM
HHS Black Box Theatre
www.hanforddrama.org

**Saturday
11**

Much Ado About Nothing
2:00 PM
HHS Black Box Theatre
www.hanforddrama.org

**Saturday
11**

Twelfth Night
7:30 PM
HHS Black Box Theatre
www.hanforddrama.org

**Thursday
16**

**Homelink Secondary
Music Concert**
5:30 - 7 PM
Chief Jo Auditorium

**Friday
17**

**Homelink Secondary
Marimba Concert**
6 - 7:30 PM
Chief Jo Auditorium

**Thursday
30**

Choir Holiday Concert
6:30 - 8:15 PM
Hanford High School

December

**Friday
1**

Choir Holiday Concert
6:30 - 8:15 PM
Hanford High School

**Saturday
9**

Hanford Holiday Bazaar
Hanford High School

**Hanford + Richland High
Athletic Events Calendars**
www.hanfordathletics.com/events
www.bomberathletics.com/events

The background is dark purple with several stylized candy corns and lollipops. In the top left, a candy corn is oriented diagonally with orange, red, and yellow segments. In the top center, another candy corn is partially visible. In the top right, a round lollipop with orange and red segments on a stick is shown. In the middle left, a green lollipop with a white outline is visible. In the bottom left, a candy corn with orange, red, and yellow segments is shown. In the bottom right, a green lollipop with a white outline is visible. Small orange and green dots are scattered throughout the background.

Trunk or Treat

.....
Badger Mountain Elementary
Friday, October 27
6 - 8 PM

.....
Early Learning Center
Friday, October 27
6 - 8 PM

.....
Orchard Elementary
Friday, October 27
6 - 7:30 PM

.....
Tapteal Elementary
Friday, October 27
5:30 - 7:30 PM

Conservatives tighten grip on Kennewick School Board

How candidates stand on flags, book bans

BY ERIC ROSANE
EROSANE@TRICITYHERALD.COM

The school board in Kennewick will see a conservative swing in its makeup this fall.

Three of the Kennewick School Board's five seats are up for reelection on the Nov. 7 general election ballot. Ron Mabry and Diane Sundvik, two moderate voices on the board, have chosen to not seek reelection.

Local Republicans hope to instill a conservative majority on the school board after three successful recall measures [ousted their majority on the school board in Richland](#).

"This election is going to impact the next four years of the Kennewick School District," said Dustin Petersen, a father of three who is running to the right of board president Michael Connors.

The [Benton County Republican Central Committee endorsed](#) Petersen, Brittany Gledhill and Joshua Miller earlier this year for seats on the Kennewick board.

Miller is [already guaranteed a seat](#) after his opponent, Lisa Peppard, announced she would end her candidacy after a death in the family. While her name still appears on the Nov. 7 ballot, she says she will relinquish the seat if she wins.

That ensures the Kennewick board will have a solid conservative majority voting bloc starting in December.

But the slate of Republican candidates say they're not interested in shaking things up, only improving student achievement and academics and restoring community trust after two failed levies in Kennewick.

School board seats have traditionally not attracted much attention from prospective candidates. Meetings are often long and the positions are unpaid.

But in recent years, despite being nonpartisan positions, school boards have become a lightning rod for "culture war" issues and ideological battles. The COVID pandemic heightened this, with parents and community members coming out to debate mask and vaccine mandates and the obscure concept of "critical race theory" or CRT.

Kennewick hasn't sat mum to these issues, either.

In February, the school board shot down a controversial policy amendment that would have [placed limits on how teachers could display non-U.S. flags](#) — such as rainbow gay pride flags — in classrooms.

And last year, the board adopted a policy amendment that [students must be taught "factual U.S. history"](#) and cannot be "indoctrinated into the belief that the U.S. is fundamentally or systemically racist."

That measure was originally introduced by two school board members to crack down on what they saw as CRT instruction in classes, but district administrators have repeatedly emphasized that schools don't teach CRT.

The Kennewick School District is the largest in the Tri-Cities, with more than 19,000 enrolled students and more than 2,000 employees. The school board oversees a spending budget of more than \$300 million.

None of the candidates running have been endorsed by the local teachers union.

Kennewick Director No. 3



Incumbent Michael Connors, right, and Dustin Petersen, left, will face off on the Nov. 7 ballot for Kennewick School Board's Director No. 3 seat.

