



# 2017 LUCAS COUNTY VOTERS' GUIDE

## Sylvania City School District Board of Education

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**Term of Office: 4 years**

**To be elected: 3**

- Q1. In the position you seek, what do you consider are the most important issues to be addressed, and what would you do about them?*
- Q2. What do you bring to the position that another candidate cannot?*

### Greg Feller

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**Education:** High school – St. John's Jesuit, College – Purdue University, BSME

**Current occupation:** Civil engineer and president/owner of a civil engineering firm

**Website:** <https://www.facebook.com/FellerForSchoolBoard/>

**Qualifications:** As a civil engineer, I have worked in the real estate market for 15 years. My company has designed many subdivisions in the Sylvania area and we work with prominent developers in the Sylvania area. I fully understand the relationship between the schools and the real estate market and growth – a strong community requires a strong school system. My skill set can be integral in future growth decisions, land purchases, facilities management and operations. I am the only candidate with this skill set. My experience as an engineer in the real estate market has been missing since John Crandall was on the board.

**Questions:**

**1)** One of the most important issues I see facing Sylvania Public Schools is public confidence. Based on my conversations and observations, there is a lot of mistrust in the board from the public right now and regaining that trust is critical. I believe regaining the trust of the public can be accomplished by communication and transparency. I believe following a defined decision-making process will greatly help. I realize that no matter what decision is made someone will be upset. However, I believe if a decision is made and it can be backed up with data and clear reasons then most of the public will understand. They may not always agree but they can understand.

**2)** As stated above, I am a civil engineer and have worked in the real estate industry for 15 years. My skill set as an engineer can be integral in future growth decisions, land purchases, facilities management and operations. I can help bring clarity to the decision-making process. I have been trained throughout my career to clearly define the problem, clearly define goals and obtain facts and data to support decisions that are made. I also believe it is vital to listen to both sides and do the necessary research to fully understand the issues. I believe following that process takes political and public influences out of the decision-making process and helps facilitate open and honest communication and transparency with the community to build trust.

I also believe I have a perspective that is beneficial. As a parent I have three kids in the schools. As a business owner I am accountable to both our employees and clients. I bring strong communication skills...I must effectively communicate with employees, clients and governmental agencies to get projects approved and completed. As a small business owner I am very conscious of the need for financial responsibility, I have to make tough decisions every day, I have to be a leader, I deal with finances and budgets and I believe this experience will allow me to bring that perspective to the board.

## Julie Hoffman

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**Education:** I am a proud graduate of Sylvania Southview, The University of Toledo (Bachelor Degree), and the University of Toledo College of Law (Juris Doctorate).

**Current occupation:** I am an attorney in private practice.

**Website:** [Julie Hoffman for Sylvania School Board on Facebook](#)

**Qualifications:** I have served two terms on the Board of Education. I have been an active volunteer in Sylvania Schools for the past fifteen years. I am an experienced attorney who emphasizes collaborative negotiation in her law practice.

**Questions:**

1) One of the most important issues facing the district is school funding. If I'm re-elected to the Board I will continue to work with my colleagues to advocate at the state level to fix the funding model which doesn't allocate state funds in a fair and equitable manner. As making changes at the state level is a very difficult and ongoing task I will continue to work with our treasurer to be fiscally responsible with our funds so that we can try and minimize the burden on the tax payer.

A primary issue for all schools is to meet the needs of all of students. Public schools have a wide spectrum of students. Our educators are tasked with meeting these children where they are and doing their best to provide every child, with whatever their specific needs may be, with the best possible experience in our buildings. In our continued quest to meet the needs of every student in Sylvania I have been very involved in our cultural responsiveness initiative and if I am re-elected I will continue my work with this group.

2) I bring eight years of experience on the Sylvania Board of Education. I have served two years as Vice President and two years as President of the Board. I have built strong relationships with my colleagues, administrators, teachers, staff and our community. The strength of those relationships is a tremendous asset when the district is facing tough issues. I have also served for seven years on the Board of Sylvania Community Action Team with six years of service as their Vice President. In my service to this community I strive to be accessible and transparent. I will always meet with students, parents, teachers, administrators, tax payers or any stakeholder who would like to provide feedback, share their concerns, ask questions or advocate for their position. In my position as a board member I never forget that I am there to represent the needs and the will of our community.

## Gregory LaManna

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**Education:** Bachelor's of Science in Philosophy and Political Sciences from Florida State University; Masters of Public Health in Organizations & Management from University of South Florida

**Website:** <https://www.facebook.com/LaMannaforSylvania/>

**Current occupation:** Business Development Director for a leading healthcare company

**Qualifications:** My role as a husband and father raising a family in Sylvania for at least the next 15 years provides unique insights and commitment. Additionally, I serve as a member of the Sylvania Township Board of Zoning Appeals and the Land Use Subcommittee on Community Growth and Development which provides experience and knowledge on the future of Sylvania development impacting how schools are funded. Finally, having worked in government previously I feel I am best qualified to navigate the local and statewide landscape.

