



## Make an educated vote for schools

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### Lakewood Sun Post

Lakewood schools are facing aging buildings, declining enrollment and diversity issues, but school officials are being proactive to deal with these challenges. They embarked on an ambitious \$168 million program to reorganize the district, rebuild and remodel the aging schools.

The first phase, which was on time and on budget, wrapped up this year with three newly rebuilt buildings opening to rave reviews. Major work is under way on additional facilities throughout the district, as part of the second phase, with the continuing support of the community.

Longtime board members Linda G. Beebe and W. Charles Geiger III should be rewarded for their service with another four-year term. Three challengers, Matthew John Markling, Martin Lowell and Dawn I. DeFreeze, are seeking the third open seat, which is being vacated by Debra Sweeney. It's a close call between Markling and Lowell, but Markling wins our endorsement for the final position.

Beebe and Geiger, with more than 40 years of board experience between them, bring an institutional knowledge to the job as the district moves into the next phase of its rebuilding project.

Beebe, 65, is an attorney and a former teacher. Her priorities are to keep the schools fiscally responsible. She notes that the district has not asked for an additional operating levy in six years, which is double the expected lifetime of the last levy. Beebe wants to continue work on improving student conduct and to begin discussion of possibly implementing uniforms for students. She also wants to improve communication by developing a new Web site.

Geiger, a local business owner, worked with Beebe and the rest of the board Sweeney, Ed Favre and Betsy Shaughnessy on the rebuilding project. He said the board needs to work harder on communication and to meet the educational needs of all students, acknowledging the variety of financial, economic, family structure, culture and language issues facing students in the city schools. Geiger also wants to continue emphasis on implementing the student conduct, school climate and school safety committee recommendations.

Markling, a 36-year-old attorney, gets the nod for the third seat. He has two young children and can bring that perspective to the board. He also specializes in school law and is intimately familiar with the issues facing a district like Lakewood. Markling's learning curve would be short, since he regularly attends board meetings and is well-versed on the most pressing issues.

Lowell, 39, owns a local painting company. He also has school-age children and is active with the Franklin PTA. Lowell was critical of the district's decision to close Franklin early and said he could be a voice for an underrepresented segment of the population, if elected. He is candid and knowledgeable about the district.

DeFreeze, 42, a minister and a public speaker, is the first African-American to seek any elected office in the city. She said her experience as a single mother with tight finances gives her an understanding of this segment of the city's population.

But the strongest candidates are Beebe, Geiger and Markling, and they should be elected to the school board on Nov. 6.

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