

READER

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CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

2021 ELECTION

Lake Pend Oreille School District trustee Zone 2 race

Ahead of the Tuesday, Nov. 2 election, the *Reader* is presenting a limited series of election guides featuring questions and answers with candidates for a range of local offices. This week focuses on candidates for the Zone 2 trustee seat on the Lake Pend Oreille School District board. This is the only contested seat on the board. For more information on candidates running opposed, visit Election Central on sandpointonline.com (sandpointonline.com/news/elections.shtml). For all other election-related information, visit Bonner County Elections at bonnercountyd.gov.

Contested races in Sandpoint and Dover will be featured in the Thursday, Oct. 22 edition of the *Reader*. In the meantime, the *Reader* will host a candidates' forum Tuesday, Oct. 19 from 5:30-8:30 p.m. at the Sandpoint branch of the East Bonner County Library (1407 Cedar St.). This will also be broadcast live on KRFY 88.5 FM.

1. Why are you running as a trustee for Zone 2 in the LPOSD race?
2. What are your top priorities if elected to the board?
3. The community (and nation) remains divided on COVID-19 mask mandates and safety measures.
Where do you stand on masks in school? What is your ideal scenario for Bonner County's school children?
4. Idaho has consistently ranked last in the nation for funding per pupil. How would you, as a trustee, work locally to overcome this deficit to make sure students receive the best education they can?

Gary Suppiger (incumbent)

Age: (did not answer)
Birthplace and residence: St. Louis, Mo.; Cocolalla, Idaho
Years in Bonner County: 29 years (since 1992)
Government service: 4.5 years trustee Lake Pend Oreille School District
Profession: business owner and professional forester; founder and owner Panhandle Forest Products, 36 years in Bonner County, 25 employees
Education: Duke University, Durham, N.C.; bachelors in chemistry, masters in forestry
Family: married 31 years; wife Sally, children Gerhart (28), Madeline (27) and Caroline (24)



benefits the individual, families, communities and our state. Educated individuals are healthier, happier and more productive for their entire life. Education builds communities. I want to do my part to ensure that current and future students from LPOSD get the education and opportunities that they deserve.

2. Support and ensure the academic success of every student. To that end, my main priorities are

1. I believe in public education. I was educated in public schools, as were my parents, siblings and my three children, who attended LPOSD schools from K-12. They received an excellent foundation and excelled in college. Two have earned advanced degrees and are all now pursuing rewarding careers of their own. Education

and will continue to be:

- Safety and security, especially during the pandemic. We must maintain our safety protocols including social distancing, daily disinfecting, deep cleaning, clean air, clean water and cohort groupings;
- Academic achievement. Make sure every child is engaged and learning. Focus on reading in K-3, teach students to problem solve and be critical thinkers, work independently or with a group, be creative and innovative;
- Acquire the skills in communication, math, science, and social sciences to compete and succeed at the next step.

3. The health and safety of our students and staff is a prerequisite to our mission of education. This school year our plan is much the same as last year. We do not require masks or vaccines. LPOSD continues a modified cohort grouping in elementary schools. We social distance, deep clean

every day and wash hands constantly. So far this school year our plan is successful. By the fourth quarter of last school year, based on the district's own data showing schools were safe, the board relieved the isolation requirements after exposure to an infected student and dropped the mask requirement for older students.

4. The state provides about half the resources to support LPOSD. Districts must rely on local property tax levies and federal funds for the balance. This model is inherently inequitable because every school district is different — from enrollment to support for levies to assessed valuations. During the 2020 fiscal year, the state had a \$1.4 billion revenue surplus. All the local property tax levies in the state total \$400 million. With our strong economy and large revenue surplus the state can afford to eliminate local property tax levies and increase funding so every child has a chance to succeed.

Jalon Peters




Age: 39
Birthplace and residence: Born in Arizona, I now live in Cocolalla.
How many years lived in Bonner County?: 4 1/2 years
Government service: NA
Profession: I own a handyman business
Education: High school diploma
Family: I've been married for over 20 years, I have three sons

1. I want to help bring greater parental accountability and transparency through monitoring. I believe in the family-first model to learning. I have vast amounts of

