

## **District 2 Candidates Mike Crowley, Jennifer Hall Lee & Wayne Hammack**

### **1. Why do you want to be on the School Board?**

**MC:** To ensure the Well Being of our kids and staff by promoting Anti-bully campaign, emergency preparedness and school safety initiatives, My Child and all children will be involved in a transition point and being a concerned parent this issue has worried me as it should all parents, How do we address this new way of education, either by home or by hybrid and all the while wondering how does PUSD enhance the creative and Social skills for children? This is why I wanted to be on school board to be a part of something that could be impactful for decades to come and all the while always keeping kids first.

**JHL:** I want to be a PUSD board member because I love the PUSD. I am running for the Pasadena Unified School Board because I can help bring members of the community into public schools as that is what I have done as Chair of the Eliot Arts Annual Fund. Misinformation about PUSD schools still exists in our district and that has hurt enrollment in our schools.

I want to be a PUSD board member because I understand the importance of a civic body in a community. As an Altadena Town Council member I serve census tract 4612 in Altadena and have been a council member for three terms. I am also the ATC Treasurer and the Chairperson for the Altadena Town Council Education Committee.

I'm running for school board because I believe in our public school system which is one of the fundamental building blocks of our democracy. It's vital to us, let's support it.

**WH:** As a parent of three children who have been in the district since kindergarten, I have become increasingly interested in the Board over a number of years. While I and many other families in the district have been pleased with the education PUSD provides, many in the community do not consider PUSD for their children, in part because of a poor perception. I disagree with that perception, and want to work to change it.

But we cannot change that perception if we do not work together to promote our schools. Nor can we change that false perception by perpetuating another false perception – that only a privileged few families exercise choice in deciding which public school is the best fit for their kids. I have pushed back against that perception in the past when applied to Marshall, and will continue to do that across the spectrum of PUSD schools to which it is applied. This became quite divisive during last year's consolidation debate, and threatens to rear its head again after the new Board is seated.

I would not be in this race had the incumbent, Roy Boulghourjian, chosen to run again. I appreciate his leadership and respect for the decisions that families across PUSD make for their children. When I learned that Mr. Boulghourjian had chosen not to run again, I decided to enter the race because the outcome of this election is so important.

We need a positive vision for the District, focused on tapping into the large number families in Altadena, Pasadena, and Sierra Madre that have not considered PUSD in the past. We will not get them all, but I know there are families out there that would give PUSD a second look if they consider that PUSD provides a viable (and cost friendly!) alternative. I will bring a positive, energetic vision to the district, while also working to dispel notions about PUSD and our community.

### **2. What qualities do you have that will make you an effective board member?**

**WH:** I will be a strong advocate for our schools and the families in our community. I am experienced in digging into the details and I have studied the history of our City and PUSD, including the persistent challenge of race. I listened carefully last year to the concerns of the community during the school closure debate, including the flow of children from schools on the west side of town to schools on the east side of town. I understand those concerns, and will work hard in the community to address that issue and to promote schools across ALL of Pasadena. I have been involved in the community as a leader in youth groups for more than a decade, including Little League, AYSO soccer, Cub Scouts, and school groups including the Marshall Athletic Boosters. I have devoted countless hours to those efforts and am

fortunate to have gotten so much from them. I have been fortunate in those capacities to meet hundreds of families of school-aged children across the District, for whom I will be a passionate voice and a promoter of PUSD.

**MC:** My Family has been devoted to Public Service, I learned the value of giving back at a young age and it has stuck with me every since, and now as a Tournament of Roses member since 2012 I have made contacts that can provide a wealth of information and help to the district as we move forward with Education and how it affects the new way of learning and the health financially for the district.

My professional life in the Music Business I was fortunate to enjoy a thriving career from Concert promotion to Artist Management. From Led Zeppelin to Coachella to a platinum selling band I learned the value of Communication, Understanding that everyone will have an opinion and that this opinion must be respected and that both sides need to feel good and understand the position of both the district and the district understanding the opinions and concerns of the families

I am a person that creates Partnerships, Collaboration with either the city a nonprofit a business we will need to work with a team of partners moving forward I have already demonstrated this ability by my days at my sons school by inviting Civic and community leaders to read at Don Benito plus working with a community partner I was able to feed the staff during teacher appreciation week, and more importantly I was able to work with the Tournament of Roses and help Don Benito secure a 4,000 dollar grant from the foundation which in turn helped the children have a night of space and fun and interesting projects for show and tell from engineers thru JPL and other partners that created an amazing night for the kids to enjoy the Moon and beyond.

**JHL:** As an Altadena Town Council member and as the Chair of the Eliot Arts Annual Fund I have direct experience with community members and our public school system.

As an Altadena Town Council member I have experience listening to residents discuss their ideas for Altadena. I have also listened to residents discuss problems and as a town council member I have to direct them to the person in LA County who can help solve their problem. I don't let things languish, I answer questions promptly. I get the task done. This is a role I have loved.

