Meet the Candidates 2019 Primary

The people-powered political campaigns and numerous newsworthy events in our communities and around the world in 2018 have inspired many throughout Swissvale and the Woodland Hills School District to get involved in politics, many for the first time. The Swissvale Community Action Committee (SCAC), a group of impassioned residents of the Borough of Swissvale seeking to connect Swissvallians to create a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable community, recognizes that the local elections that will take place in 2019 (May primary and November general) have the potential to shape Swissvale, Woodland Hills, and the region for years to come.

To that end, SCAC has presented a series of events throughout early 2019 inviting residents to make their voices heard in local elections. Citizens had the opportunity to share their opinions and concerns on local issues, learn about local government positions that are up for election and how to run for them, and meet and learn about potential candidates to learn about their positions on the issues that matter to them. SCAC also released a “How to Run for Local Office” primer in January.

Declared candidates for Swissvale Borough Council and Woodland Hills School District Region 2 (Braddock, Rankin, Swissvale, Edgewood) in any party have been invited to share their positions on issues that matter most to Swissvallians. This document is a compilation of their introductions and answers to a series of questions we asked them to answer.

These same candidates have been invited to participate in a Meet the Candidates Forum on April 18, 7pm at Pittsburgh Mennonite Church. Candidates that choose to participate will have the opportunity to speak directly to the community members they wish to serve and those community members will have the chance to ask questions, just a few weeks ahead of the primary election on May 21.

In preparation for this event, we surveyed the community to solicit their questions and to ask them about how important the following topics are to them when considering the role of elected borough council and school board members:

- Police Accountability
- Communication/Transparency
- Safe/Convenient/Affordable
- Environment
- Racial Disparities
- Taxes
- Infrastructure and Transportation
- Support for Youth Programming
- Support for Public/Community Assets
- Disability Rights/Accessibility
- Spirit of Collaboration
- Economic Stagnation
- Jobs/Economy
- LGBTQIA Issues
- Veterans Issues
Woodland Hills School Board Region 2

Jonathan Ebbitt

Please provide a brief bio.
Jonathan Ebbitt
38 years old
Swissvale resident
Loving husband of an educator
Father of three children currently in Woodland Hills School District
Self employed
Woodland Hills graduate

What should council members/school board directors be doing to address environmental concerns like air and water quality?
I believe that a school director should support and encourage a curriculum that ensures environmental awareness and sustainability.

How can council members/school board directors address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues?
I believe a school director should support diversity and inclusion in any way that they can while serving the district. They should also be open to any viable solutions to close the gaps in racial disparities.

What can council members/school board directors do to attract more business and economic development to the area? Are there any complexities that need to be considered in economic development or is any business good business?
Create an environment that is desirable to investors, employers and workers.

How can council members/school board directors address the increasing concerns about police actions in our schools and communities?
By working with the communities and local police departments to regain the trust that has been lost. I believe there are many ways to do this.

What responsibility do council members/school board directors have to preserve affordability and accessibility of opportunities and housing to long term and lower income residents?
I believe preserving affordability and opportunity to all residents of the district is as important as providing a high quality education.

What is the role of council members/school board directors in communicating with residents?
School directors should work with all of their represented communities to stay in touch with the needs and concerns of the people.
Please provide a brief bio.
My name is Terri Lawson. I am a life time Mon Valley resident, I have 3 daughters two who have previously graduated from our phenomenal school district, and one who is an active sophomore. The reason I am interested in running for school board is to bridge the gap between education and community development, which will ultimately improve the quality of life within our surrounding neighborhoods.

What should council members/school board directors be doing to address environmental concerns like air and water quality?
School Board members should team up with or reach out to local environmental groups to provide resources and educational materials throughout our school and community that will teach the importance of environmental quality.

How can council members/school board directors address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues?
The school board can address diversity, inclusion and racial issues in one way, and that is “directly” we can’t in any way, shape, or form grow as a community or district if we don’t supersede and fearlessly address that these issues negatively effect our community and ruin our district.

What can council members/school board directors do to attract more business and economic development to the area? Are there any complexities that need to be considered in economic development or is any business good business?
I can only speak for myself on this issue. I am a small business owner in the district, and to attract more business I attend District organized events (ex Trick or Trunk), I also encourage other small business owners to attend local small business forums that are free of charge with plentiful funding resources and other great information. All business is not good business with such a diverse and ever growing population we should strive to include as well as introduce all types of business, which brings a variety of customers, sights and sound.

