



2014 Frederick County Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE: Liz Barrett

OFFICE SOUGHT: Member, Board of Education

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS: Citizens for Liz Barrett, 5257 Buckeystown Pike, #504, Frederick,
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CAMPAIGN TREASURER: Deborah Fegley

I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking local office, and I understand that FCTA reserves the right to share my responses with members and interested parties.

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: *Elizabeth A. Barrett* **DATE SUBMITTED: 3/6/2014**

*Candidates: In order to be considered for a recommendation, you must respond to each of the questions. Clarifications, explanations, and other information may be attached, but please be certain to indicate clearly the questions(s) to which you refer. Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to **the Frederick County Teachers Association.***

Frederick County Board of Education Candidate Biography

Education:

- BA – English, Ethics; King’s College, Wilkes-Barre, PA
- MA – English Language & Literature; University of Maryland, College Park, MD
- JD – Washington College of Law, American University

Employment history:

Please see attached resume.

Organizations/Community and School Involvement:

- PTA Member
- Classroom Volunteer, Tuscarora Elementary
- Poverty Mitigation and Homelessness Advocate via Frederick County Coalition for the Homeless and Frederick County Homeless Students Initiative
- Founding Chairwoman, 2009 – 2012, Sustainable Futures, Inc. This organization was founded with the goal of establishing Carroll Montessori Public Charter School
- Friend of the Board, 2013 – present, Sustainable Futures, Inc.
- Youth Sports Coach; YMCA of Central Maryland

1. What is your vision for the future of Frederick County Public Schools? As a member of the Board of Education how will you support this vision?

Frederick County Public Schools will be a premier school system. State and national accolades are welcome and wonderful, but my vision is focused here, for a school system that truly represents the vision, priorities, and the heart of Frederick County. Putting people first and valuing local control, our schools will be the centers of each of our communities. Regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, first language, disability, or socioeconomic status, every one of our children deserve high quality instruction delivered from teachers who are respected as knowledgeable and competent professionals.

As a member of the Board of education, I will support this vision by:

- fighting for our public schools and making clear that public education in Frederick County is a good that benefits all citizens;
- supporting our educators to ensure compensation that reflects their professionalism and value;
- building opportunities for public participation so policies reflect the collective values of our community;
- protecting and expanding a full, rich curriculum that includes music and the arts, sciences, history, literature, world languages, and physical education;
- ensuring our budget is responsibly administered and that BOE and our County government work in a collegial and productive manner;
- recognizing that poverty and serious social problems are not “cured” by even the most skilled and caring teachers and working for a comprehensive County-wide approach to these issues that impact education.

- 2. For the last five years, the county government has funded the school system at Maintenance of Effort (MOE) levels, even in the years county revenues increased. MOE is the lowest level of county education funding allowed by law and does not take into account inflation, unfunded mandates or other increased costs to education. FCTA has been very clear that MOE funding over this extended period is not adequate to meet the needs of our students. Do you believe MOE funding for Frederick County Public Schools is sufficient or do you think additional funding is necessary? Explain.**

MOE is insufficient.

Public education is an investment that our community must make to benefit students, parents, and communities. Our schools are critical to a strong Frederick County. Adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding of our schools is among my top priorities.

We have also seen the impacts of budget processes that have focused on cutting and more cutting, rather than on developing shared priorities and then funding those priorities adequately. Among my top goals is to bring civility, clarity, and strategy to the budget process. Developing a strategic plan for FCPS that reflects the values and priorities of our students, educators, and parents is vital – we know our community wants a premier educational system. Inadequate funding is a proven way to set up both people and systems for failure; it's not fair or reasonable to keep asking our students and educators to do more with less. Our County must prioritize and fund its values. Education is at the top of the list.

- 3. Recruiting and retaining high-quality employees is essential to improved student achievement. It is made more difficult in Frederick County by our proximity to higher paying school systems and the high cost of owning a home here. What would you do to help the school system recruit and retain high quality and effective employees?**

Compensation is crucial to recruiting and retaining high quality professionals. Also important is fostering an environment where our educators and staff can develop professionally and have a career that flourishes. Here are some specific ideas:

- Ensure starting and on-going compensation that reflects the importance of education, the professionalism of our educators, and the value they create for our community;
- Ensure benefits packages are competitive with similarly-situated districts;

- Safeguard compensation in lean budget times – prevent employee pay from being the item that hits the chopping block;
- Reject – publically and clearly – any rhetoric that disparages teachers and their work or their right to engage in collective bargaining;
- Ensure FCPS classrooms are not overcrowded and are healthy and safe;
- Provide ample and well-funded opportunities for professional development; and
- Reject compensation or promotion proposals that are linked to student performance or other faulty metrics.

