

# WHERE THEY STAND: THE CANDIDATES' VIEWS ON SIX DISTRICT ISSUES

Find out where the school board candidates stand on six key issues, as paraphrased by the Weekly from public comments, election debates and interviews with the Weekly. Candidate Christopher Boyd did not respond to questions about these issues.

	STACEY ASHLUND	KEN DAUBER	SHOUNAK DHARAP	KATHY JORDAN	ALEX SCHARF
<b>Do you agree with the board's Sept. 25 vote to hire a general counsel?</b>	No. The position is a "big statement about our priorities as a district" and the argument that it will cut down on the district's legal spending is "highly misguided." She doesn't see a general counsel as helping to redirect resources to the district's core mission of supporting students.	Yes. Dauber voted to approve the position three years ago and said it's a "mistake" that it wasn't filled at the time. He believes a general counsel would reduce spending on external law firms and provide proactive, on-the-spot legal advice to ensure compliance.	Yes. The position is a "no brainer," would reduce spending on outside law firms and "is crucial to building the culture of compliance that has been absent in the district for far too long."	Yes, it is "long overdue." Jordan believes the general counsel should report directly to the board to "build trust with the community."	Yes, though he believes the job requirements, as posted by the district, were not specific enough to ensure the hiring of a quality person.
<b>Do you agree with the board's 2017 decision to report weighted grade point averages (GPA) on high school students' transcripts?</b>	Yes. The board "did the right thing" by implementing the same practice at both high schools.	Yes, though the district should solicit feedback from students on why they are enrolling in particular classes to determine whether grade weight is influencing those decisions.	No. He would not have voted to report weighted GPAs and said that "any policy that disincentivizes students from taking elective courses, from exploring what really drives their passion to learn, is in my opinion not a great policy."	Yes. Weighted GPA is "just one indicator about a student."	Yes, especially to ensure access for seniors applying to the University of California. "Providing people with multiple options is good," though the district should review whether weighted grades are impacting elective availability or student well-being.
<b>Should the district's negotiations with the teachers and classified unions be more open to the public?</b>	Ashlund, who was endorsed by the teachers' union, said she sees no reason to change current practice, which is closed negotiations. "I trust our teachers and I trust our teachers union," she said. "I trust them to negotiate fairly for what the teachers deserve, what the classified staff deserve."	Yes. The district should within legal limits go "as far as we possibly can" in providing transparency into labor negotiations. Dauber is "fully" committed to publicly sunshining negotiations and said he has discussed that with the superintendent, who has indicated that the district and unions are discussing "how to open up the process."	Dharap, who was endorsed by the teachers' union, believes negotiations could be hampered if they are "completely open" but supports gathering public comment before negotiations begin and having the board directly involved in the sessions. Upon learning that the Palo Alto City Council is considering making proposals and counterproposals public, he said he would support such a model for the district, despite his earlier concern that doing so would be "counterproductive to having efficient negotiations."	Yes. Jordan would prefer open negotiations. It is not "appropriate for a public entity that's financed by our public tax dollars" to have a process "with no visibility whatsoever."	Yes, though he's unsure of the implications of doing so. Scharf said he is "all for getting people introduced to the problem earlier so that they can have a bigger impact."
<b>Do you support or oppose the board's two-meeting rule, which requires that agenda items are presented at a first meeting for discussion and a second time for action?</b>	Support. It has value for public transparency and providing board members time to consider issues thoughtfully. The rule "has been in place in PAUSD for at least 40 years and we would need a very solid reason to remove it," she said.	Oppose. Dauber describes this as the "do everything twice rule" and sees it as unnecessarily hampering board action. If re-elected he will propose suspending the rule on a test basis (though for certain issues the board agenda-setting group could choose to apply the two-meeting rule), and if that goes well, lobby to change board policy to eliminate the rule.	Support. Dharap said the rule gives board members time "to grapple with controversial issues," which "leads to more thoughtful solutions and maintains transparency in the decision-making process. However, if there's "broad support" for an agenda item at the first meeting, he believes it's appropriate to waive the rule "in the interest of effective governance while still staying true to the rule's purpose."	Support, "unless it's an emergency of some type." The rule "provides transparency to the public into the school district's affairs, and transparency is something the district has been lacking."	Support. It provides an opportunity for the public to weigh in, and "giving people an opportunity to talk is not going to be bad."
<b>Would you vote to allocate funding to support the county's proposal to build affordable housing for regional school district teachers and staff in Palo Alto?</b>	Yes, "assuming it was part of an overall solid budget plan for the district."	He doesn't "yet" support this proposal and said it should be evaluated within the "larger context" of options to address the affordable housing and teacher retention in Palo Alto. He believes that the board will at some point have to consider building teacher housing on district land.	Yes. "Solutions to regional problems like cost of living are most effective when they are the products of regional consensus," he said, noting that the district's support "would be a crucial step towards achieving the regional consensus necessary to implement the plan."	No. She would rather use tax dollars to benefit a larger swath of teachers, rather than a small number in Palo Alto Unified and other districts in the region.	Yes. Investing in a specific project "is going to be much more cost effective than just ... tossing out money to the individual teachers."
<b>Do you support term limits for school board members, Measure Y, which will go to voters on the November ballot?</b>	Ashlund declined to state definitively if she supports this ballot measure, but it's not something she would have "advocated strongly for." Term limits could harm the district's "longevity," she said.	Yes. Dauber voted in favor of a resolution ordering a term limits measure for the November election.	Yes, "absolutely."	Yes.	No, the system is "OK" as is given that incumbents have to secure enough votes to be re-elected. Experience is helpful for the district.