

Forum questions – with Mark’s response

The first 10 pages are the questions asked during the Forum, and my response. I have already seen FB posts (some even during the Forum) of people blatantly misquoting me. So, here you go. If you want to know what I said, read this.

Starting on page 11 are questions I was asked following the Forum, with my answers.

Opening Statement (Megan, Mark)

This is your chance to introduce yourself to everyone. Please include the reason you are running for School Board and any unique assets, qualities, experience, and skills you would bring to the board in this Opening Statement. You will each have two minutes.

Thank you Mr. Farmer, Mr. Garrison, current Directors, and those on-line. I appreciate this opportunity for Megan and me to share our thoughts and enable the voters to cast a more informed vote.

- My name is Mark Pampe
 - I am grateful to have been married to my wife, Robbie, for nearly 40 years. I am Dad to two grown men, Papa to two grandsons, and a sinner saved by Jesus.
 - We have raised our children here in the Lake Tapps area since 1986, and now our grandchildren are being raised here.
- I am Retired Boeing
 - Where I managed a diverse team of engineers
 - I was personally responsible for a multi-million dollar budget.
 - I learned to work with people in all sorts (bosses, customers, authorities, subordinates, cohorts, and sometimes opponents).
 - I’ve learned to manage budgets and resources, ask tough questions, identify root problems, and lead toward effective solutions.
- I’m running for school board because I have watched state politics increasingly erode the ability for individual school districts to make their own decisions - to set their own direction. Dieringer’s status-quo is not static. We are moving ever closer to the politics – and ideologies - of Olympia. If elected -
 - I won’t be here to be an administrator state directives & ideologies.
 - I won’t be here to adopt and implement state-written policies and procedures.
 - I’ll be here to be a Director – one who helps sets the direction of an organization – and I won’t be inclined to do everything Olympia tells us to do.
- I’d like to stop our drift toward the politics of Olympia and restore a voice of influence for the families that entrust their kids to Dieringer schools.

Thank you

Question One (Mark, Megan)

What do you believe are the Dieringer School District's biggest challenges going forward, and how can you make a difference in addressing those challenges?

I believe that our two biggest challenges are achieving academic excellence and gaining some separation from state influence:

1. Regarding academics: We have suffered extensive learning loss from the COVID shutdowns.
 - According to published OSPI scores, about 1/3 of our students are failing in each of the categories: ELA, Math, and Science.
 - We need to be laser-focused on restoring academics.
 - I believe the best way to improve academics is to let our talented staff of teachers teach academics.
 - I can help with that by addressing our second challenge – which I believe has become a distraction and impediment to academics

2. Regarding state influence: I want to see Dieringer gain some independence from state influence
 - From the legislature to OSPI to the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA), the state is clearly NOT focused on academics
 - The state focus is on social engineering and ideology
 - Sometimes called DEI – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
 - Labels change – I'll just call it social engineering
 - Dieringer has adopted WSSDA-written Policies and Procedures
 - They are fraught with social engineering and often go well beyond what is required by law
 - If you read
 - WSSDA-written policies
 - Positions voted on at last year's WSSDA conference
 - Agenda for the coming WSSDA conferenceyou will find that a focus on social engineering far outweighs any academic focus

 - If we don't deal with state social engineering, we will never get back to academic excellence.

Thank you

Question Two (Megan, Mark)

Special interest groups have become increasingly involved in politics as of late, including local school board elections. What political endorsements have you received, and how is that a reflection of your candidacy and the priorities you would bring to the school district?