[Dustin Petersen](#) is challenging incumbent [Mike Connors](#) for the No. 3 seat currently held by Ron Mabry, a radiological engineer and facility manager at PNNL.

He is the most senior member on the board and served three full terms.

Connors has served one term on the board but switched to run for Mabry's seat because only one other candidate had filed that position.

He wants to give the board some stability and institutional knowledge.

"I have learned an enormous amount in the last four years, and even after four years I'm still learning," said [Connors](#), 55, who has two high school-age children in Kennewick schools. "If I'm elected, I'll be the only one with more than two years of experience."



Michael Connors

Connors is owner of Skone and Connors Produce in Pasco. He's a third generation farmer whose family has worked in the Tri-Cities since the 1940s. His wife, April Connors, serves as a Republican representative in the Washington Legislature.

School safety, addressing learning loss and declining enrollment, and lobbying the state for more basic education and special education funding are among Connors' top priorities for a second term.

Connors backed levy funding to [hire safety officers in elementary schools](#) and expand school resource officer programs in middle schools this school year.

Testing shows Kennewick students are [about halfway recovered from COVID-era learning losses](#). Connors said the board needs to continue supporting the efforts of schools to catch students back up.

[Petersen](#) grew up on an apple farm in the Quincy area. He's lived in the Tri-Cities since 2017 and has two young children in Kennewick schools.

"I'm concerned about the future of my kids' education and the direction we're headed. The next board's going to have some challenges with a pretty large budget deficit coming up," said Petersen, 36.



Dustin Petersen

Petersen works as a food safety officer at Ecolab. He previously served for a few years on the Quincy City Council before moving away to Arizona then returning to Washington state.

Asked to grade the Kennewick board's leadership in recent years, Petersen gave them a C.

"I don't think under Mike Connors's leadership the district has gotten better. In fact, I think it's gotten worse," he said, adding that he would "like to see more civility and some more levelheadedness out of our board president."

He sees the back-to-back levy failures as a "vote of no confidence" by the community, and says the public has not been satisfied with the district's leadership in recent years.

Voters approved the levy on the third try in April but the delay will mean the district won't receive local tax revenue this year. The district has said it has a plan to use reserves and COVID relief money to make up some of the difference.

Petersen believes the district's financial outlook is not getting enough attention, either. If the district finds itself in a situation where cuts need to be made, he says he's the better candidate to make those tough decisions.

"We're going to need some new eyes there to help right the ship," he said.

Petersen also pointed to a [recent fine by the Washington Public Disclosure Commission around levy promotion](#) as damaging the public's trust.

By law, public school districts are not allowed to weigh in or promote local operation levies and bond measures that they put out to the voters. But the PDC found the school district went to far in attempting to influence the April special election.

Petersen said he would support a flag policy that puts the American flag as the highest and most prominent in the classroom out of a sign of respect for the country, but believes teachers should be allowed to display gay pride flags too.

Connors said banning or restricting flags — including those associated with alma maters and sports teams — only serves to sterilize learning environments.

He said the school board received dozens of pictures of the "same three gay pride flags" that were hung up in Kennewick schools last year during a debate about restricting certain flags in classrooms.

"At the end of that day, nothing in that policy, to me, made our educational system better," Connors said.

"It's terrifying. I have a gay child, and how am I going to explain to my child that I'm OK with them banning what this community believes is a flag of acceptance and love?" he added.

Petersen also has been critical of Connors' vote to allow the children's book, ["Antiracist Baby," by Ibram X. Kendi](#) to remain on shelves at elementary schools.

The book — which, according to a description, "introduces the youngest readers and the grown-ups in their lives to the concept and power of antiracism" — [has been the target of several book bans](#) in the nation, with critics saying the concepts can confuse and divide children.

"Let's keep politics out of the schools," Petersen said, adding they should consider taking out books they find "inappropriate."

Connors — who voted alongside Mabry, who is Black, and Sundvik to keep the book — says he’s against removing books that reflect different ideologies and perspectives.

“Just because we disagree with something, doesn’t mean we should ban access to it — especially a children’s book that was not full of profanity, vulgarity,” Connors said. “It wasn’t a great book, but people got mad and thought we should ban that. That is both morally and ethically wrong — we cannot ban different ideas.”

Kennewick Director No. 4



Aaron Michele Massey, left, and Brittany Gledhill, right, will face off on the Nov. 7 ballot for Kennewick School Board’s Director No. 4 seat.