4. Adequate healthcare and other benefits are crucial in the recruitment and retention of high quality and effective employees. The joint FCPS/Employee Insurance Council has worked collaboratively to ensure the financial health and long term viability of FCPS employee benefits. What recommendations would you make to continue to provide quality health care benefits to employees while keeping the costs affordable to employees and the Board?

Benefits are one portion of compensation; they are not “extras.” One of my platform priorities is putting people first in FCPS; that means ensuring that we’ve adequately funded healthcare and other benefits. The following are recommendations to continue to provide quality health care and benefits to employees while keeping costs affordable to employees and the Board:

- Ask employees what they value in a healthcare and benefits package and listen;
- Empower the joint FCPS/Employee Insurance Council to continue its work to provide quality health care benefits;
- Identify opportunities to negotiate more competitive rates – seek out best practices from other similarly situated school districts that offer exemplary benefits packages; and
- Expand voluntary employee wellness programs which often result in cost-savings.

5. What is your opinion of negotiating multiyear bargaining agreements on salary and benefits? How would you ensure funding from the county government if this approach is used?

Once elected, I’ll work on the Board to restore trust, civility, and transparency to the budget process by working collaboratively with County government and by strongly advocating for FCPS professionals.

While it's time-consuming to "open up" multi-year bargaining agreements each year to renegotiate salary and benefits, I think these annual negotiations are important processes. In particular, given the current challenges in the County/BOE funding process, having this negotiation each year – at least until the economic/political environment improves – appears to be the best way to guarantee that FCPS employees receive competitive pay and benefits. It's important, too, for our community to be aware of and reflect upon the value that our educators bring. The annual pay/benefits negotiations allow for this focused attention.

- 6. Teachers do not have adequate time to meet the increasing demands and constant changes that are the result of education reforms enacted at the federal, state and local level. Implementation of the Common Core State Standards, changes to teacher evaluation, restructuring of the middle school schedule and changes to elementary school grading and report cards, for example, have put tremendous stress on teachers and students. What ideas do you have to streamline, prioritize and reduce the constantly changing demands put on teachers? How should the BOE assess the effectiveness of existing programs and new initiatives?**

One of my top priorities and key strengths is strategic planning. Our system must identify its top priorities. Not everything can be a #1 priority. I've spoken to many teachers who have been functioning in an environment of constant change for far too long. There are clear impacts on their morale, and this constant change isn't fair to our children, either. In both the public and private sector, I have championed and cultivated efficient and effective work environments through strategic planning and straightforward and efficient organizational improvement efforts.

There will always be state and federal mandates. One of the chief roles of the BOE is to advocate for only those changes that will improve FCPS and then work to deflect other distractions. Once elected, I will strengthen FCPS' voice in state and federal politics by developing a coherent and strong advocacy stance – there's no reason, for example, that our teachers and students should have had to waste time on MSAs this year. FCPS must practice saying "no" and standing firm.

Meanwhile, our BOE shouldn't be adding to chaos by increasing requirements in the midst of other large-scale changes. For example, if designing and deploying a curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards was the top priority, our teachers and staff should have had the time necessary to implement the new curriculum without other significant demands. If that means delaying schedule changes, report card modifications, or other priorities, so be it. The BOE should support FCPS' development of reasonable timelines and resource allocation, both budget and human, for all initiatives.

Another reason our BOE so desperately needs a strategic plan is to ensure progress and success is measurable. In lean budget environments and with staff who are often overextended, our BOE must be able to understand which initiatives are providing some return on time or budget investment. We need to establish local metrics (not always test scores) to evaluate learning outcomes and achievements for our students in Frederick County. Our BOE needs to reach out to collect and then replicate the best practices from our teachers, staff, and administrators across the County. It is clear that our professionals have a substantial amount of solid homegrown solutions; these best practices need to be built into priorities and metrics in a strategic plan. Because our BOE has functioned for so long without a strategic plan or clear priorities, this is a process I am eager to help shape and lead.

7. Please mark the box that best reflects your position.

POLICY ISSUE	FCTA position	Support	Oppose
Private/home school vouchers or tuition tax credits	Oppose		X
Differentiated pay for hard to staff positions	Oppose		X
Merit pay for teachers and administrators	Oppose		X
Taxing authority for the Board of Education	No Position	**	**

Comments:

** While I support the current FCPS funding structure via County government, taxing authority for the Board of Education could merit a county-wide discussion. With the advent of our new charter government, improved, additional or new funding streams are worth discussing. No county in Maryland has such taxing authority, so we'd have to look at other states to even begin an assessment of the idea.