1. Endorsed: Pierce County Chapter of Mom's For Liberty.
 - Their mission is to: "empower parents through the principles of liberty in the education of children, and to defend against harmful health and educational policies".
 - Mom's For Liberty have been called a hate group by some loud activist voices. The truth is that M4L is hated by many because they have proven effective at things like:
 - Defending parental authority
 - Pointing out instances of harmful practices such as sexually-explicit materials in libraries for children.
 - I am happy to have their endorsement.
2. Endorsed: Pierce County Republican Party. Even though this is a non-partisan position, political parties do have platform positions regarding education. The Pierce County Republican Party platform includes positions that I share, such as:
 - We believe the primary authority and responsibility of educating our children resides with the parents.
 - We believe gender identity, sexual expression, and sexual orientation should not be taught or promoted in government "public" schools or early learning centers.
 - We object to biological males, ostensibly identifying as females, invading the safe spaces, such as bathrooms and locker rooms, of biological females.

I agree, and so I am also happy to have their endorsement.

3. Lastly I am recommended by the Family Policy Institute of Washington. They are self-described as "Advocating and defending Human Life, Religious Freedom, Parental Rights, and Marriage on the frontlines in Olympia". While that scope is much larger than a focus specifically on schools, it clearly includes schools. I am happy to have received their recommendation as well.

Thank you

Question Three (Mark, Megan)

One of the school board's main duties is to approve a budget each year. What are your thoughts on the current state of the district budget? Are there any areas or programs you would like to see either expanded or eliminated?

This is the hardest question for me to answer. A good understanding of a budget requires discussion and context; discussions of which I have not been a part.

The best I can do here is to share the questions that I have about the budget. These are among the questions I will be asking if elected. These questions may well be just a matter of my lack of context and understand— so there is no intent here to point out flaws in the budget. These are simply areas of the budget that I don't fully understand.

Q1) It appears that the 2023-2024 budget significantly draws down reserves. In other words, it appears to me that we will be spending more than we bring in, thus depleting savings. I might be reading that wrong, but if true it clearly needs an explanation as deficit spending is not a sustainable strategy.

Q2) I know that the district has been sued in the past over special education services. I don't know the details or outcome of that lawsuit, but I will be asking how the lessons learned from that incident are captured in the budget. I see the special education numbers on the page, but my questions will be regarding if that is the appropriate funding given our past experience.

Q3) I don't see budget items aimed at student safety or security. That might be buried under some other category, but I will be asking about what security measures are in place and questioning if we need to focus any additional funding on improving student safety/security.

Again, I am in no position to specifically criticize the current budget. It might be just fine, but those are the types of questions I will be asking if elected.

Thank you

Question Four (Megan, Mark)

The district's long-term strategic plan has prioritized educating the whole child, creating innovative systems, and engaging the community. How will you support these commitments to ensure success for all students?

I have read the district's Long-term Strategic Plan, and am supportive of most of it.

I will support this plan in two major ways:

First, I'd like to work with the other Directors and Mr. Farmer to add some executable detail in some areas.

Much of it is, frankly, more of a vision than a plan.

A vision describing what is wanted is a bit different than a plan that shows the steps to get there.

Some of the steps are there, but many are missing.

For examples:

I'd like to see what steps we are taking to complete OSPI assessments in social studies & history.

I'd like to see what monies we are setting aside for things that we know will wear out (like roofs or furnaces) so that they can be replaced without going back to the people for a bond levy?

Second, there are several instances in the Long-term Strategic Plan where loaded phrases, a sort of insider jargon, is used.

Phrases like "learning is provided with an equity lens"

Or several mentions of Social Emotional Learning, which the OSPI website describes using phrases like

"cultural responsiveness, universal design, and trauma-informed approaches ... applied with an equity lens".

We can't just repeat jargon from OSPI – we need to use language that is clear to parents and citizens that read the plan.

I'd love to discuss those areas with the Directors to see if we even know what that jargon means – and then edit the plan to include plain language.

So the bottom line is that I support most of what I understood, but I cannot support areas that are written in OSPI-speak and are unintelligible to the average parent.

Thank you

Question Five (Mark, Megan)

Dieringer is becoming an increasingly diverse district with different backgrounds and cultures. What can we do to ensure ALL students and ALL families feel equally seen, heard, respected, and represented?