[Brittany Gledhill](#) and [Aaron Michele Massey](#) will face off for the seat currently held by Connors.

[Gledhill](#) is a full-time, stay-at-home mom with five kids in Kennewick schools. Her family owns Gledhill Dental in Kennewick.

“The reason I’m running is because I have always believed we need to be involved in our community,” said Gledhill, 43.

Top priorities for her include improving student test scores, advocating for transparency for parents to know what their children are doing in school, local control, and providing beneficial oversight over the district’s budget.

She will have children in the school district for the next decade and believes a parent’s perspective is needed.

Gledhill voted down the levy last year, but has voted for local school funding the last two times. She and other parents felt they weren’t being heard over lingering COVID mandates, and they felt their trust had been broken.

“I am the demographic of parent in the Kennewick School District that takes kids out to homeschool and takes kids out to private school. We have not recovered all of that enrollment yet, and I understand how to talk to that population,” Gledhill said.





Brittany Gledhill

“I see myself as a liaison between the school district and the parents,” she added.

In addition to the Benton County Republican Party, Gledhill is also endorsed by the Mainstream Republicans of Washington.

[Massey](#) is a parent of two boys who are on individualized education programs. She’s running because she believes there’s “more the district could do as far as special education.”

“The programs are there, but they’re not being utilized at their full capacity in ways that they can be, and I do believe there are tweaks that can be made to make them better,” [she told the League of Women Voters of Benton and Franklin Counties](#).

Massey was not available to speak to the Tri-City Herald about her candidacy, but has spoken publicly at forums and provided a statement in the Voters Pamphlet.



Aaron Michele Massey

Raised in Tennessee and having spent time married to a military service member and as a union member in the nuclear industry, Massey relocated to the Tri-Cities five years ago to be closer to family. She currently works as an independent process server.

“I really want to give back to my community,” she said in the Voters Pamphlet. “I want what is best not only for my students, but for all students. I also feel that parents, children with disabilities and minorities need a greater voice in our community. My overall goal is to listen and to be that voice for everyone.”

On the issue of removing books from libraries, Gledhill’s and Massey’s views vary slightly.

Gledhill says there's a specific process for curating and challenging books in public school libraries.

She believes librarians should remain independent to decide which books are allowed. But if a book does not meet community standards, it's OK to exclude them from the collection.

"I think excluding authors and things of that nature is something that shouldn't be done, because we're going to get to the point where we're excluding history and excluding history causes us to repeat past mistakes," Massey said.

Kennewick Director No. 5

[Josh Miller](#) is unopposed after his challenger Lisa Peppard announced she is no longer seeking the position.

The seat is currently held by Diane Sundvik, who is not seeking a second term.

[Miller](#), 45, works as an orthopedic surgeon for Kadlec Regional Medical Center and clinical faculty member at WSU's School of Medicine. The son of a public school teacher has four children attending Kennewick schools.



Josh Miller

His priorities are to focus on academic excellence, encourage parent involvement, and to focus on fiscal responsibility and transparency. He would also like to see more curricula and instructional feedback from parents and students.

The district also needs to be more willing to accept cost-cutting measures, in areas such as construction, Miller said, to put more dollars into education.

“Listening to the people that are in the trenches is imperative. So, listening to teachers, listening to what their experiencing is important,” he said.

Miller said believes having other flags in classrooms “divide us” and siphon people into groups.

“Unfortunately, I don’t believe that’s what our schools should be doing. The beauty of our school is our schools can be a safe place for all of our kids if we focus on academics,” [he said at a forum for conservative candidates](#).

“I would need a good reason for another flag to be there... I don’t think it’s appropriate for a teacher to be pushing a certain political ideology or a certain social ideology on the students. They have incredible influence on the students,” he added.

Ex-school bus boss sues Pasco School District



Jose Hernandez

BY ERIC ROSANE
EROSANE@TRICITYHERALD.COM

Pasco, WA

A Pasco School District employee is suing the district and its superintendent, alleging a pattern of retaliation by top administrators for racial discrimination and harassment during his time as transportation director.

The lawsuit was filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Richland by Jose Hernandez, who still works for the district but in another department.

The suit details charges of a hostile work environment, workplace retaliation and racial discrimination.

In court documents, Hernandez describes a “broken” system and “racially hostile work environment,” where he was subject to nearly a decade of racial slurs, anonymous notes, insensitive language, targeted graffiti calling him names on school district buildings and an alleged harassment campaign by a group of subordinates.

