

November 9, 2020

Madam Chairperson Lucy Payne
Mahtomedi School Board
Mahtomedi Public Schools
1520 Mahtomedi Avenue
Mahtomedi, Minnesota 55115

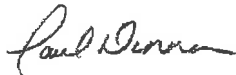
Madam Chair and Members of the Board,

Please accept the attached resume and responses to the School Board Appointment Questionnaire for consideration to be appointed and serve on the Mahtomedi Public School Board.

I believe my combination of personal and professional credentials uniquely qualify me to serve with you and provide valuable perspective and opinions as to how best we prepare our students for their adult lives.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Donna".

Paul Donna

attachments



PAUL DONNA

CONTACT

PHONE:
612-499-3066

EMAIL:
Pdonna42@gmail.com

EDUCATION

B.S. Applied Business Economics – St. Cloud State University

WORK EXPERIENCE

For the past 31 years I have worked in the public finance industry as a financial advisor and investment banker to non-profits including schools, cities, counties and hospitals and foundations. I am currently Managing Director with R.W. Baird & Co. Incorporated.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- Mahtomedi Area Education Foundation – Board of Trustees 2013 – present). Active on the Finance Committee.
- Mahtomedi School Middle School Strategic Plan Committee - member (2019)
- Mahtomedi Baseball RBI Club – Board of Trustees
- Mahtomedi Youth LaCrosse - Head Coach (2011 – 2014)

MAHTOMEDI PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL BOARD APPOINTMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: Please respond briefly to the following questions and **return with your letter of interest and resume** to Lucy Payne at the Mahtomedi Public Schools, 1520 Mahtomedi Avenue, Mahtomedi, MN 55115 or lucy.payne@isd832.net by due by noon on Monday, November 9, 2020.

1. **Your Name:**

My name is Paul Donna. My wife Angie and I have four children ages 13 (8th grade), 14 (freshman) and 17 (Senior) in Mahtomedi Public Schools as well as a 19 – year old (2019 graduate).

2. **Why are you interested in serving on the Mahtomedi School Board?**

I enjoy being part of the decision process regarding how to best prepare our children for their adult lives. To that end I wish to help set the direction for our schools and instill confidence in our parents that our school district is providing the best education and opportunities for their children.

3. **How have you been involved with this or other school districts and educational programs? Have you served on any other boards?**

I have had the privilege of participating on the Mahtomedi Middle School Strategic Plan Implementation Committee in February 2020 and currently serve on the MAEF board of trustees (since 2013). I am also on the board of the newly created Mahtomedi Baseball RBI (booster) club.

I was also active in support of the operating levy campaign in 2018. I have attached a copy of the article I wrote for the White Bear Press and social media during the campaign. .

4. **What experiences or talents can you bring to the Mahtomedi School Board?**

I will bring past and current perspectives from having children in the Mahtomedi Public School's continuously for the past 11 years (with five more years to go) based on our experiences in the elementary, middle school and high school systems.

I am also uniquely qualified to serve on the Mahtomedi School Board given my 31 years in the public finance consulting and investment banking industry assisting non -profits including public school boards navigate their finances and capital funding issues. My knowledge and experience will be valuable as we execute the strategic plan, advance policy, demonstrate accountability and maintain a leadership role in the community. Complex budgets, government regulations, implementing plans and communicating with the public are all issues I deal with daily.

To be effective, I will work with the Board, community, school staff and parent stakeholders.

5. What do you believe are the most pressing issues facing the Mahtomedi Public Schools?

- Student Mental Health - The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges to students, educators, and parents. Children already coping with mental health conditions have been especially vulnerable to the changes, and now we are learning about the broad impacts on students as a result of schools being closed, physically distancing guidelines and isolation, and other unexpected changes to their lives. Mahtomedi schools made mental health awareness a priority in 2019 and identified resources to help. The COVID-19 pandemic brings more challenges for the school community.
- Managing and Implementing the Learning Models - to say 2020/2021 is a challenge for our kids, parents, educators and administrators would be a gross understatement. More than ever our school community needs the strength, courage, fortitude and support to continuously examine our approach, implementation and execution of our learning models with the best interests of our students first and foremost.
- Community Relations – I admire the strength and courage the Board has shown when tackling many of the very difficult decisions over the past nine months and am empathetic of your position. This is the first year in eleven years I have sensed any level of widespread community cynicism toward the district administration and school board. I believe most of this stems from parents feeling they are not being heard or allowed to be part of the district decision process particularly with regards to the change in learning models. If appointed, I will bring an “outsiders” perspective to help the Board and administration reconnect and educate our community on the how’s and why’s of the decisions being made.
- Educational Equity – Mahtomedi Public Schools has long been recognized as one of the most outstanding public schools in Minnesota. Our key metrics have always ranked high in comparison to our peer schools. However, we need to ensure our schools policies and systems work for all of our learners. We need to ensure struggling students and average students receive the same attention if not more than our advanced learners.

2018 Operating Levy Article Published in White Bear Press and Social Media

Let's not lose what we have today only to regret it tomorrow

Dear Editor,

If you're like me, you may not fully appreciate something until that something is gone and, most regrettably, lost. If the Mahtomedi Schools operating levy does not pass on November 6th, we will certainly lose a whole lot of "something". We are currently experiencing the impacts of the recent school board budget cuts of \$1.1M. The increased class sizes and reduction in educational programs were forced upon our kids by the Legislatures' lack of ability to provide adequate funding for our schools. The general education funding formula is the core of school district finances. The Minnesota Constitution requires that the Legislature provide funding to "secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state". For 12 of the past 14 years now, the Legislature has not done that, as increases to the state's general funding formula was less than inflation. We are now faced with having to raise more funding locally or face millions of dollars of further and deeper budget cuts over the next several years – ones that will surely further impact our kids. Millions! Think about that for a minute. I have. Here is what we risk losing:

- Gone may be manageable class sizes that are essential to healthy learning environments;
- Gone may be vital programming for a balanced education such as Spanish, French, home economics, media and fine arts to name a few;
- Gone may be activities such as physical education, and athletic programs;
- Gone may be the opportunity to make our schools safer from people looking to do harm to our children;
- Gone may be the foundation for strong property values;
- Gone may be crucial cash flow reserves to meet payroll;
- Gone may be the ability to continue closing the achievement gap;
- Gone may be professional development opportunities critical to our educators;
- Gone may be the ability to prepare our kids for today's world after high school;
- Gone may be the competitive edge we enjoy in preparing our kids for College

Let's not let anything be lost on our kids and regret what we have the ability to save. Vote YES for our kids and our future.

Sincerely,

Paul Donna
Mahtomedi Schools Parent

Paul Donna
12350 Upper Heather Ave. N
Hugo, MN 55038