8. In spite of an accelerated building schedule, many of our schools remain overcrowded. Enrollment data indicates 13 of the county's 66 public schools are exceeding full capacity. This includes; Centerville Elementary, at 140 percent; Hillcrest Elementary, 130 percent; Urbana Middle, 128 percent; Tuscarora Elementary, 120 percent; Yellow Springs Elementary, 112 percent; North Frederick Elementary and Whittier Elementary, 111 percent; Waverley Elementary, 109 percent; Urbana Elementary, 108 percent; Oakdale Middle, 105 percent; Deer Crossing and New Market Elementary, 104 percent; and Monocacy Elementary, 102 percent (source: *Frederick News Post*, October 7, 2013).

What are your ideas to provide adequate space for all Frederick's school children? What ideas do you have to ensure the adequate use of existing school space to avoid overcrowding in some schools while unused classrooms exist at other schools?

My own children attend a school that is overcrowded, and impacts on students, teachers, staff, and the facilities are clear. Many administrators, teachers, and staff

should be commended for having implemented best practices at their schools to alleviate impacts, but these “make the best of it” situations should be the exception, rather than the norm for our schools.

Redistricting is never a popular concept, but it should always be an option – if considered, plans should be thoughtful and strategic and reflect substantial community input. Redistricting should ensure all neighborhoods have open and well-attended schools that reflect the diversity of our County. We need to ensure school environments that are equitable, safe, and productive for students, teachers, and staff. Once elected, I want to the opportunity to hear more from our staff, teachers, and parents about overcrowding and ideas our community has for solving the problem.

Most importantly, solutions should not always be reactive. Indeed, the most important thing our BOE can do is to proactively engage with the County long before new developments are designed and built. Our BOE and our facilities experts must be prepared and ready for development and population changes. Any approved development must also include adequate funding streams for schools and other needed infrastructure; this is where our BOE must be a fully engaged partner in County government.

9. Inequities in technology, space and functionality exist between new and newly renovated buildings versus older buildings. How do you see the need to renovate older schools fitting into the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)? How should the renovation needs of older buildings be prioritized?

Clearly, some FCPS facilities are “flagship” quality and reflect state-of-the-art design while others are in dire need up updating.

I will strive for equity across our system – regardless of the school a child attends, every child in our County should have access to high quality educational experiences. I look forward to learning more from FCPS facilities staff about the current methods for prioritizing improvements. It’s also important to hear from the administrators, teachers, and staff who work in buildings to hear directly how improvements should be prioritized. Safety and accessibility should always be paramount; building designs and renovations should provide for flexible space solutions. I’ve reviewed the CIP and need to learn more about how the priorities are identified and assigned. Again, before being able to comment specifically regarding renovation priorities, I’ll learn more from FCPS staff.

10. Technology improvements continue to be a need in the school system. School technology positions, critical to staff training and technology upkeep, have not been sufficiently funded. Adequate funding for technology infrastructure, hardware and software has not been provided as the school budget has been squeezed. Do you

believe FCPS needs to commit to a more aggressive plan to improve technology in our schools? What will you do to advocate for increased technology funding, especially for the necessary staff to ensure that technology is used effectively?

Strategy and stewardship is one prong of my campaign; this applies to technology investments, too. Clearly, the Frederick County schools our kids attend today are far different than the ones I attended a few decades ago. Technology is crucial – we hear it from parents, students, teachers, and our children’s future employers. However, in both the public and private sectors, I have seen the results of inadequate or ill-conceived technology investments. To some degree, the current state of FCPS technology (computers that don’t work, take too long to boot up, etc.) reflects insufficient planning. Any technology investment is a long-term investment that must take into account the lifespan of hardware, software, and network requirements.

FCPS’ technology considerations are far more complicated than that of a business because there are several sets of users and many diverse needs. We need technology that supports learning outcomes for K-12 students, but FCPS also needs technology that ensures administrative system functioning (everything from HR systems to information storage) and technology that supports our teachers. It is also important to invest in technology that can improve learning and achievement for children with special needs; research shows that technology can often bridge gaps for students with physical, emotional, or cognitive challenges.

There are other factors to include in a technology plan. For every piece of hardware or software deployed in the classroom, our teachers must also have training and support so the investment can be maximized. Additionally, while BYOD initiatives seem promising, it is important that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to the same technology. Certainly, too, privacy and security requirements are huge.