Employees would slip notes under his door, some saying, “Go back to Mexico,” “Speak English,” or calling him a slur.

He alleges hearing comments and “anti-Mexico jokes,” including, “Don’t f***** talk to me... I still can’t believe we have a Mexican for a director,” and, “Mexicans — like Mr. Hernandez — will steal the bus’s hubcaps,” and, “You people don’t like Trump because he wants to build a wall, why’d you even come to our country?”

Hernandez claims employees would use his picture as a dartboard target.

The harassment got so bad, the lawsuit says, that Hernandez was reporting one new instance of racially harassing conduct per month to his supervisor. He also alleges that another supervisor used the phrase “you people” to refer to Mexican-Americans in a derogatory manner.

“I encouraged humanism and open and honest conversations, but it was obvious that the district was not concerned about the racism, hostility or the vulgarity of hate words used toward me and others,” Hernandez

said in a statement. “Through this lawsuit, I hope to bring change in our school system and provide a platform for others to come forward and take a stand.”

Hernandez claims the district did very little to investigate or discipline employees after he reported the abuse, and went so far as to retaliate against him by reassigning him after he reinstated a worker who allegedly drove a school bus while under the influence, and denying him a promotion.

Hernandez is requesting the court award him lost wages, damages for emotional harm and attorney’s fees, among other relief.

The district disputes the claims alleged by Hernandez in the 24-page document filed by the Seattle law firm, Bloom Law PLLC.

“Pasco School District does not tolerate discrimination, and the district and Superintendent (Michelle) Whitney adamantly disagree with the characterizations in Mr. Hernandez’s complaint,” said Anna Tensmeyer, director of public affairs, in a statement Tuesday to the Tri-City Herald.

“The district’s record illustrates prompt and reasonable responses to all reports of discrimination brought forward by Mr. Hernandez and the district’s support of, and dedication to, Mr. Hernandez as an employee,” it said.

Hernandez earned an annual salary of more than \$162,000 as transportation director during the 2022-23 school year. When the district reassigned him as the migrant program manager, he was offered the same salary for two years. Today, he makes more than \$170,000.

“While the district could have chosen a harsher response, Mr. Hernandez’s record of service and previous expression of interest in similar work were considered in offering him his current assignment,” Tensmeyer said.

CAREER WITH PASCO SCHOOLS

Hernandez began working for the Pasco School District in 2006 as a dropout prevention manager and after four years was promoted to student achievement coordinator.

In 2012, he took a job as the district's transportation director, where he oversaw the transportation of 11,000 students daily and managed 230 workers.

The lawsuit says he received "uniformly positive" reviews during his nine-year tenure as director despite witnessing and being subject to "pervasive" racial harassment.

Hernandez alleges a small group of bus drivers in the district, who call themselves the "Stearman Group," engaged in "intimidating and racist conduct towards him because of his race."

The school district's transportation facilities are located on Stearman Avenue.

He says they directed threatening glares at him, refused to acknowledge his greetings, distributed social media pictures of offensive graffiti ostracizing him in 2016 and spread false rumors.

In 2019, the group also reportedly delivered an "intimidating and anonymous" package with a coffee mug inside, which read: "It's a Stearman Thing. You Wouldn't Understand."

He also learned secondhand of other racist comments and conduct toward he and other Latino employees on either a weekly or monthly basis.

"Mr. Hernandez frequently felt anxious and physically sick after hearing of this racist treatment of him and others," the lawsuit reads.

Despite reporting the harassment to his supervisors, Hernandez claims they repeatedly failed to take "prompt or effective remedial action."

Within his first year as transportation director, Hernandez claims he told his supervisor that bus drivers were engaging in appalling racist conduct. Not much was done at first, he says, but investigations were slowly opened.

In 2016, the district formally investigated Hernandez's reports of racist conduct. He claims investigators never spoke with him and that he was left uninformed about the outcome.

The district also formed a "climate assessment committee" that year, but Hernandez claims it fell apart.

In 2017, after Hernandez and others reported racist comments made by transportation workers, the district issued a non-disciplinary letter to employees to "maintain professional behavior at work" and "be respectful of co-worker's beliefs, values and privacy." The letter stated "no one will discriminate, harass or intimidate others."

