



Edwardsville | Glen Carbon
Chamber of Commerce

POLICY COUNCIL & BUSINESS BUILDS PAC

ECUSD#7: SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate: Terri Dalla Riva

Position Sought: School Board Member

1. Please provide us with some basic information. Tell us briefly about:

a. your family: I have four daughters, and two grandchildren.

b. . how long you've lived in District 7: I have lived in Edwardsville since 1994, when my oldest daughter started kindergarten, and have raised my four daughters here.

**c. c. your education: B. A. English, Creighton University
Cert. Paralegal Studies, College of Saint Mary**

d. your employment: Realtor, Coldwell Banker Brown Realtor

2. Why are you seeking this office?

I have served as a member of the Edwardsville CUSD7 board since 2015. I bring the experience of chairing the finance and policy committees. I have also served on the curriculum and facilities committee. This experience allows me to look to the future of education for Edwardsville schools. I value my experience, but I bring a passion for education to the table as well.

3. What education, skills and experiences have prepared you to deal with the complex financial, technical and legal issues that regularly come before the school board?

I am already familiar with many of the issues that come before the school board. I feel my experience as a school board member for the last six years, as parent in the school district from 1994-2020, and my work as a realtor who values good residential and commercial property growth, allows me to bring value and insight to the board.

4. Identify and prioritize the three most important challenges facing District 7. Please justify your prioritization. How do you propose to pay for these projects?

Technology. The pandemic has had a profound effect upon how we use technology in education. Future needs should be anticipated when creating the next year's budget, as well as determining long range needs/planning.

Vocational and CTE. We need to be creative in looking at opportunities in the workforce. We are currently partnered with Collinsville School District and we also have an apprentice program. We should look to the ROE for a cooperative program in vocational and CTE experiences so that students throughout Madison County can benefit.

Curriculum and Teacher Professional Development. These two challenges must be linked with technology. We need to maintain our academic strength. This can be done with new, current materials and providing our teachers with tools necessary to teach them. I think many community members are concerned about we may have lost regarding education during this last year, and we must reexamine what we need, and make decisions accordingly.

5. What are your thoughts on school district finances?

School district finances are largely dependent upon the success of the local economy and property values, the source of over 80% of the district's revenue. Good strong schools are the result of the wonderful community that supports and values them.

a. Are there opportunities to cut expenses?

Specifically, where are those opportunities?

The Budget is prepared for the fiscal year, and must be done within the complicated framework of Illinois School Code. One is ECUSD7's strengths is its business department. The Assistant Superintendent of Business keeps a watchful eye on expenditures and income to ensure we stay within budget. The pandemic has put an added stress on our budget, but we will have over \$2 million in Working Cash at the end of this fiscal year.

b. Is there a need for new or additional revenue?

Specifically, where would it come from?

Additional revenue would come from an expiring TIF, which we should expect to see in 2021, as we did in 2020. We received funding from the CARES act and should see additional funding from the federal level.

c. Are there areas where spending needs to be increased?

Specifically, where does spending need to increase?

Specifically, where would the money come from?

We will to continue to fund technology, putting devices into the hands of middle school students. In 2020, we updated WIFI / broadband on all educational levels, put devices into the hands of our high school students and teachers. This

is an expensive undertaking, and a well prepared budget anticipates this. EAV growth helps support this spending. The 2020 TIF expiration provided funding to help make tech spending possible.

6. District 7's superintendent, approximately halfway through the employment contract, announced plans to depart; the district is currently engaging in a search for a new superintendent. If elected, how do you plan to partner with the new superintendent? What are your recommendations for minimizing superintendent and key personnel turnover?

I think the new superintendent should have a long term strategic plan for the school district. We will discuss some serious issues as we look at the future but as a board member, I think it is best to take direction from the community as part of this. I am always available for discussion - please reach out to call me. My phone number is on terridallariva.squarespace.com and the district's site. Minimizing superintendent and key personnel turnover is an issue that many school districts face. The stress of the pandemic created an additional challenge for work that comes with much stress already. As a board member, I have worked very hard to support the work of the superintendent, the staff and teachers, and will continue to do so.

7. In March 2018 the 1% county-wide school facilities sales tax appeared on the ballot for the third time, and Madison County voters resoundingly opposed the implementation of this additional sales tax. If elected, would you support putting this tax before voters for a fourth time? Why or why not?

Most people see this as an additional tax, but they fail to read the fine print. With this sales tax, certain items are not taxable, thereby protecting people who are buying essentials like groceries, prescription medications, etc, from the burden of the tax. At the same time, it has the power to lower the property tax. The argument some try to make is that the District 7 tax rate never gets lowered, which is NOT true. The Edwardsville school property tax rate has indeed decreased over the last three years. With a facility sales tax, districts could commit to lowering their levy. That being said, maintaining thirteen school building and their campuses is expensive. With commercial and residential growth that we are seeing locally, the taxpayer should periodically be given a choice at the polls as to what is the best way to handle the corresponding growth in student population and the demands growth places upon us. Let the voters decide whether the one penny tax is worth it. Put it on the ballot. It's not my decision regarding whether it is acceptable but a community decision. I support giving the community a choice, and whatever the community decides, I will work to support that decision.

8. If you're the incumbent, what have been your significant accomplishments during your term? If you're the challenger, what do you believe have been the significant disappointments of the incumbents, and how would your term in office be different?

As an incumbent, I am able to say that we have been removed from the financial watch list, provided balanced budgets, established working cash reserves, reintroduced CTE and vocational education, and revised the entire policy manual. We work with the community and have been blessed by the generosity of many businesses and other organizations within the District 7 community.

9. If elected, how would you engage with the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce as a conduit to the business community?

I would be open to serious discussion with the Chamber of Commerce members to fully explore this concept and expand it. The business community should always be actively involved in education. I fully support that.

10. At the end of your term in office, how will you know if you've been successful?

I will examine the excellence of education we provide for all students first and foremost, and how we do that within the framework of the community's support.

11. What changes you would like to see regarding:

a. how District 7 functions as a whole?

I am always in favor of transparency and open communication and believe the school district is supported when we engage in that manner.

b. how District 7 addresses unfunded mandates?

I think it is vitally important to be in communication with our legislative representatives regarding issues such as these. I have always said state mandates should be accompanied by state funding.

c. how District 7 approaches curricula innovation?

I appreciate that the administration and our educators have done to bring new ideas and technology to our educational environment. I was able to tour school buildings recently and was constantly amazed how our teachers and students are finding new ways to use technology to teach, to learn and to explore the world we live in. What I appreciate about both teachers and students is the high level of openness to ideas that yields creativity.

d. how District 7 prepares students for entry into the workforce?

District 7 has opened up pathways these past two years in apprentice and CTE programs, and I am working to continue that, as I previously said. As always, we provide AP and honors courses - college preparatory, as well as fine and performing arts programs, athletics, clubs, volunteer opportunities, student government and extracurriculars. All of these are essential to our students' development beyond preparing them for the workforce to shaping them as amazing people.

e. how District 7 has managed the COVID-19 situation?

I am proud of our hard working administration and educators, and believe that they have given their best efforts to provide our children with education during this difficult time. I think they have continually tried to respond to the challenges of the pandemic, and the requests from our community. I am deeply grateful for that.