As the Altadena Town Council Education Committee chairperson I initiated town hall style events for all community members. Working with the committee we created these town halls as informational meetings for people to get to know PUSD principals, teachers and parents. They were quite successful and we introduced ideas about the importance of public schools to communities.

In the role as an Altadena Town Council member I understand that Altadena is a diverse town. In fact, on the Council we frequently remind ourselves of this. This sensibility is important for public service. It's important to recognize that not everyone is going to see things your way, or that your ideas are seen by others the way you see them.

I believe the PUSD is one unified district. When my child was promoted from Eliot Arts Magnet Academy to a PUSD high school, I chose to continue my role as Chair of the Eliot Arts Annual Fund because I believe that we are one district.

- 3. Two of the attributes of an effective board member are: 1) an understanding of the importance of parent involvement and support in public education; and 2) an understanding of the need to seek parent and community input in the decision-making process. Describe how you would try to ensure that your decisions reflect input not just from the most vocal parents, but also from parents whose voices are not always heard?**

**JHL:** As Chair of the Eliot Arts Annual Fund I have sought out information and participation from parents in the school. I have worked with DELAC parents. As a board member I will reach out to parents and community members in the PUSD as I have done working with Eliot staff and parents. Prior to Franklin Elementary being closed I sought out information from the Principal, staff and PTA members.

**WH:** You have to talk to people. We cannot sit back and listen only to the folks that show up at Board meetings. Or only to those with whom we agree. During this campaign, I have engaged people who don't agree with my perspective. But it takes two to tango. If someone disagrees with my perspective, I want to hear from them. Let's have a conversation.

I am proud of the relationships I have developed across this district which were not built overnight. They developed only from talking to families and getting to know them. I will visit schools across the district regularly, talk to parents, and my email and phone number will always be available.

One of the troubling things I have observed in talking to families during this campaign is the number of people who have left the district because of dissatisfaction over poor communication or lack of attention to their concerns. We must do better. With so many private schools to choose from, families have countless options. We cannot ignore the needs of families once they are in PUSD or take them for granted. I will be a true public servant if elected – for all of Altadena, Pasadena, and Sierra Madre.

**MC:** 1) Must have a Clear and bold vision with challenging goals for success  
2) Must put Students first and understand children are moving parts not data

Monthly Communication with the parents of the District schools, this pandemic has shown we can engage and still be heard, I am retired I would have more ability to sit down at the 4 schools in District # 2 and make myself available to the parents of the schools, Zoom and Google Hangouts are game changers. Principals and the PTA will be key working partners; this will also keep me engaged with the daily struggles not only from a school side but from a parental side because I will make sure nobodies voice will be left on deaf ears.

**4. A characteristic of an effective school board is that it allocates resources to needs. Given the ongoing budget concerns and declining enrollment, what are your top funding priorities?**

**MC:** 1) Support Teachers and Staff by equipping them with the tools they need to provide a high quality education for our children  
2) Ensure the Well-being of our students and staff by emergency preparedness programs and school safety initiatives.  
3) Invest in Early literacy programs, establish childhood education focused on reading and math.

**JHL:** I believe we should always make sure our students who are enrolled in PUSD schools are served well. I had discussions with the Principal and staff of Franklin with community members. We were discussing the direction for the school. We discussed the garden and the technology program. One of the conversations was about technology, and the new green/nature consciousness for schools. The discussion turned to equity. If you have a certain amount of funding, how do you spend it? You must always keep in mind the needs of the student body.

What will I not cut? I would never cut the arts. Children need access to arts, they need extra curriculum. I helped to create the Women's History Month assembly, a middle school collaborative for all PUSD middle schools, which began at Eliot. We had a vision and we followed through. Now that assembly is recognized by ACSA Region #15. It is an event that goes beyond writing biographies about historical women, this event challenges a student to think about gender, representation, and historical events.

When we talk about declining enrollment it is important to be aware of the facts. PUSD has been experiencing declining enrollment for years. We are a smaller district than what we used to be. In order to provide for the students we need transparency on the facts, always.

Principal Touloumian, parents, and volunteers have done amazing work to help Eliot Arts Magnet Academy grow. In my role as Chair of the Annual Fund I see our role as fundraisers, yes, but also as a support system for the school. The annual fund committee has often assisted the PTA in their events because they needed the help. We can have a solid and healthy school district if we always keep all the children in our minds as we discuss the district. Budgets reflect our

values. What are our values? This is a good question right now. My values are equity, arts for every child, mentoring for children from community members, and listening to all parents - general education and special education.

Through all my work in the community I have developed a vision for PUSD that is based on the importance of public schools and their essential nature as fundamental to our overall democracy. All the things I believe in come together in a coherent vision; community, equity, democracy.