How can council members/school board directors address the increasing concerns about police actions in our schools and communities?
School board can constantly work with local law enforcement AND community to provide assurance that the police are our safety net, and that each situation that involves law enforcement will be handled FAIRLY and JUSTIFIABLY for the safety of all. I also feel an open forum that included law enforcement should be held monthly to keep the community involved with any changes that law enforcement has made or is making to better improve the quality of community security.

What responsibility do council members/school board directors have to preserve affordability and accessibility of opportunities and housing to long term and lower income residents?
A board members responsibility is to provide helpful, effective housing resources to all families and also share and resourceful home owner program information that is geared toward to economic demographic of our community.

What is the role of council members/school board directors in communicating with residents?
The role of a school board member communicating with residents is to be an open mind and ear initially, to clearly understand the need and cause and effect of an issue, and provide a quality resource to assist if necessary.
Please provide a brief bio.

I have been a resident in one area of the district or another for most of my life, living in Forest Hills as a young child, moving to East Pittsburgh as an adolescent, and currently residing in Edgewood Borough with my husband Chris and daughter Adelaide. Additionally, I am a Woodland Hills High School graduate (class of 1998). Prior to attending Woodland Hills High School, I was a student at the former Good Shepherd Catholic School in Braddock.

My ties to the district and the individual communities it encompasses are vast and longstanding. In my professional career, I have spent the majority of my time working in the non-profit sector and am passionate about working towards changing systems of inequality.

I feel my personal experience of having lived in such socioeconomically diverse areas of the district over the past three decades affords me a unique perspective which would be an asset to the board. I am dedicated to the notion that ALL kids in our district are deserving of respect and dignity as well as access to a quality education that prepares them for their future.

If appointed to the office of School Board Director, I will utilize my first-hand experience in conjunction with my parenting and professional expertise to advocate for and argue in the best interest of the residents of Braddock, Rankin, Swissvale, and Edgewood and their children.

**What should council members/school board directors be doing to address environmental concerns like air and water quality?**

In the best interest of those in our communities, council members and school board directors should be taking into consideration any environmental factors which could be negatively affecting those whom they represent. Policy and procedure are useless if residents are struggling just to access clean air and water. Maintaining environmental stability for future generations should be taken into consideration when decision-making.

**How can council members/school board directors address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues?**

The best way to address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues in both our communities and our schools is by coming to terms with our own implicit biases and putting in the work to build an open and honest dialogue where voices of marginalized groups are heard AND represented. Sometimes that means listening more than speaking up.

**What can council members/school board directors do to attract more business and economic development to the area? Are there any complexities that need to be considered in economic development or is any business good business?**

I believe it is important to determine a stance regarding the values of the businesses we welcome into our communities, therefore furthering our over-arching goals of inclusion and diversity. This may mean turning some businesses away due to problematic ownership or management, and while that may seem like a risk in the short-term, the long-term benefits of being selective about the businesses we encourage to take root in our communities will help uphold our shared values and provide a greater foundation of local commerce for future generations. I strive to consider the ethical implications of my consumerism and role in the community and encourage others to do the same.
How can council members/school board directors address the increasing concerns about police actions in our schools and communities?
Council members and school board directors should be representing the opinions and viewpoints of their constituents. If their constituents are concerned about police actions in the schools or communities, it is their duty to represent that viewpoint and advocate for the change their communities demand. There can be no change without those in power speaking up and taking action.

What responsibility do council members/school board directors have to preserve affordability and accessibility of opportunities and housing to long term and lower income residents?
Long term residents are the backbones of our communities and the ones responsible for shaping them into the places we choose to live and raise our families. Lower income residents provide socioeconomic diversity which is essential to creating a thriving community. Both of these groups are vital to the success of our community and we need to work together with them to create a dynamic environment which benefits ALL residents. Keeping housing affordable and accessible to these groups means keeping them and their wisdom inside our communities. It is as important to me to hear and represent these groups of community members as it is to represent those whose demographics more closely resemble my own. We truly are strongest together and should rely on building these relationships to strengthen our communities.

