

Harford County Council
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Harford County Council of PTA, Inc.

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Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Ron Eaton

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Home address 2118 Bellvale Road
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Education (including institutions): Master of Education University of Maryland
Bachelors, Loyola College Baltimore, Maryland

Years residing in Harford County: 37

Ages of children and where they attended school: 39, 35, and 26 All attended Youth's Benefit Elementary, Fallston Middle, and Fallston High School.

- 1. What prompted you to seek election to the school board?** Over the last few years the public has lost of confidence in the Board of Education (BoE), parents are held at a distance, and collaboration with elected officials has been marginal. That must be reversed. Such an atmosphere eventually impacts the classroom environment.

When I served on the BoE from 1985 through 1996 it enjoyed the confidence and trust of parents, the public and elected official. I was privileged to work with members who believed in and practiced professional, open, academic, and at times dynamic discussions on all matters within the Board's responsibility. We returned every phone call. I am convinced that trust and confidence can and must be restored.

The first election of BoE members will bring challenges. It will require a depth of understanding of the School System and the County. An ability to join people and organizations as a team during the transition from an appointed to an elected board will be important.

We must remember that public service is a privilege, not a right. Nowhere is that more important than in educating America's future, your children.

Public education in a democracy is the public's business, but students are the parent's pride.

2. **Share some examples of your involvement with the public schools in Harford County.** Past legislative chair and President of Youth's Benefit Elementary PTA, former member and President of Harford County Board of Education (1985-1996), Harford Community College Trustee (1991-1996).
3. **What qualifications and/or experience do you have that will help you make a positive contribution to the school board?**

The following activities highlight accomplishments as a member of the BoE. I must add that these activities were successful with the support of six other Board members.

- **Collaboration, cooperation and open processes** - Worked with energy and commitment to ensure open and frank dialogue with parents, elected officials, PTAs, teachers, administrators, and staff as well as businesses and State BoE, Maryland State Department of Education, among others. Every phone call was important and was returned!
- **Harford Glen** – initiated development of the Harford Glen master plan and fostered political and fiscal support for new facilities
- **Technology Education Program** - conceptualized and instituted.
- **Cultural Arts Center** - initiated public and political discussion for the development of the Center now shared by Harford Technical High School and the Community College.
- **Harford Technical High School** – championed the change from a three to a four year program
- **School Construction** - advocated school construction for Fallston Middle, Forest Lakes Elementary, North Bend Elementary, Fountain Green, Church Creek, and Abingdon Elementary. Presented before the Board of Public Works several times in collaboration with the Delegation and the County Executive
- **Budget** – insisted on open and public budget discussions at all times.
- **Professional Organizations** - insisted on open and collegial discussions with all bargaining units
- **HEAT Center:** Worked in collaboration with the Board, the Community College, and elected officials in conceptualizing and initial development of the Higher Education and Technology Center in Aberdeen.

4. **If elected, what are three priority issues that you will advocate as a school board member?** Reconstitute confidence and trust of parents, the public, and elected officials. Ensure BoE processes are open for public involvement except where provided for by law. Teaching the “Whole Child” through diverse curricula by exemplary teachers.

5. Based on you knowledge and perception, what are the strengths and weaknesses of HCPS? Are there programs, activities, or budgetary items that you would add or eliminate?

- Strengths: teachers and facilities
- Weaknesses: Communications, unfocused leadership, as well as roles and responsibilities between the BoE, Superintendent and the staff that appear to be out of balance. Adversarial relations with professional organizations and elected officials.
- Budget: The budget represents the translation of policy into dollars. I am not convinced the BoE fully understands the importance of a thorough and public review of the budget. It would be premature to focus on adding or eliminating items without a thorough review involving parents, PTAs, and the school system.

6. Please list three ways parental / community involvement can be utilized effectively in our schools.

- Parent support for the operating budget through participation in its development and review
- Support in developing requirements for school construction whether new or a renovation
- Active involvement in developing and/or reviewing Board policies.

7. Please use the space provided below to share any additional information not covered in previous questions. A complete understanding of the County demographics, public expectations, and community values are an integral part of public education policies and oversight. As the Research Chairman for Futures Commission of Harford County "Focus 2000" I gained great insight into the County. Much of that data and insight led to improvement for HCPS. I also served as the first Chairman of the Fallston community Council.

- Though retired, a substantial part of my career involved budget, programming, and management at the national level. I had the privilege to work with the White House staff, the Office of Management and Budget, various members of Congress, and Senate and House Armed Services Committees on a variety of issues. Those experiences provide a depth of understanding for large budgets, and policy that will bring skills and talent to the Board that does not presently exist.

I served as the Deputy Director for the Maryland State Police Aviation Command. That service involved day to day leadership and management decisions on policy, budget, and aviation operations. Testimony before committees of the Maryland Senate and the House of Delegates on budget, personnel matters, aircraft procurement, and safety was integral to the job.