**WH:** First, I hope that everyone votes to support Measure O, the bond initiative on the November ballot. It has been a dozen years since Measure TT, and our schools are in need of upgrades to facilities and technology. I know some were dissatisfied with Measure TT allocations. I have heard your voice and will work hard to make sure your concerns are addressed with this new funding. But our schools need this injection of money to bring them into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Please support Measure O.

We need to boost the district's technology resources for all students. Distance learning has laid bare the challenges faced by the large numbers of socio-economically disadvantaged students that PUSD services. Like so many concerned stakeholders, I fear that we will be dealing with an exacerbated achievement gap for years to come, as not all families can stay home with their children to help with their daily lessons, nor can they all afford private tutoring. I have great concern as well for the special education community, which is suffering greatly right now. I will make it a priority to make sure those families' needs are addressed.

We need to look from top to bottom at what is working and what is not. Which schools and programs are providing the most bang for the buck? Those schools and programs should be maintained, so that we can build off of what PUSD undeniably is already doing so well. Where there are challenges, we need to look closely at why, and make sure they are properly funded, promoted, and supported.

**5. Another attribute of an effective board member is that he/she is committed to high standards of achievement for all students. How do you see your role as a board member in ensuring the district closes the achievement gap while challenging higher achievers AND offering a well-rounded education for all?**

**WH:** This is the million-dollar question, for which there are no easy answers. For reasons going back to the founding of Pasadena, PUSD faces the challenge that its student body does not mirror the region as a whole - there is a far-greater percentage of socio-economically disadvantaged families in the district, and fewer enrolled middle-class families than live in the area. Research shows that students benefit from a diverse mix of families from across the spectrum. Some of our schools have that, while others do not. My role as a board member will be to challenge middle class families to come to the table, which will help all of our students.

Now, as I said above, I paid attention to the arguments during the consolidation discussions. I understand the concern that by chasing middle-class families, we might be ignoring the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. I believe we can recruit those families and do so in a way that benefits all students. The benefits of a diverse student body are undeniable.

Finally, there are some practical things that we can do as a district to work to close the achievement gap. Proactive guidance counseling, improved technology, and training our teachers to better relate to, and communicate with, students of varying backgrounds will help keep our students engaged and prevent them from falling behind.

**MC:** 1) By attempting to partner with parents and teachers and staff to establish equity across the District by making sure all of our schools are "Great schools" so that students and parents enjoy creative roles and goals which are attainable.

A. Academic support to improve achievement

B. Family engagement to help support education and assistance

**JHL:** As a child who was on the low end of the achievement gap in high school I find this to be a very good question. How we instruct students is important. I loved learning "one to one" later in high school because it helped me get my

diploma. I am not sure I would have earned the diploma without instruction that utilized my strengths. Seeing a child's strengths is important and necessary.

## **6. What do you see as PUSD's greatest opportunities and challenges?**

**JHL:** I can answer this with one word: Integration. One of our greatest opportunities is the ability to tell our story as part of the history of integration in the United States. We are the first school district in the west for court-mandated bussing and that was both an opportunity and a challenge. As the topic of school integration in schools grows throughout the nation, let's look at our own part in the history of integration in the United States. We can learn from this history.

**MC:** Opportunities: The Children, the very backbone of this District, The Teachers who work so hard to ensure that each student has the opportunity to achieve his or hers goals and become our future. The staff of each school who keeps the school running as a fine tuned engine without a great staff the school will fail and the teachers will not have the support needed to teach our children to their fullest needs.

Challenges: The State funding is a challenge, Charter schools have now become a challenge as well as Homeschooling and private schools in short the parents have more options to choose and while state funding is cut every year for education the school sites lack the very things needed for recruitment of new parents thus we enter a slippery slope and until a new stream of revenue is created this deficit will take public education down and the other models of children and education will survive and thrive.

**WH:** I will not rehash my answers above about the challenges, which are many. I was struck in reviewing a video of the 2015 PEN candidate forum just how similar the issues were then as now. We can do better.

We have a tremendous opportunity coming out of the pandemic for a refresh of PUSD's image. Let's first work to get our kids back to school safely. We need a collective positive outlook for our future, and to put the divisiveness of the past in our rear view mirror. We have a great opportunity to improve communication with families, inside and outside of PUSD, regarding the wonderful and varied opportunities our schools provide. We all must accept the challenge to actively reach out to our friends, neighbors, and former students who may have left the district, to convince them to give us a well-deserved fresh look.

## **7. Where do your children attend school, or if they've graduated from high school, where did they attend school?**

**WH:** My oldest son graduated from Marshall in 2020, and is about to start at UCSB. My daughter is a Freshman at Marshall. My youngest son is a 4<sup>th</sup> grader at Sierra Madre Elementary.

**MC:** Don Benito Fundamental School

**JHL:** My child attends Blair High School.