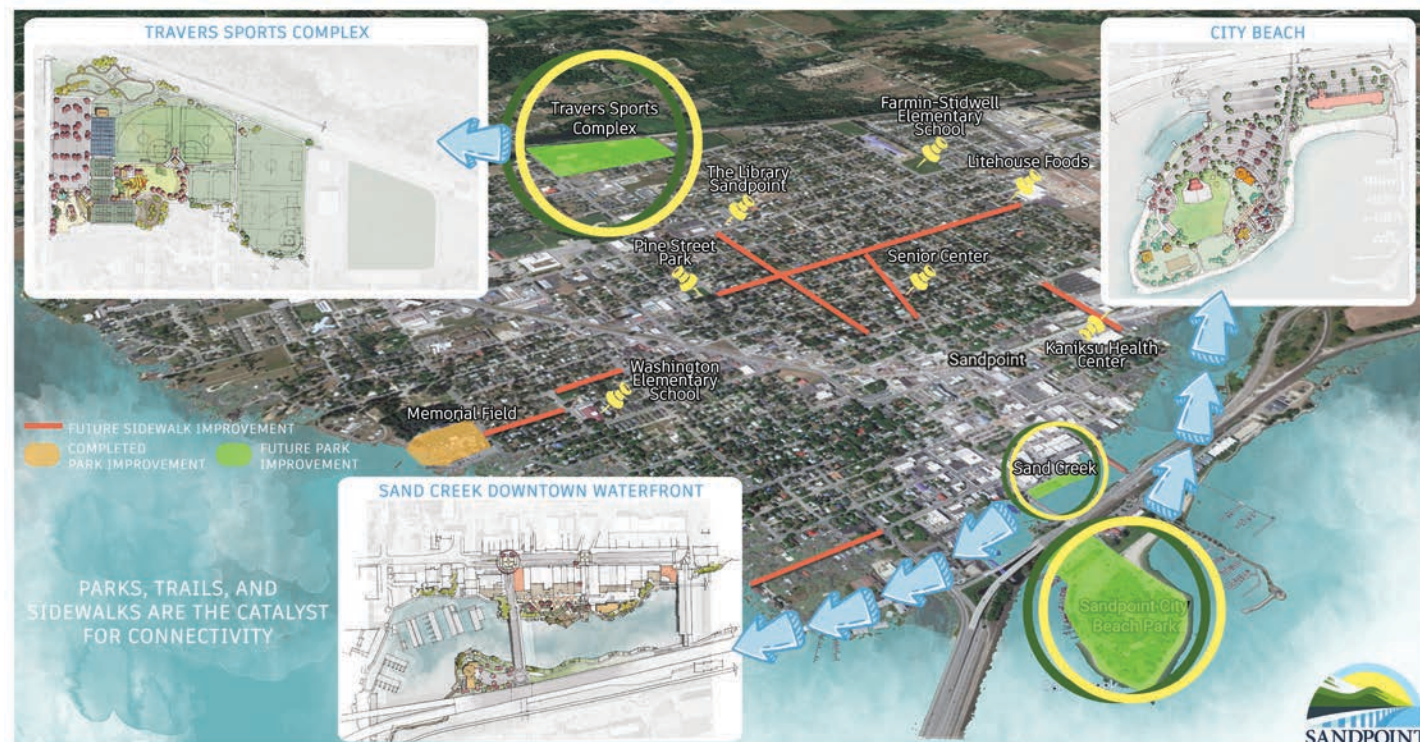
experience working with students and parents as a former youth pastor and lead pastor. I also have vast experience with leading teams, organizing/delegating and overseeing budgets as a missions director and construction superintendent. I feel our LPOSD could use my strength in making decisions. I care about the next generation of citizens and want to do my part to contribute to their success.

2. a. Parental involvement in the classroom and extracurricular activities;
- b. Fiscal responsibility while being accountable and frugal with taxpayer money;
- c. Partnering with teachers when it comes to selection of curriculums and testing requirements, even if they differ from state mandates;
- d. Never allow Critical Race Theory into LPOSD in any form;
- e. Work toward improving the trade programs and trade schools for those students that choose not to attend college;
- f. Ensuring personal liberties for parents, students, teachers and administrators;
- g. Work toward educating the children of LPOSD not indoctrinating them.

3. I feel that the only thing people are divided on is the infringement of personal liberties. I personally feel that wearing a mask to combat this virus is counterproductive and even more damaging. The science and studies show that oxygen deprivation is worse for us than the virus itself. It also creates a greater risk for our lungs to become severely infected when there is lack of oxygen. When the survival rate among people under 60 is 99%, I am baffled that people would wear a mask or take a shot to try and make their chances of survival 100%. If someone wants to wear a mask or get a shot, they have the personal liberty to do so. And so do those that do not wish to do so. An ideal situation would be where people were free to choose what they did with their own health care without being forced or mandated one way or another. And from there, people use common sense when they feel ill and stay home accordingly. We would "quarantine" the sick... not the healthy.