The most practical difficulty about dealing with diversity should be language. There is no inherent or practical reason for kids or staff to not equally accept and respect people from all backgrounds and cultures. Difficulties in accepting others, if present, is usually a taught response.

The practical exception to that is language. You can't "hear" someone if you can't understand their language. That's why I am fully supportive of the Multilingual and English Learners services offered at Dieringer.

In an ideal world, beyond language assistance, there would be no issues with diversity.

But we all know that we don't live in an ideal world. Preconceptions of people based on race or sex or culture or whatever can be very harmful and should not be condoned or promoted.

That is why I was very disappointed when, at last year's WSSDA conference, Dieringer voted to REJECT this statement:

"WSSDA will not support curriculum or trainings that teach students that people, due to their race or background are inherently good or bad, guilty or innocent, more or less capable than others."

I would have voted to ADOPT that statement as a necessary step toward getting past issues of racial division. Kids aren't born caring about race, or prejudice against any race. Kids are taught that by adults. We should be willing to adopt a resolution that says we won't use curriculum that perpetuates racial divisiveness.

Thank You

Question Six (Megan, Mark)

How do you plan to provide support to our district as we collaborate with families to educate students on subjects like sex education, health and wellness, internet safety, and bullying?

Regarding Sex Education; I would like to see a parent-led reevaluation of FLASH – our sex education curriculum. I have read the curriculum, including the instructor guidance. FLASH, in my opinion, is confusing and harming children if taught as written. I know that instructors have some leeway about how they present the material and what supplemental material they use, so maybe it isn't so bad at Dieringer schools. But I do know that the curriculum itself is highly misleading, avoids biological clarity, and coaches children toward gender confusion. The Dieringer Directors should either replace that curriculum or establish some clear guidelines on how it is presented and what supplemental material is used.

Regarding Health and Wellness;

Schools should teach the academic facts regarding health and wellness but NOT see themselves as the health or wellness caretaker of a child.

This also shows up in FLASH; Students are taught about pregnancy and STDs. That's good. Students are also to be given a resource guide for local health and wellness services. Okay. But I didn't find any mention in FLASH that says the parents should also receive that guide – or to encourage students to consult with parents over health issues. Maybe that happens, but I couldn't find it in the curriculum.

I fully support the teaching of health and wellness. But I will raise questions any time I see that parental involvement or authority in their child's health is being side-stepped.

Bullying should not be tolerated, but we also need to not go overboard. I believe that wise adult judgement is way better than state-prescribed forms and protocols. Kids are human. Sometimes humans act poorly and part of growing up is learning to deal with that poor behavior. We must not permit true and persistent bullying, but we must also allow kids to learn to deal with less-than-perfect human behavior without automatic or unnecessary elevation.

Thank you

Question Seven (Mark, Megan)

If one year from now, you were asked, “How is your term on the school board going?” and you said it was “very successful,” can you describe what that success looks like?

This is the easiest question for me to answer. I have posted five priorities on my website (votepampe.us). They are:

Recover learning loss from lengthy COVID shutdowns to see more than 80% of all students meeting ELA, Math, and Science standards.

Review existing district Policies and Procedures to remove world view and ideological content.

Conduct a parent-led reevaluation of the FLASH Comprehensive Sex Education curriculum for biological-focus and age-appropriate content.

Adopt a resolution stating that parents are the primary stake-holder in their children’s education, healthcare and development, and that secrets will not be kept from parents.

Adopt a resolution declaring all races equal and banning racially divisive curriculum.

I would consider my term very successful if these things were accomplished.

Thank You

Final Follow-up Question (Megan, Mark)

Former Board President Greg Garrison will ask this final question LIVE, and will be different for each candidate based on your statements and answers from earlier. It will NOT introduce a new topic but may ask you to clarify or expand on something you said earlier.

The question was about my support of school vouchers (money follows the student). While this is basically moot point – at least in the foreseeable future in Washington State – I did reiterate my belief that competition makes everyone better.