What is the role of council members/school board directors in communicating with residents?
Council member and School Board Directors are elected officials, and as such, are duty bound to represent and advocate for their constituents. The best and most effective way of doing that is through open, honest dialogue with them.
Please provide a brief bio.
My wife (Sarah) and I moved to Swissvale in 2006. We instantly fell in love with our community, the families, the walkability, the ease at getting to other parts of the greater Pittsburgh area. Swissvale is not just a place we call home but is a place we have desired to dig deep and serve. I currently chair the recreation board for the borough, additionally, I serve as the judge of elections for District 9 in Swissvale. Sarah has also been involved in the neighborhood, founding Swissvale Moms, a community support network, and is one of the co-founders of the annual Swissvale Mile. For the last two and a half years I have also worked in the borough. I am co-pastor of CityReach Church Swissvale. As a faith community we desire to engage the place where we are rooted. We volunteer with Community Days and have additional programming around the holidays to provide support for the under-privileged in our community. Sarah and I have three children and have chosen to send our kids to school in the Woodland Hills School District.

What should council members/school board directors be doing to address environmental concerns like air and water quality?
Council should be the champions of their residents, advocating for their health and well-being. When it comes to issues of pollution, or contamination, council should be seen as an ally and advocate. At times there may be places where council doesn’t have the direct authority to make changes to issues originating outside of our borough, however, they should continue to use their influence and connections to represent the will of the community to those who are in authority and insure that resident voices are heard.

How can council members/school board directors address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues?
One of the strengths of our community is its diversity. We should see the diversity in our community as something to champion and encourage the sharing of differing perspectives and ideas. One way that we can do this is to have our committees reflect the diversity that is true of our community, not in any kind of tokenism, but recognizing we have thoughtful leaders and passionate citizens from minority populations and perspectives who deserve to be in places of authority within our borough.

What can council members/school board directors do to attract more business and economic development to the area? Are there any complexities that need to be considered in economic development or is any business good business?
As someone who doesn’t have a strong business background, I don’t know the best way to address this desire. But I can say this, Swissvale is a very attractive place to do business, our business privilege tax is one of the lowest in the surrounding communities, and there are already scores of small, independent, locally-owned businesses in our community.

As to the other half of the question, not all business is necessarily good for a community like ours. We have seen the rampant gentrification of places like Lawrenceville and East Liberty. But I have also observed positive economic development in places like Homewood. What separates those two is whether the investor/business opportunity comes from outside the community to make a buck, or if the economic...
development was done from within the community. So the question we can ask ourselves, how can we promote education and opportunity for the entrepreneurs in our own communities to initiate their business ideas?

How can council members/school board directors address the increasing concerns about police actions in our schools and communities?
I personally have positive relationships with the police force in Swissvale, but I recognize that not all residents share my level of comfort with them. To many in our community, police officers are not perceived as advocates or as a resource provided for them, but instead are seen as antagonists.

Police have a difficult job, putting their personal safety on the line each and every day. But even the best of us have implicit bias and make snap decision based around that bias. One of my desires is to continue to find ways to develop meaningful relationships between our police officers and the residents of our community. The police department has taken steps in a desire to address this divide and have scheduled several outreaches in order to connect with residents. This is an important first step, but I would love to see more opportunities where residents are not asked to go to meet police on “their turf” but where police officers are available and engaging residents where they actually live and play. The more personal interactions that we can facilitate in safe spaces, the more humanized we will see each other and greater empathy will be developed.

What responsibility do council members/school board directors have to preserve affordability and accessibility of opportunities and housing to long term and lower income residents?
In an area like ours, where the housing market is increasing, it does provide challenges to long-term and lower income residents. The market in some sense does move where it wills, but this goes back to my response within the business sector. We all want the economic engine of Swissvale to increase, but when we are able to facilitate much of that growth in-house, within our community members, both the borough and its residents are able to flourish.

Housing prices will increase naturally as the market increases. Supporting programs and non-profits that provide education and subsidies for lower income residents provides resources to enable them to acquire property of their own and gain equity. Then, they are able to also benefit from the market increases.