4. My first response would be, does funding equal quality? While I do agree that products are typically better when they cost more, that doesn't necessarily mean that we need to spend more to have better students, curriculums or test results. Maybe the budget would not be an issue if we were able to cut unnecessary programs that drag finances down. I think that a lot of how a student learns and grows has much to do with their "buy in" of the school or that particular class. If we can work toward creating environments where students want to be there, then maybe we would have academic excellence regardless of funds. This may come through offering electives that students find appealing for their long-term goals or through giving teachers the freedom to share life with the students. Where students feel loved and valued. Some of the best teachers I had growing up were tough on me, and they held me accountable. Those were some of the reasons I knew they cared. 

Sandpoint voters asked to consider 1% local option tax on Nov. 2 ballot



By Zach Hagadone
Reader Staff

In addition to local government offices, Sandpoint voters will also be asked to weigh in Tuesday, Nov. 2 on whether they support a 1% resort city local option sales tax. City Council members voted Sept. 8 to put the measure on the ballot. Meanwhile, city officials hosted a series of workshops in early October to familiarize residents with the scope and intent of the LOT.

The ballot language voters will see at the polls on Nov. 2 reads:

Question: Shall the City of Sandpoint, Bonner County, Idaho, adopt an ordinance providing for imposition and collection, for a period of seven (7) years from its effective date, January 1, 2022, and ending December 31, 2028, of certain non-property taxes as follows:

A 1% sales tax on all sales except occupancy sales subject to taxation under Chapter 36 of Title 63, Idaho Code. Exact revenue from this proposed tax is unknown. Revenue from the tax will be used to fund the following projects to completion as prioritized.

The anticipated revenue for the 1% sales tax will be used in the following manner:

For design and construction of the site plan concepts in the 2020 Sandpoint Parks and Recreation Master Plan, including, but not limited to (in no priority order):

- (a) City Beach;

- (b) Downtown Waterfront;
- (c) Travers/Centennial/Great Northern (Sports Complex); and

To purchase property for open space, parks and recreation; and

To support implementation of the City's Pedestrian Priority Sidewalk Network as identified in the adopted 2021 Multimodal Transportation Plan in the amount of \$200,000 per year for a total of \$1,400,000; and

Direct costs to collect and enforce the tax.

Voters will be asked to answer either "in favor" or "against."

Sandpoint residents voted in 2016 to approve a five-year 1% LOT to fund reconstruction work at War Memorial Field, with that revenue source sunseting in December 2020. The proposed seven-year LOT on the ballot in 2021 has been estimated by city officials to raise upwards of \$12 million by the time it expires in 2028.

Proponents of the proposed LOT point out that such funding mechanisms are only available to "resort cities" with a population under 10,000. Sandpoint's population in the 2020 census came in just under that figure, suggesting that it is unlikely given current growth trends that it will be available to the city by the next census in 2030.

Those in favor of the LOT have also argued that large capital projects such as the parks facilities and pedestrian network outlined in the ballot language carry hefty price tags requiring a multitude of funding sources, including grants in need of

matching funds that could be secured via the 1% tax. At the same time, those amenities and infrastructure are heavily used by both residents and visitors, though the cost of their maintenance is borne entirely by the former. The LOT, supporters say, is a way to ensure that non-residents contribute to paying a share of that expense.

Opponents of the proposed LOT argue that the city already has established sources of funding for parks and open spaces and so the 1% tax is an unnecessary burden on consumers and private sector providers of a variety of services. Those against the measure have also questioned whether parks and open spaces should even be a priority for LOT revenue, suggesting that funds raised by such a vehicle could — and should — go to other infrastructure needs, including affordable and workforce housing.

According to a recent survey conducted by the city of Sandpoint, of 265 respondents 57.7% said they supported a new resort city LOT to fund completion of park site plans, while 30% said "no" and 11.3% said they needed more information to make a decision. Among those who responded to the survey, 58.1% identified themselves as registered voters inside Sandpoint city limits, while 41.9% said they were not.

Find the survey at opentownhall.com/portals/287/Issue_11069. To see official ballot examples, visit Bonner County Elections at bonnercountyid.gov/departments/elections.