

Trustee Area 7

John Houser

1. Why they are you running for Trustee and what are your biggest priorities.

I am running to give back to my hometown and strengthen my community. My main three priorities are vocational training to future proof our students, English education to better prepare students in the language of commerce, and social emotional supports to ensure our students acquire the tools needed to brace themselves during the challenging times of their lives.

2. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing public education, particularly NVUSD, in the next four years? What specific actions or programs would you advocate?

Currently the demographic change of the area predicts a reduction of about ~5% student population year over year. While there is no way to predict the future if these trends continue in 4 years that could be a 20% decrease. We might lose 1 out of every 5 schools. Currently the solution for the near term has been to issue Bonds through special elections that rack up an insane amount of debt, the can being kicked down the road is rattling with about 90 million in interest payments. Yes, I double checked the independent oversight committee numbers (it's 3.5 million in interest this year alone). I do not believe this to be sustainable in the long run. I would rather see small, targeted measures for specific use cases. Additionally, a return of stronger public private partnerships is a phenomenal method to overcoming certain challenges.

That's just the issue right in front of the headlights. If we look down the road, we see a deglobalizing world which will present numerous challenges across multiple sectors. I'm just gonna shotgun blast these out folks, because it's a lot of information everywhere all at once. Ready? Oh boy. AI is eating into the white-collar workforce with the voracity of offshoring

manufacturing jobs to China and call centers to India and the Philippines. This has impacted the bay area to the point that New York has overtaken us as the nation's tech hub. Piggy backing on these notions of a changing tech scene the EU has banned fitness content and forced tech companies to change their algorithm to show kids less health content; internally many companies have followed suit (let's not even start on the Iranian Lego edits). These policy shifts are reflective of an overall unintended consequence of social media that we see playing out in our local economy: people take better care of their health (maybe obsess over social image too much) and drink less alcohol. It's a bloodbath in the wine industry, revenue down 1 billion across the sector, local tasting rooms down 18%, half the wineries are barely breaking even. Each of these sentences could be a whole presentation on their own. That's not even scratching the surface, we have the tourism and hotel issues, transportation and the advent of driverless cars that will take out Uber which took out wine tours which took out taxis (which took out horses? I don't know, I wasn't around back when Zellers was new). Unregulated food pop ups and kitchens hurting brick & mortar stores, hospitals struggling to retain talent, manufacturing prices rising from tariffs, oil, and more, the Premium Outlets being outdated, tacky and a tourist trap. Lots of issues folks and, as the greatest nation not only on this Earth but in all of recorded human history, we will overcome these challenges. As for programs I'd advocated for? Financial planning, healthy habits, and helping kids find their "ikigai" (that's a fancy Japanese word for purpose).

3. How do you see the use of School vouchers and the development of charter schools effecting NVUSD? What actions should NVUSD take to ensure its schools meet any unmet needs that vouchers and charter schools may provide?

Charter schools are clearly providing something that families want, be that education in an accessible language such as at NVLA or a deliberate cognitive delay to keep childlike wonder in those sparkling eyes for a few more years as they do at many Waldorf schools. Once obvious gaps in services appear the district can act accordingly to accommodate the

existing needs. If we want to get specific with dual language, it was illegal for many years to offer dual language education, hence NVLA being a charter school. This was repealed back in 2016, so it's still a relatively new thing. One issue that arises is some funding can be tied to test scores which test English skills, as dual language education teaches in both there is naturally a little lag in one speech or the other, as such the pitch would be "hey, do you want to lose funding to offer better services towards a marginalized community heading into a future environment that is going to have less students and is already dealing with financial struggles? Also, this will be an expensive endeavor." I spoke with a clairvoyant, and they said it would be a tough sell.

4. If elected, how will you ensure that students have access to libraries and curricula that are diverse, bias-free, and historically accurate? How will you respond to challenges to books and or curriculum?

Luckily in our town we do not believe in banning books and have accessible information. I hope to continue this tradition and would even strive towards partnering with the local libraries for a whole host of reasons. I'm a fan of their current story time field trips where students get to see the kids' section and explore all the wonderful resources our library has to offer. I would have to peek and pry to see if we already do this, but I know the Friends of the Library has book sales to fundraise and I could easily see that organization partnering with the schools to provide additional reading materials. As someone who spent most of junior high squirreled away in the Redwood Middle School library, I have a fond spot in my heart for literature.

5. What measures will you advocate to address the issues of equity, harassment, bullying, and sexual assault on campus, ensuring the safety and well-being of all students regardless of their ability, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual identity?

As I'm sure many readers know NVUSD has deemed acts of bullying and discrimination as prohibited in Board Policy 5145.3 & 1312.3. As such that does not occur in Napa... Riiiiight. There are many supports in place; we could do with better raising awareness of those methods to get help and the reporting policies not only for students but parents as well.

I would like to see more nature based therapeutic services, which can take many forms. I am a fan of hiking through forested areas. Though animal therapy, biking, and gardening are also wonderful activities I support.