Definitely, I support improving technology across the system, but we must first have a plan – an assessment of the current state, a clear analysis of needs supported by data, a set of measurable priorities and milestones, a financial assessment, an analysis of security and privacy, and a plan to renew and refresh. Technology investments cannot be done piecemeal; they are too important and too expensive.

11. FCTA and the Frederick Association of School Support Employees (FASSE) oppose the outsourcing and privatization of jobs currently done by the dedicated education support professionals of FCPS. Do you think it is appropriate for the school system to privatize aspects of their operations? Under what circumstances, if any, would you support privatizing or outsourcing work currently being done by FCPS staff?

I support the stance of FASSE and FCTA regarding outsourcing.

Outsourcing is often done to streamline business operations and to cut costs. While there are many efficiencies that may be gained through careful stewardship and oversight of a school system and its budget and human resources, the core work of educators and educational staff must stay in the system—the school system is not a for-profit business. I worked for many years in the public sector, and now that I work in the private sector, I still recognize that there is work that is “inherently public sector” and must remain in the hands of the experts.

12. The School Board is responsible for determining the FCPS curriculum as well as approving all textbooks and supporting instructional materials. What is your view of the current FCPS curriculum? What changes, if any, will you advocate in regards to the curriculum? Will you advocate for changes to the current process of textbook and supporting material selection and approval?

The development of FCPS curriculum aligned with common core state standards has clearly been a tremendous undertaking for many FCPS staff, administrators, curriculum specialists, and teachers. They should be commended for this work. While I do have concerns with *the process* by which the common core state standards were developed at the federal level, adopted at the state level, and then expedited at the local level at a breakneck pace, I believe that we need to learn more about how the local curriculum is working – it’s not even been a full academic year. I’ve heard from many teachers that they believe students are being challenged, and I’ve seen that in reviewing the work of my own children.

For decades, there have been lots of “reforms” aimed at increasing “rigor” – typically, regardless of the reform, groups of children (those who live in poverty, for example) still face barriers to achievement. Our BOE must make sure we don’t label the curriculum a “failure” because it hasn’t been able to address the social and economic injustice that is present in our community. We need to address those issues in a comprehensive County-wide approach; this is an important priority of mine.

Additionally, we must slow down the process a bit – to allow time for the reflection that our educators need to see what tweaks or modifications the new curriculum may need. Certainly, it is important to delay any testing until the curriculum is well established and refined as necessary.

I believe strongly that the defects I have described in the common core “process” at the national and state level reflect the need for stronger local control; again, I don’t oppose the standards themselves, nor am I calling for their repeal, but our BOE needs to give our teachers, curriculum specialists, staff, and administrators ample time for the professional development and training to develop and implement the new curriculum.

We must have the chance to tailor the curriculum and timelines to the needs of our local system.

The current textbook selection process involves our educators and the public. While I'd welcome suggestions for improvements from the public, this process seems adequate as is. Our educators are best positioned to recommend textbooks and materials that support the curriculum, and our parents and community members should have the opportunity to review materials.

13. FCTA supports efforts to protect and enhance the state's collective bargaining laws and opposes "right to work" laws which restrict freedom of association and weaken organized labor in Maryland. Do you support or oppose public education employees' right to bargain collectively?

Yes, I wholeheartedly support public education employees' rights to bargain collectively. I oppose any law that restricts freedom of association. I believe strongly in organized labor generally; in my consulting work, I work on employment and equal pay issues. Organized labor is a key component of fostering equitable work environments that lead to equal pay across race, gender, and age groups.

14. The Board of Education must often act as an advocate for the needs of public education in Frederick County. How will you work with the County Executive and County Council to support the goals and mission of the school system? How will you reach out to other stakeholders in the community, such as the business community and parent groups to improve public education in Frederick County?

Advocacy is among the most important roles of our elected BOE and part of my platform. I'm particularly excited and eager for the opportunity to "refresh" the collaboration, productivity, and congeniality between BOE and our new County Executive and County Council. I believe strongly our elected government should collaborate under a shared vision for Frederick County, and that education is a significant component of that shared vision. I'll work to improve communication and create consensus around shared priorities. Through my advocacy regarding families who are experiencing homelessness or living in poverty, I have developed excellent connections throughout the community and a strong understanding of our community's resources. Likewise, during my career in and out of the public sector, I have helped government improve processes and develop better policies and regulations via consensus building and stakeholder input.

