Incoming Board President Betsy Shaughnessy's Comments - January 5, 2026

I will start with my heartfelt thanks to the citizens of Lakewood for giving me the opportunity to continue to serve the students, parents and staff of the Lakewood City Schools. This community has supported our schools recognizing the critical role of public education in a democracy and the need for a rigorous academic program reflecting the values of Lakewood. I promise to work on behalf of all our citizens by doing my best to protect the district which serves as an anchor in our community.

Thank you to Mrs Katsenberger who has worked tirelessly to communicate with the greater community and to keep the Board moving forward in dealing with the hundreds of important issues that impact our students through the year.

Thank you to Superintendent Niedczwiecki for her vision and perseverance as well as the excellent leadership team she has assembled. They have maintained a consistent focus on the current and future needs of the district as we work not just to maintain what we have but to improve it. The needs of each individual child are always at the forfront of decisions designed to make each child's daily experience safer and happier.

Thank you to Treasurer Zeman - he is truly an educator who has worked to manage district resources in order to provide the programs and opportunities our students and teachers deserve and require.

We have much to accomplish in the new year. I have said before that we cannot wait for the environment to change - we need to act now. In this spirit we will work toward the following this year:

The Superintendent will be leading and supporting Elementary Transition Teams and developing a comprehensive plan with updates and opportunities for comment by the Board and community

Enhanced and timely communication within the district and with the community remains a priority

Policy review and policy development assuring alignment of legal requirements , district values and needs of students and staff

Focus on student achievement and growth

Advocacy for adequate support for public schools and resist efforts to reduce Local Control

Close monitoring of our financial position and resource utilization

I want to recognize that while none of these are new they reflect the broad expectations facing the Superintendent, administrators and staff - demands on their time that need to be recognized and supported. Not a day goes by that there are not serious issues impacting a student or staff member that require immediate attention and must take precedence over the schedule. We need to appreciate this and do what we can to support those doing the work.

We have come through contentious times in the past - I believe that all of us share the hope that our students - our children - have a bright future filled with promise and that we can work together to make this hope a reality. We can be certain that new challenges and expectations will arise and we will be ready to respond in ways that are best for all our students. We can prepare our students for a world of opportunity and for the unimagined

I know that this Board is ready to focus on the future. Each member of the Board brings unique skills, experiences and perspectives that enable us to work together as we explore all aspects and implications of actions being considered. We may not always agree however mutual respect has been a hallmark of Lakewood Boards of Education and it has served us well. We will always listen to each other and to the community - we may not always end up agreeing but we will listen.

Together we - parents, teachers, students ,board members, Lakewood citizens - have strengths that can be called upon to move forward with positivity, creativity, resilience and innovation.

I will end with a thank you to all of you who keep our buildings running and our students learning.Thank you to Central Office staff and to teachers and administrators who work every day to sustain and support our children and each other. I know this will be a great year.