Closing Statement (Mark, Megan)

Make your final pitch as to why people should vote for you. Again, two-minute time limit.

Thank you again for this opportunity. Many of my answers, as I tried to make clear along the way, were directed at state-level efforts to influence our schools. Dieringer has been able to stay somewhat insulated from those influences and provides a much healthier learning environment than would be the case if we just did everything by the OSPI / WSSDA play book. But we are ever more adopting state ideologies. As I mentioned in my opening remarks: our status quo is not static, we are increasingly letting ourselves be governed by state politics.

I am running for this position to reinforce the insulation – to put a filter on state political influence. We need policies and procedures that are our policies and procedures – not just copies of what the state offers. We need policies and procedures – and curriculum – that actively invites parents into all aspects of their child’s education. WSSDA policies and procedures, and the FLASH curriculum, actively go around parents for some of the most sensitive aspects of their child’s development.

Let me conclude with this: Dieringer cannot, by itself, restore parental authority if the parents don’t take up that responsibility. I thank and congratulate each parent that is here tonight. It shows that you care. I ask you, whether I win this election or not, to please come to School Board meetings. Read the policies, read the procedures, study the curricula, then show up and make your support, or objection, known.

They are Your Children – teach them Your Values.

And finally, whether you support me or Megan – please vote

Thank you, and God bless.

After Forum Q&A

Here are some of the questions I have received (via email, text, messenger, etc.) and my responses.

I post this because, during the Forum and on various social media postings, people have said what I said or believe – and they are often wrong. A simple rule to live by: Don't tell people what other people are thinking, unless the other person has specifically told you what they are thinking. It turns out that humans are not particularly good at mind-reading. I appreciate it when people actually ask what I believe, rather than assume.

Q1) I am wondering about your position regarding the children of same sex families. What would you have the teachers say to the children with 2 moms or 2 dads when they bring up their family.

They don't have to say anything in particular. There is no reason at all to make an issue out of family structure – just be supportive of the family that they have.

Q2) How would you suggest the teachers include these children in projects where they are making a card for Mother's Day or Father's Day?

The same way they would include children where, for example, the father had died. "Who would you like to send a Father's Day card to?"

Q3) What do you say to the children who are living with their grandparents. Or in a foster home?

Same answer as above - They don't have to say anything in particular. There is no reason at all to make an issue out of family structure – just be supportive of the family that they have.

Q4) I understand you have concerns regarding the flash curriculum and want some of the topics left out.

Would you have these children asked not to talk about their families? Would you suggest the teacher not acknowledge all families are ok.

Every kid should be able to talk about their family, with no judgement.

Q5) I am not concerned about your position on lessons they teach children as far as their sexuality. No one is telling children who they should take as a partner.

Who they "take as a partner" should not come up at all. Leave that to the parents.

- Teach biology (there are males and females, and here's how sex/reproduction works).
- Teach how males & females bodies mature – so here is what they can expect to start happening in their own body.
- Teach safety (STD's, pregnancy, etc.)

Q6) I am concerned about the toll this may take on the mental health of children living in a non traditional household when they feel the parents they have are not accepted.

I have never advocated anything about being judgmental or non-accepting of non-traditional households. If that was attributed to me, someone is just making stuff up.

Q7) Do you personally believe that marriage is between a man and a woman?

I'm not sure what that question has to do with schools, but I'll answer anyway because it is simple. It is not something to "believe", it is just what is.

The government has prescribed a certain relationship between adults, and the word "marriage" is used.

The Bible prescribes a certain relationship between a man and a woman, and the word "marriage" is also used there.

I don't know, but I suspect that the Koran and other texts probably also prescribe relationships labeled "marriage".

The word "marriage", as is true with many other words, has multiple definitions.

If you are trying to relate this to school: clearly a government school will use the government-related definition of the word.

Q8)

Q9)

Q10)