Two years later, in November 2019, the district opened another investigation based on hostile work complaints from Hernandez. But he says investigators failed to look into his concerns. No corrective actions were taken based on the report, but Hernandez claims in the lawsuit that Whitney acknowledged to him that "people needed to be fired based on that report."

"Because of the district's repeated inaction and failure to take prompt or effective remedial measures, Mr. Hernandez was continually exposed to a racially hostile work environment for years," court documents read.

Hernandez said he would frequently feel physically ill, and the environment was emotionally distressing.

"Mr. Hernandez gained a reputation, especially towards the end of his tenure, as someone willing to call out the district's inaction on issues of race intolerance," claims the lawsuit.

The district never disciplined nor fired a single employee based on Hernandez's claims, says the suit.

Tensmeyer says while the district was unable to identify who sprayed the graffiti and sent the coffee mug, they enlisted the support of law enforcement and third-party investigators in an attempt to hold someone accountable.

"In other situations, the district took prompt and appropriate measures to address misconduct and prevent any further violations. Additionally, the district implemented measures in Mr. Hernandez's department to improve the climate with demonstrated success," she said.

INTOXICATED

BUS DRIVER

One of the main reasons Hernandez was demoted and reassigned was because of allegations that in December 2021 he allowed a district school bus driver to continue driving despite an alcohol test identifying a low level of alcohol in his system.

Hernandez claims he placed a bus driver back on duty after verifying the driver took a blood-alcohol test and was below Washington's state legal intoxication limit. The driver "blew" an alcohol concentration of 0.014 and 0.016 when tested.

In Washington state, a person is considered legally drunk if they have a blood alcohol measure of 0.08 percent or higher. Hernandez claims the two breath tests were below the limit and would be classified “negative” by Washington’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration standards.

But Pasco school policy states [an employee is not allowed on duty or to remain on duty](#) “to perform safety-sensitive functions while having any alcohol concentration.”

“As an administrator, it was Mr. Hernandez’s responsibility to know and enforce this policy,” the district said in a statement.

“In the subsequent third-party investigation, Mr. Hernandez admitted to not knowing of Policy 5259 (zero-tolerance policy) and stated that if he had, he would have not permitted the school bus driver to ‘move until HR got a hold of him.’”

But Hernandez says placing drivers back on duty when they blow below 0.02 is consistent with the agency’s and PSD’s “zero-tolerance standard for alcohol,” and that the district used the incident as an excuse to retaliate against him for reporting racial harassment.

In November 2021, Hernandez said he proposed to an assistant superintendent a “meeting with the school board” to discuss his concerns about the hostile environment.

A month later, Pasco School District placed him on administrative leave from December 2021 to March 2023, citing allegations of misconduct due to the incident with the bus driver.

The lawsuit says the district ultimately determined that while he acted reasonably in allowing the driver back on duty, he had violated the district’s “zero-tolerance” policy. He was denied a promotion to the executive director of operations and placed in “the district’s version of Siberia.”

“The district’s justification was nothing more than a cover-up for race discrimination and retaliation,” court documents read.

Choose 3 directors who will help Richland schools move on

BY TRI-CITY HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD

Richland School District voters have a chance to close the book on a tumultuous couple of years. Things came to a head in August when voters ousted three directors who had put hot-headed social warfare over serving students. They broke the law and had to go. So voters [ousted them](#).

Now voters will elect [three of the school board's five directors](#). Two of the seats are open after the recall, and one has an incumbent running. The third recall seat will be up at a future date.

Richland needs smart, temperate leaders who will restore stability so that students can excel and taxpayers can trust that their investment in public education is managed well.

Pandemic education losses hit students in Richland schools just like everywhere else. Students fell behind previous cohorts, and they are struggling to catch up.

Though Richland fares well compared to the state as a whole on the [state education report card](#), the numbers still cause concern. Fewer than half of Richland students meet math and science standards, and only a little more than half meet English language arts standards.

Richland School Board races are nonpartisan and school board members are elected at-large, meaning that all voters in the district vote for all directors.

The Tri-City Herald Editorial Board interviewed candidates and reviewed their records and qualifications in deciding whom to recommend in each race.

We commend all of the candidates for stepping up to run. Competitive elections elevate the public discourse and give voters a choice, which is a cornerstone of democracy.

Voters can view our interviews online at tri-cityherald.com.