FCPS should be commended for recent efforts to involve parents, business leaders, and other groups and citizens in budget and policy development. I am ready to expand these efforts. When all stakeholders feel valued and heard, they are far more likely to participate and support. These are outcomes that benefit us all.

15. Please explain how, as a member of the Board of Education, you will work with FCTA, FASSE and the Frederick County Administrators and Supervisors Association (FCASA) so that the experience, knowledge and expertise of professional educators will help inform decisions by the Board.

I'm eager to work with FCTA, FASSE, and FCASA. These organizations embody a wealth of experience and knowledge and also provide ready linkages to a far larger group of teachers, staff, and administrators. I'd value regular meetings with organization leaders and would welcome *ad hoc* opportunities to share ideas including roundtables or coffees. The hallmark of an effective organization is a free exchange of information and feedback; this is the type of environment I wish to foster.

Liz Barrett

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Savan Group, LLC, Arlington, VA

Associate and Leader of Policy, Standards, and Rulemaking Division, January 2011 to Present

Project Manager, Working Women with Disabilities, Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Rights

- Oversee research team to conduct assessment of best practices regarding employment and equal pay for working-aged women with disabilities
- Produce substantive report and fact sheets
- Develop and oversee project budget, including subcontractors, partners, and independent contractors and project plan

Project Manager, Updating Acquisitions Regulations, Department of Transportation, Office of the Senior Procurement Executive, October 2011 to Present

- Advise and conduct regulatory and policy development initiatives
- Direct a systematic gap analysis to determine insufficiencies in current regulations
- Facilitate a cross-Department leadership steering committee
- Implement project methodology including data research, collection, and analysis

Project Manager, Best Practices in Equal Pay, Department of Labor, Women's Bureau

- Designed a research and analysis strategy to determine State and local best practices on ensuring equal pay for women
- Determined mechanisms by which States and localities ensure equal pay
- Oversaw the production of a substantive best practices report along with internal and external stakeholder outreach documents, including fact sheets

Senior Consultant, Regulatory Support Services Project, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Organic Program

- Advised and conducted all aspects of five regulatory development initiatives including research, documentation, technical writing, and delivery of decision-support documents
- Conducted regulatory requirements analysis, including research on the organic industry, evaluation of existing regulations, strategic and policy-level assessments, and development of methodologies for risk management
- Performed data analysis including regulatory cost impacts, small entity economics impact analysis, unfunded mandates reform analysis, and information collection burden analysis

ICF International, Fairfax, VA

Senior Associate, May 2009 to December 2010

Provided tailored analytical and regulatory expertise and service to a number of Federal clients, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Agriculture, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Energy, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and others.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Various Positions, June 2000 to May 2009

Director, Writing, Editing, and Regulatory Coordination, July 2006 to May 2009

- Oversaw a multi-disciplinary staff and the annual production of over 1,000 technical and policy documents, presentations, and briefings for Departmental, Congressional, and Cabinet officials
- Directed the development, publication, and supporting economic, risk, environmental, and other supporting analyses for over 80 import/export and domestic program regulations a year
- Coordinated and provided liaison to other food safety, public health, congressional, and animal health officials in the Centers for Disease Control, the Food and Drug Administration, and State and local governments
- Developed streamlined and successful public relations campaigns on controversial health human/animal health issues
- Received advanced National Incident Command Training

Team Leader, Writing, Editing, and Regulatory Coordination, August 2004 to July 2006

- Directed team of analysts and writers who developed policy statements, strategic documents, speeches, correspondence, briefings, and other materials for senior USDA leaders and external audiences
- Worked closely with senior leaders to address high priority and controversial issues
- Prepared a broad range of material to facilitate and expedite policy and decision-making
- Led communications (Situation Unit Leader) efforts for multiple emergency response efforts in the National Incident Command structure

Acting Chief of Staff, May 2004 to August 2004

- Directed daily operations of large governmental organization responsible for the health and marketing of the nation's animals, animal products, and biologics
- Coordinated rulemaking and the regulatory process through oversight of legal, administrative, and legislative experts
- Developed, implemented, and communicated national animal health policy

Regulatory Writer and Analyst, June 2000 to August 2004

- Researched and wrote dozens of regulations on animal and plant health, import and export requirements, and zoonotic disease
- Led public meetings to ensure stakeholder input on regulations
- Responded to public comment

Adjunct/Instructor of English Literature and Composition, August 1998 – June 2000

Anne Arundel Community College, Arnold, MD
College of Southern Maryland, Waldorf, MD