

Trust in Hills School Board Plummets – Pat Morgan

The BHSD Board was handed a wonderful opportunity to begin to heal and “unify” the community. Instead they earned more mistrust and reinforced the divisiveness that exists in this community.

In selecting the replacement for Trustee Kate Pettersen, the board could have taken the opportunity to appoint someone who was not closely and publicly associated with themselves and previous attempts by the district to pass bonds for large, expensive, poorly planned high schools. A little diversity would have been a refreshing change.

Instead they appointed Joan Berndt who has recklessly and without foundation publicly essentially called the watchdog group, Bloomfield 20/20, “liars” who disseminate “outrageous propaganda.” In truth, my colleagues and I voice the interests of a majority of the voting district residents utilizing facts largely culled from public/district documents as well as statements from our board members. Based on these statements from Ms. Berndt, it is difficult to see her appointment as an effort towards unification.

Furthermore, if you assume the recent trustee appointment process was above board, consider this: prior to any application reviews, Board Treasurer Cynthia von Oeyen states in part, “the board (should) select(s) someone ... whose children attend district's schools either currently or in the past.” It is well known that “runner-up” John Roach does not meet Ms. von Oeyen's stated requirement. However, this did not keep the board from “using” Mr. Roach to advance their own agenda. By portraying him as a serious contender, it appears the board used him as a “show pony” in an effort to appear magnanimous enough to consider someone outside their usual circle of supporters. Rather, this callous use of Mr. Roach only serves to deepen the sense of deceit and mistrust already engendered by the board within our community. Mr. Roach, a dedicated and informed advocate for what is best for our students and schools, as well as our community, deserved better.