Director No. 3: Chelsie Beck

Voters face a [stark choice in this race](#). Both Chelsie Beck and Nino Kapitula are intelligent parents who care about education and would work hard. Their differences are ideological.

Beck is diplomatic and thoughtful. She has kids in Richland schools and wants to refocus the district on fostering an environment in which students can excel, not divisive social issues. She has managed large budgets. We are optimistic that she can be part of new leadership that mends divisions in the community.

Kapitula is out of step with the community, having aligned herself with the recently recalled school board faction. She would reignite fruitless cultural battles. Voters also should question her commitment to public education. She sends her own children to private school, not Richland public schools.

Director No. 4: Katrina Waters

Voters rejected Kari Williams' brand of leadership when they recalled her in August. Despite being recalled, Williams is trying to get back on the board. We recommend voters move on and [choose Katrina Waters](#).

Waters is an excellent candidate. She's clearly very knowledgeable about the issues in the district. She also will be better able to work collaboratively and respectfully with the board at a time when healing is necessary. She has three children who graduated from district schools and has served in a variety of volunteer community leadership roles.

Williams would like voters to forget about the recall, but she continues to highlight the pandemic issues that caused all the divisiveness in the first place. Richland schools can do better.

Director No. 5: Jill Oldson

With three new directors after the August recall, the Richland School Board could use some continuity. Voters can provide it by [reelecting Jill Oldson](#), the current board vice president. She has a solid grasp on the challenges facing the district and the limitations of what a single school director can do within the bounds of the law. She has served through some tough times. Richland should give her a chance now to shine during relatively calm times.

Oldson's opponent, Gene Nemeth, comes in with big ideas but without clear proposals on how to accomplish them. His vision hews toward the sort of ideals that the recalled directors had.

Nemeth clearly cares about student achievement, but we are skeptical that he can work with the rest of the school board collaboratively.

https://www.nbcrightnow.com/news/rsd-students-learning-teen-mental-health-first-aid/article_9ee55232-71f9-11ee-a17a-4b62fac31903.html

RSD students learning teen mental health first aid

Noel Anderson Nonstop Local Weather Anchor/Reporter
Oct 23, 2023

RICHLAND, Wash.- Teen mental first aid is a training program for teens brought to the U.S by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing in partnership with Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation.

According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 64% of teens in the U.S who experience mental health challenges don't seek help.

Richland High School Counselor and teen mental health first aid instructor, Chandra Markel, started the process of getting the program to Richland School District (RSD) in 2019.

"What if you saw someone struggling with suicidal ideation or having a panic attack? Would you know what to do? Most of us wouldn't. So, teen mental health first aid teaches kids how to recognize the warning signs and how to get a trusted adult involved," Markel said.

FEATURED



Every 10th-grader in RSD is working to become teen mental health certified. The students will take six, 45-minute lessons, every Wednesday, and when they finish the course they will earn a certificate and an orange wristband that shows other students they are safe people to talk to.

According to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, the course covers common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges, the impact of school violence and bullying on mental health, and how to seek the help of a responsible and trusted adult.

"I'm proud actually about knowing that I know the signs. Knowing that I'm able to help somebody and then have a trusted adult with me to help them in any way possible. Having that orange band just signifies that okay 'she knows what she's doing. She knows how to do this and she knows how to take care of me. I can trust her,'" Richland High School Student, Amy Ordaz said.

Additionally, evidence-based teen mental health first aid uses plain language to ensure learners at all reading levels can easily follow along.

To learn more about teen mental health first aid, click [here](#).

MORE INFORMATION



SR 224 in Richland will be closed in all directions until Oct. 27

Noel Anderson

Nonstop Local Weather Anchor/Reporter

Are these signs legal? They're a 'blatant attempt to deceive,' says Tri-Cities official



COURTESY WASHINGTON PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION

A complaint has been filed with the Washington Public Disclosure Commission claiming that campaign signs placed adjacent to those belonging to Mike Connors are false and a “blatant attempt to deceive the public.”

BY ERIC ROSANE
EROSANE@TRICITYHERALD.COM

A complaint has been filed against [a prominent Tri-Cities, Wash., conservative PAC](#) alleging inaccuracies in political yard signs that were being placed next to an opposing candidate's signs.

[Kennewick School Board President Michael Connors](#), a Republican, is running for reelection Nov. 7 and has been out placing his yard signs near high-traffic intersections in the school district.