What is the role of council members/school board directors in communicating with residents?
Two-way communication is a vital part of representative government. I believe that the public is a partner and a resource to council. Council should be responsible for finding proactive ways to communicate with residents, both about decisions that are made, and creating space for residents to express their concerns, ideas, and joys about the borough. Additionally, ease of communication is a need, for example, not everyone can attend Wednesday night council meetings, council should be finding accessible ways to disseminate that information.
Frank Berry

Please provide a brief bio.
Wilkinsburg High School Grad 1981
Geneva College Grad. B. S. Organizational Development 2013
Port Authority Route Forman 1992-Present
US Air Force Retiree 2014
Desert Storm 1990, Desert Shield 2006
Four Tours of Service in the Theater

What should council members/school board directors be doing to address environmental concerns like air and water quality?
Develop committees to develop relationships with the many institutions of higher education. Invite the students and educators to attend council meetings to help educate the community on the changes in the environment and nuances in the field to address changes going forward.

How can council members/school board directors address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues?
I believe council/school board members must first be willing to face and acknowledge the imbalances that exist. There needs to be communications concerning the make-up of the council and school board. Work to establish diversification that is consistent with the community’s racial make-up. Also, address the economic and educational exclusionary practices must to be addressed as well.

What can council members/school board directors do to attract more business and economic development to the area? Are there any complexities that need to be considered in economic development or is any business good business?
In my opinion the biggest killer of small businesses in any community is big corporations that exist under the guise of small business. Most corporate businesses have little or no buy within the community. Limiting the amount of corporate small businesses and giving incentives to attract restaurant businesses and entrepreneurs.

What responsibility do council members/school board directors have to preserve affordability and accessibility of opportunities and housing to long term and lower income residents?
Establish and provide coop opportunities for middle and low income families. Begin by sponsoring courses to teach the importance of home ownership which helps build wealth. Establish training centers and employment centers.

What is the role of council members/school board directors in communicating with residents?
The purpose of communicating is to establish free flow of information. It is the job/role of Council or any public servant to understand the transfer of information to better serve their community. Council should develop community events and venue’s to allow the community to be heard and participate. When you hear the voices of your community, you make wiser decisions.
Please provide a brief bio.
My name is William C. Price, Jr. I am 64. I am an attorney and have been practicing law in Swissvale for 39 years. My wife Mary and I live in an apartment above my law office on Noble Street. We work together. We have three children. We are expecting our third grandchild in May. We have been married for almost 41 years.

I am Past President of the Swissvale Rotary Club and I have been an active member for 34 years. I served for 25 years as a board member for the Lutheran Church Extension Society. I also served for 12 years as a member of the Board of Trustees for the National Aviary. I am presently on the Swissvale Planning Commission.

What should council members/school board directors be doing to address environmental concerns like air and water quality?
I suffered from asthma as a child. My wife carries a personal inhaler for herself. Air quality is a real concern of ours. We live within 100 feet of the busway. I believe Swissvale should put political pressure on the Port Authority to reduce its impact on our air quality. In the short term, they should use natural gas powered buses. In the long-term, we deserve light rail as much as Mount Lebanon does.

Lead water supply lines are a real concern in America. We need to work with the water authority to identify any problem lines and inform the affected residents.

How can council members/school board directors address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues?
Mark Twain once said:

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”

Council Members (and all citizens) should strive to encourage and participate in racially diverse community activities. Citizens need to interact more. We all have the same universal family needs, aspirations and concerns. The more people work with one another, the less they will fear each other and the more they will value each other.

We need to provide more reasons for people to leave their homes. Athletic opportunities such as baseball at Les Getz, the Swissvale Mile, the expansion of bike trails, festivals, etc., all increase the mixing of populations. We need more outdoor offerings. A dedicated dog park would be a nice place where people will interact.

What can council members/school board directors do to attract more business and economic development to the area? Are there any complexities that need to be considered in economic development or is any business good business?
Plenty. Swissvale has been getting terrible press. Search Swissvale in Google News and you will see stories about shootings. This is not representative of our community. We have an excellent location in Allegheny County for businesses. Storefront properties are inexpensive for rent or purchase. There is no reason why we should have the number of commercial and residential vacancies we do. We need to be smart about nurturing and marketing our community.

My wife and I own a storefront rental at 2007-09 Noble St. Several people approached us
Swissvale Borough Council continued

about renting it to be either a barbershop or beauty salon. Those are fine businesses, BUT there are already at least five places providing hair services within one block of the storefront. We decided instead wait and find a tenant who would add something different to the community. We eventually rented to a young couple who opened H. Lane Coffee Shop and Dry Goods. They offer seamstress work, they sell local art, they bring in musical performers and they provide a new community place for people to mix, surf the Internet, drink coffee and eat baked goods. Noble Street needs this.

