



# Meet the Rolla Public School Board Candidates

Election 3 April 2012

## Rodney Southard



### **Tell voters a little about yourself, such as your occupation, education and family.**

I am a 1980 graduate of Rolla High School. I continued my education at UMR (Missouri S&T) and obtained a M.S. Degree in Civil Engineering in 1986. My area of expertise is in hydrology and hydraulics. I have been employed with the USGS since 1983. I have written numerous proposals/grants and overseen the successful completion of statewide and regional scientific studies. I have authored numerous publications and journal articles.

My wife of 25 years is Lisa and she is employed at the Phelps County Regional Medical Center. We have two wonderful daughters. Our oldest daughter is Karana, who is completing graduate studies at the University of Missouri in Columbia and our youngest daughter is Hanan, who is completing undergraduate studies at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Education plays a critical role in our family. We are the fifth generation to live on the family farm that has been in our family since 1856, where we operate a cow/calf operation.

### **Why do you want to serve on the Rolla School Board? And, what qualities/qualifications would you bring to the board?**

My reason for filing for the Rolla School Board is I believe that education is the key to fulfilling a child's dreams. I am grateful for the quality education I have received in Rolla, an education that has given me a chance to provide a good living for my family and to fulfill my dreams. Serving on the school board would be an opportunity to give back to my home community that has given me so much.

I have had the honor of being elected to two terms to serve on the St. James school board, while living on a farm in north Phelps County, before moving back onto the family farm in 2009. I have an understanding of the complexities of operating a school district from issues such as finances, infrastructure, personnel, and policy. My career has included the management of personnel and budgets on a routine basis. I am a detail oriented person that strives to understand why and how goals of an organization can be met. I believe success is a journey and not a destination and I will always be looking for ways to improve the academics of our district.

I have attended the Rolla school board meetings for the past 2 years learning and listening about the issues and ongoing projects. My commitment and dedication to Rolla Public Schools are two qualities that I will bring to the board. I serve on the RPS Technology planning committee, and I am a member of CORE and Kiwanis.

*Investing in education & creating futures*

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## **What do you consider are the three most pressing issues facing the Rolla Public School District?**

The most pressing issue that faces our school district is improving academic performance. Our society and job market are dynamic. It is critical for our school to provide our students with the best learning environment possible. We need to provide adequate facilities and the best technology and textbooks possible for every classroom. I believe every student can excel in a career of their choosing with the proper education.

Recruiting and retaining quality teachers is a pressing issue too. Teachers are the critical link between the known and unknown for a student. Academic success of a student is highly correlated to the effectiveness of a teacher.

Funding may become a very pressing issue in the next few years with reduced state and federal monies available to the district. It will be very important to have board members that are fiscally conservative serving on the board.

## **What do you consider the School Board's main role in the school district?**

Establishment of policy is the main role of the school board. Board policies provide the foundation for the administration to achieve its goals in education. Policies also reflect the priorities of the school district. The importance of academic achievement will be seen in the decisions of the board. Other critical issues that are addressed in policies, directly and indirectly, include safety, curriculum, discrimination, and staff employment.

The expectations of school personnel rarely exceed the expectations of the school board. Thus, a school board must provide enforceable and achievable policies that lead school personnel to higher performance levels. The board must provide clear direction and sufficient resources to meet the expectations that are established in school policies.

## **What would you hope to accomplish if you are elected?**

First, I hope to challenge the administration, teachers, and students to be the best that they can be. I desire to continue the standard of excellence the Rolla Public School system is well known for throughout the state.

Second, I hope to be a part of a board that is fiscally conservative and responsible. I am committed to spending tax dollars wisely. I also am committed to find the best solution possible on every issue. I will be available to residents of the community and I will listen closely to their needs and concerns.

Third, I hope to create a positive environment in the classroom. I believe students will perform better in this type of environment and will succeed academically. I believe a school should challenge the gifted students and support the challenged students academically. Every child in our community is a vital part of our community.

## **How would you improve the work the board does for the Rolla School District?**

As a board member, I would study in depth the issues that are brought before the board and work with the administration, while listening to the residents of the district, to find not just a solution but the best possible solution. It is important for the board to evaluate all sides of an issue.

I believe the work of the board might be improved by developing stronger lines of communication with staff members in all buildings. Every individual on staff serves an important role in our school system. Attendance of school activities by board members is one way to develop lines of communication with staff members.

My strong commitment and dedication to the continued success of the Rolla School District and to the success of every child will improve the decisions the board currently makes and will be faced with in the future.