But it appears the [We Want Accountability PAC](#) has been funding the creation and placement of signs next to Connors' that he says are “false and easily disprovable.”



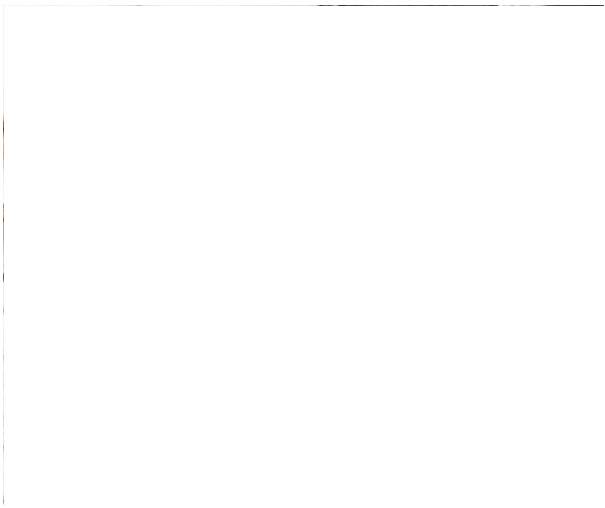
The PAC signs point to Connors' campaign signs, with messages like: "Voted With Liberals 100%," "Kept Our Kids In Masks" and "Supports CRT (critical race theory) in Schools."

"These signs paid for by the We Want Accountability PAC are a blatant attempt to deceive the public," writes Joshua Skipper, a Connors campaign aid, in his complaint to the [Washington Public Disclosure Commission](#) (PDC). "These false statements are material as they attempt to portray Michael Connors as a 'liberal' candidate to harm him politically to the benefit of their preferred candidate."

The PDC is a state agency that interprets and enforces campaign finance and disclosure laws.

The Tri-City Herald reached out to We Want Accountability about the complaint and their signs but did not hear back on Friday.

Connors told the Herald Friday that he has gone to great lengths in recent weeks to move and relocate his own signs away from those paid by We Want Accountability that are targeting him.



Opposing campaigns cannot touch each others' signs. It's a misdemeanor to [remove or deface lawfully placed political advertisements](#), including yard signs and banners.

But many of the adjacent signs have come down since the PDC officially opened an investigation into the matter on Wednesday, Connors said.

Will this cost him votes?

"That's the hard part, is no one really knows what the damage done is," Connors said.

“Ultimately, all we’re trying to do is provide a public service — just help out the kids and help out with our community. And people have just decided that they want to bring politics into what is basically a volunteer position,” he added.



COURTESY WASHINGTON PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION

A complaint has been filed with the Washington Public Disclosure Commission claiming that campaign signs placed adjacent to those belonging to Mike Connors are false and a “blatant attempt to deceive the public.”

‘False and easily disprovable’

Connors is defending his seat against Dustin Petersen, a challenger who is backed by local conservatives including the Benton County Republican Party.

Connors, whose wife, April Connors, is a Republic state legislator, says the signs are an attempt to smear him and his campaign.

The complaint alleges the signs are [in violation of state law that prohibits](#) sponsorship of statements with malice that constitute libel or defamation. The complaint says:

- The claim Connors “Voted With Liberals 100” is false because he and other members of the board voted differently on a resolution to remove weighted voting for the Washington State School Directors’ Association.
- The claim that Connors “Kept Our Kids in Masks” is false because the Washington Supreme Court ruled in the Richland School Board recall case that local school boards did not have the authority or power to overrule COVID face mask mandates ordered by the governor.
- The allegation that Connors “Supports CRT in Schools” is false because Connors and the entire board voted to pass a policy in August 2022 on race and curriculum that has been lauded by local conservatives as an anti-CRT policy.

We Want Accountability could be responsible for damages if the violations are proven by clear and convincing evidence.

Full list of Tri-City Herald Editorial Board 2023 recommendations



BOB BRAWDY • BBRAWDY@TRICITYHERALD.COM

BY TRI-CITY HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD

Ballots are arriving across the Tri-Cities, and voters face some tough choices in their city council and school board elections.

The Tri-City Herald Editorial Board met with more than two dozen candidates in local races to discuss the issues on voters' minds.

The full stories will be appear online and in print this week for school board races. City council races have already been published. Each of the editorial board sessions also were recorded, and the full videos will be added to stories throughout the week so you can listen to the full discussion.