**Questions:**

1) I feel the most important issue is the perceived lack of transparency and trust in our school system because it is the lens in which a large number of community members view everything the school system does. I believe re-districting, the board of revisions and the departure of the previous Superintendent contributed in part to this perception. In order to operate any successful organization it must be built on a foundation of respect, communication/transparency, trust and accountability. If those things are lacking or are perceived to be missing it leads to dysfunction and distrust which disrupts our core mission of educating students and preparing them for success. As a member of the Sylvania School Board I would work with parents, teachers, students and the administration to develop efficient, effective and consistent processes while partnering with parent organizations and community leaders to communicate out what is happening and why. I would ensure that we get the basic

functions right and then tackle grander plans once we have a support structure in place. Secondly, I think school funding is an issue as we are among the highest taxed districts in NW Ohio and parents also then face the prospect of fees for their children as well. The district is significantly impacted by the state decisions on school funding as we are considered a “wealthier” district and receive less dollars as a result which puts more pressure on our local families. As a School Board Member i would work diligently with my fellow Board members here locally and around the state to rally communities to change the way our schools are funded. In addition, I would work nationally to diversify our funding streams where we can to place less burden on homeowners. Finally, I believe State Testing and the Report Card are important issues we must address. Recognizing that the test is imperfect and Sylvania has more factors to deal with than other suburban NW Ohio schools, it is imperative that we improve in our State report card. The fact of the matter is that most folks including home buyers just look at the achievement grade or summary scoring to make determinations on how our school district is performing even though it is far more nuanced than that. As a member of the School Board, I would work to address the flaws in the testing to the extend possible but also work with parents, teachers and the administration to ensure that we have a comprehensive plan and the tool we need to be successful including continued development for our teachers to deal with our changing school composition. I know we have passionate teachers and administrators as well as invested parents. We are certainly have the pieces to make a difference for our schools.

2) As an executive in a Fortune 500 company for over 10 years I have managed people and financial performance of products and services. I understand setting strategic direction, setting goals and managing a budget and personnel to deliver success. Finally, having worked in large organizations I excel at bringing a diverse group of stakeholders who often don't all agree together to achieve common objectives.

## Stephen Rothschild

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**Education:** Northwestern University, Bachelor of Science and Juris Doctor, cum laude

**Current occupation:** Attorney

**Qualifications:** Current President of Sylvania City Schools Board of Education. Lifelong resident of Sylvania Township; attended Stranahan, Arbor Hills and Northview; 3 children all graduated from Southview and went on to attend Northwestern University; currently General Counsel to one of the AmLaw200 largest law firms in America.

**Questions:**

1) Funding. Without adequate funding and understanding by our stakeholders to support that funding, public education will grind to a halt. The challenges are enormous. The state legislature and Governor are not supportive of appropriate state funding for public education in districts like Sylvania and have not fixed an unconstitutional system of funding. They continue to support a system that requires “wealthier” districts to increase revenue from property taxes. This becomes more difficult each year, wastes time and resources, creates uncertainty and is tiresome for taxpayers. We must do more to educate the public about how schools are funded and why they deserve our support. Public schools are here to stay. We know they need perpetual funding and we should come up with a solution to funding that recognizes that truth. I will continue to work with citizen groups and politicians to address this issue.

2) I am seeking re-election because I believe that in my first 4 years of service I have demonstrated that I can be an effective advocate for public education. The work is not done and I believe that my experience will help me to be even more effective in the next four years. I have been a resident in the district for over 50 years. All three of our children attended Timberstone and Southview and all had outstanding experiences that I want to continue to make available for others. I am a passionate supporter of public education and a highly skilled communicator. With those skills, I intend to continue to focus the Sylvania Schools mission on educating all students to their full potential.

## Shannon Szyperski

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**Education:** Northview High School, Bowling Green/University of Toledo (Geography & Planning)

**Current Occupation:** Copywriter (content for websites, brochures, advertisements, and other marketing materials)

**Website:** <http://www.ShannonForSylvania.com>

**Qualifications:**

- President of Sylvania Schools Parent Organization (2015-present)
- Nine years of volunteering in Sylvania Schools, including several parent officer positions
- My copywriting skills include the ability to absorb complex information, understand it as fully as possible, and then encapsulate it simply and effectively. Copywriting involves being a decision-maker, as well as a fair, accurate and meaningful conduit of information between a client and an audience, much like a school board member is a conduit of information between a school district and a community.

**Questions:**

- 1) I believe the most important issues facing Sylvania Schools are:
  - a. A need for greater trust and transparency within the district and between the district and the community. I strongly believe in respecting the “public” in public education. As a writer and as a citizen, I have a longstanding reputation of presenting information in a fair, accurate, and direct manner. I will bring this forthrightness to the Sylvania Board of Education and encourage the same be done throughout the district.
  - b. School funding. School funding has been declared unconstitutional a number of times, yet it remains so. I believe we are responsible to work within the current funding parameters to best financially take care of our district while also working to fix the deeper issue at the state level. We need to work with other districts to improve funding conditions for all students across Ohio so that our districts can focus less on finances and more on educating children.
  - c. A change in demographics. A district that includes a wider range of physical, intellectual, socio-economic, and other types of diversity can be more challenging and demand more resources and more patience. This doesn’t mean it’s a bad thing or that we can’t continue to succeed. I will embrace and nurture Sylvania’s increased diversity in a way that it benefits us all as a community by exemplifying a positive mindset and seeking out the opportunities diversity provides.
- 2) The thing that I can bring to Sylvania Board of Education is a broader, multi-experience perspective. I have seen the district as a student, as a parent, as a parent volunteer at each school level, and as a parent leader working closely with district administrators. Professionally, I have worked with companies very large and very small to help them discover their greatest resources and to decide how they need to present themselves to their customers/clients. I can do the same for Sylvania Schools.

I have an appreciation for all facets of our school system. Having had several hands-on jobs, from cashier to donut fryer to lock assembler, I understand the importance of the more “stage crew” positions in a school district. I have had years of experience as a paid full-time caregiver for children from six weeks old to elementary school age, so I understand how demanding being responsible for the care and education of children can be. I have led individual school parent organizations and our district-wide parent organization, so I understand how much difficult decision-making, criticism, and frustration being in charge brings with it. For years, I’ve been in our schools early in the morning and later at night, so I’ve seen just how hard our custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, playground attendants, teachers, other staff members, and administrators work even before and after hours. I appreciate our district, I know our district, and I understand our district, inside and out.