

Summary – PVP Watch endorses Jeremy Vanderhal and Liz Peterson for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District (PVPUSD) Board.

There are five candidates and three openings for the PVPUSD board. The candidates are:

- Louis Matthew Harley
- Allyson Lehrer
- Liz Peterson
- Jeremy Vanderhal
- Paul Vidal

PVP Watch interviewed three of the five candidates. Mr. Harley returned our questionnaire, but chose not to have an in-person interview. Mr. Vidal did not respond to our interview request. We also attended a candidate forum and have made independent observations regarding this election. Mr. Vidal did not attend the candidate forum.

PVP Watch's Opinion - Financial acumen is most desirable for a school board candidate.

This PVPUSD Board election is unique in that the District oversees a [\\$298 million SOS Bond](#) approved by voters in November 2024. When interest is included, peninsula residents will have paid [about \\$500 million](#) in the next 30 years! In addition, the district's revenue/expenses are near [\\$160 million annually](#). Hence, financial management, technical knowledge and project management will challenge to the District for decades to come.

An example of questionable financial decision by the District is a \$2.2 Million [upgrade of a swimming pool](#) with bond funds. As a first project, this was prioritized over other urgent needs such as air-condition, restrooms, electrical system, roof repair, etc. These higher priority items were used in the [sales pitch](#) to promote the bond before voters' approval. PVP Watch regards **financial decisions, project management, contract negotiation, technical knowledge to be critical skills for a school board candidate**. Our new board members must possess these critical skills to oversee future financial decisions and processes.

Jeremy Vanderhal (PVP Watch recommends)

PVP Watch interviewed Mr. Vanderhal. He has a two year old daughter attending 2nd grade in the District. He and his wife moved to Rancho Palos Verdes for our outstanding schools. He is running for the school board to help maintain and strengthen the quality education our community expects and deserves. While in the US Air Force, **he oversaw a \$2 billion budget**

for technical projects. He has the financial and technical skills and experience described above.

Mr. Vanderhal is an educator, an engineer and a leader. The key points he made were:

- He is in favor of vouchers.
- He feels that to raise our schools' standard of learning, we need to attract more students, locally.
- The District must decide on how to handle cell phones, AI, screen time, mental health screening, and gender issues/pronouns.
- Children belong to their parents and not to the District.
- He would like our teachers to be well compensated. But the District receives much lower revenue per student from Sacramento than other Districts, limiting the District's ability to do so.
- Pension liability of approximately \$24 million adds to the funding problem. Mr. Vanderhal would like to see some form of endowment set up for the District.
- Closing schools would be a last option.

The three most pressing issues Mr. Vanderhal will work on if elected are **fiscal responsibility, school safety, and enrollment.**

PVP Watch recommends voting for Mr. Venderhal.

Liz Peterson (PVP Watch recommends)

PVP Watch interviewed Ms. Peterson. She is well versed in the District's issues and follows Board meetings and correspondence regularly. She emphasized Sacramento's bias on PVPUSD funding, resulting in the District receiving some of the lowest per student funding in California.

The key issues that Ms. Peterson commented on:

- The District needs to rethink how we implement mental health programs and make it available to all children.
- With the SOS Bonds, the District must prioritize important items such as air conditioning, lighting, and safety over other items.
- We need more local control to develop solutions for funding our District and to support the needed programs.
- The District needs to establish a social media policy that restricts employees from posting information on students' identities. Children belong to their parents and the parents should know what is happening to them in our schools.
- The District needs to increase enrollment potentially from neighboring cities and the employees in our city. Our representatives have failed the District in obtaining equitable funding from Sacramento.
- Various District policies have to be updated. Examples include AI and cell phones.
- Regarding teacher's salary contract negotiations, she feels the District must be creative and look for other funding sources.

- Ethnic studies are required by law. The District needs to be creative with compliance and only met minimum state requirements. We need more local control.
- Closing schools would be a last option.

The three most pressing issues Ms. Peterson will work on if elected are **transparency, responsible budgeting and school safety**.

PVP Watch recommends voting for Ms. Peterson.

Louis Harley

Mr. Harley returned our pre-interview questionnaire, but declined an in person interview.

Mr. Harleys has 2 daughters who went to high school in our District. He has been a teacher for 30 years and has recently retired. He has a law degree and an MBA.

Mr. Harley was on the Palos Verdes Faculty Association (PVFA) board for a long time. PVFA is the group that negotiates with the District on teachers' contracts. It appears to PVP Watch as a potential **conflict of interest** for a school board member to be involved with PVFA.

The key points Mr. Harley made were:

- Increase the District's revenue by increasing enrollment, and fight for more revenue.
- He is not in favor of AI and feels that AI has no role in our schools.
- On mental health, he mentioned that mental health support is available to students when needed.
- On the SOS Bond, his priorities are air conditioning and heaters.
- Mr. Harley is not familiar with social media.
- Mr. Harley's approach on teachers' salary was to make the teachers feel welcome and supported.
- On global issues, he feels that both sides should be listened to.
- On gender issues, Mr. Haley commented that parents do not always notice the changes in their children.
- He is absolutely against school vouchers.
- When asked about unfunded pensions, his answered that he just retired and did not know much about the issue.
- Closing schools would be a last option.

The three most pressing issues Mr. Harley will work on if elected are **declining enrollment, AI, and clean up our campuses, trim trees and cockroaches**.

Allyson Lehrer

PVP Watch interviewed Ms. Lehrer.

When asked about her supporters, Ms. Lehrer mentioned that one of her supporters was PVFA which was not mentioned on their website. She has two master degrees and worked for an information technology company. She has been involved in education for a long time.

The key points Ms. Lehrer made were:

- AI and screen time has no place in our schools.
- With regard to mental health she feels that students have access to therapists.
- Her priorities for the SOS Bond is air condition and how we are investing.
- She has worked in schools and is familiar with managing budgets.
- Ms. Lehrer is against posting student information on social media.
- On student global issues, she advocates for inclusion in school curriculum.
- Ms. Lehrer has experience with student gender issues.
- Ms. Lehrer supports student vouchers.
- For the unfunded pension liability, she favors setting up a trust.
- Ms. Lehrer's solution to declining enrollment is to create a partnership with other school families.
- Ms. Lehrer's view on teacher's salary impasse would be to increase involvement with the teachers and inform them what is available.

The three most pressing issues Ms. Lehrer will work on if elected are **technology and AI, emotional/safety and declining enrollment.**

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