Because of redistricting, there are more races on the ballot this year. The Herald reached out to more than 40 candidates, community leaders and elected officials in Richland, Pasco and Kennewick for editorial boards this year.

There are also dozens of competitive races in towns around the Tri-Cities, as well as several fire and safety related levies on ballots in Benton and Franklin County, plus hospital district and port races that the Herald was unable to schedule editorial boards for.

Here are their recommendations for the Nov. 7 general election:

Public Safety Sales Tax

Benton County Proposition 1

The Herald Editorial Board recommends voting YES on the Benton County [Public Safety Sales Tax renewal](#).

Richland City Council

[Read the full article](#) here.

Position 1: Jhoanna Jones vs. Allison Ball

No recommendation. The Herald was unable to schedule a meeting for this race.

Position 2: Theresa Richardson vs. Liz Vann-Clark ([Video](#))

Liz Vann-Clark

Position 5: Shayne VanDyke vs. Greg Levy ([Video](#))

Shayne VanDyke

Position 6: Kurt Maier vs. Kent Madsen ([Video](#))

Kurt Maier

Position 7: Ryan Whitten vs. Joshua Short

No recommendation. The Herald was unable to schedule a meeting for this race.

Richland School Board

[Read the full article here.](#)

Position 3: Chelsie Beck vs. Nino Kapitula ([Video](#))

Chelsie Beck

Position 4: Katrina Waters vs. Kari Williams ([Video](#))

Katrina Waters

Position 5: Jill Oldson vs. Gene Nemeth ([Video](#))

Jill Oldson

Kennewick City Council

[Read the full article here.](#)

Position 7: James Millbauer vs. Ted Owens ([Video](#))

James Millbauer

Kennewick School District

Position 3: Mike Connors vs. Dustin Petersen ([Video](#))

Mike Connors

Position 4: Brittany Gledhill vs. Aaron Michele Massey

Brittany Gledhill ([Video](#))

*Note: Massey confirmed, but did not attend.

Position 5: Lisa Peppard vs. Josh Miller

Peppard has dropped out of the race. Josh Miller is the only person actively running for the seat, but both names appear on the ballot.

Pasco City Council

[Read the full article here.](#)

Position 2: Joseph Campos vs. Charles Grimm ([Video](#))

Joseph Campos

Position 3: Leo Perales vs. Irving Brown Sr.

No recommendation. The Herald was unable to schedule a meeting for this race.

Position 5: David Milne vs. James Czebotar ([Video](#))

David Milne

Position 7: Peter Harpster vs. Kim Lehrman ([Video](#))

Peter Harpster

Pasco School Board

Position 1: Steve Norberg vs. Vincent Guerrero

Vincent Guerrero

Position 2: John Kennedy vs. Gabriel Lucatero

John Kennedy

Position 5: Rosa Torres vs. Steve Simmons ([Video](#))

Rosa Torres

Other levies

The Herald Editorial Board [recommends voting YES](#) on the Franklin County Public Hospital District 1, Franklin County Fire District 3 and Walla Walla County Fire District 5 levies.

About Editorial Boards

Who decides the recommendations?

The Tri-City Herald editorial board is comprised of experienced opinion journalists and community members, and is separate from The Herald's newsroom. Conversations are on the record.

What does the recommendation process entail?

Whenever possible, The Herald editorial board meets with opposing candidates at the same time. The questions are largely focused on a candidate's qualifications and goals. The editorial board then discusses the

candidates in each race and decides who to recommend. Board members seek to reach a consensus on our recommendations, but not every decision is unanimous.

Is the editorial board partisan?

No. In making recommendations, members of the editorial board consider which candidates are well prepared to represent their constituents — not whether they agree with us or belong to a particular political party. We evaluate candidates' relevant experience, their readiness for office, their depth of knowledge of key issues, their understanding of public policy and their ability to work with the current board . We're seeking candidates who are thoughtful and who offer more than just party-line talking points. The editorial board will endorse both Republicans and Democrats.

Why are the editorials unsigned?

Our election recommendations reflect the collective views of The Herald's editorial board — not just the opinion of one writer. For the 2023 election, the board includes: Laurie Williams, Herald executive editor; Jack Briggs, retired Herald publisher; Ken Robertson, retired Herald editor; Matt Taylor, retired Herald editorial writer; Martin Valadez, Dan Clark and Cecilia Rexus, community representatives. Chris Trejbal is our editorial writer.