We need to raise Swissvale’s visibility as a viable harbor for small businesses that can’t afford Lawrenceville or East Liberty or Regent Square. We also need to be smart about getting a diversity of businesses. We need more to offer than hair salons and barbershops.

How can council members/school board directors address the increasing concerns about police actions in our schools and communities?
We need to hire diverse police officers who live in our community and understand our neighbors.

Also, we need to make Swissvale a community where it is a less safe place for criminals to shoot people or commit other serious crimes. Swissvale does not have adequate surveillance cameras presently needed to solve crimes. Our police must go door-to-door trying to find privately owned security cameras, because the Borough’s cameras are inadequate. We must change that. We must upgrade the Borough’s security camera system and install license plate readers at major intersections. This technology should be well publicized. There should be street signs warning criminals of the presence of these cameras.

One Saturday night a few years ago my wife’s van was parked in front of my law office. Someone crashed into it and fled. They left behind $4,000.00 worth of damage. We have security cameras. The police viewed our video and were able to read the license plate number on the car. The perpetrator was caught. The perpetrator’s insurance company paid for our damage. Technology makes a difference.

What responsibility do council members/school board directors have to preserve affordability and accessibility of opportunities and housing to long term and lower income residents?
I started practicing law in Swissvale in 1981. I have been a first-hand witness to Swissvale’s 40 year long economic decline. We are finally turning the corner.

Nobody benefits from the glut of vacant residential and commercial properties that just sit here, unutilized. If a local property owner does not have the resources to fix up his/her vacant property, it is not a bad thing if they sell to an outsider willing to invest here.

It is important for the Borough to make sure that all housing is safe and affordable, but we must not treat outside investors in distressed properties as our enemies. We should encourage people to bring their money and talent into our community to fix up and make habitable places that would otherwise be torn down. Certainly, we must make sure that housing is safe, but if we pile an excessive punch list of requirements onto the potential investors, then we discourage them from buying in our community. It is a delicate balance.

We need to serve all constituents, especially those who lack power. I particularly worry about the elderly homeowners on fixed incomes struggling to pay their property taxes. I am horrified by the obscene attorneys fees, penalties and interest that are piled on when a senior citizen falls behind on property taxes. Council needs to take a close look at what is happening with the fees assessed on delinquent taxes.

We also need one good publicly available source that local residents can turn to for the latest information on the availability of government grants, rental assistance, energy assistance and other potential help. This could be a published pamphlet and/or a page on the borough website.

What is the role of council members/school board directors in communicating with residents?
For the community to have trust in its representatives and for these representatives to properly serve the community, there must be two-way communication and transparency. I am readily reachable. Every day I meet with Swissvale clients at my Noble Street law office.
Swissvale Borough Council continued

Weldianne Scales

Please provide a brief bio.
Greetings, my name is Weldianne Scales. I am a resident of Swissvale, and I am running for Swissvale Borough Council.

I am the owner and managing attorney for Weldianne C. Scales, Attorney at Law. Also, I currently serve as a board member for the Homer S. Brown Division for the Allegheny County Bar Association (HSBD). As the owner of a law firm and practicing attorney, daily I oversee the day to day operations of a business structure and advocate for the legal rights of others. Such advocacy requires the interpretation of the law, ability to identify those that are underserved, and execute a resolution to resolve unmet needs.

As a black woman, I understand the negative impact to individuals in a community that are underserved. Moreover, as an attorney I understand the importance of the role of a public servant. Such understanding empowered me to co-found the free legal clinic in Swissvale known as Ask A Lawyer.

My consistent advocacy for individuals that are underserved, and capacity to execute a resolve to meet their needs enables me to join with all the residents of the Swissvale to develop leadership that is diverse, inclusive, and transparent for the Borough of Swissvale.

What should council members/school board directors be doing to address environmental concerns like air and water quality?
Communication is key here. Prior to residents addressing their concerns regarding air and water quality, it is quite often the case that leadership will exercise numerous actions well in advance. It would be beneficial for council members to address upcoming events and/or potential transactions that impact the environment with the residents, and enable the residents to voice their concerns.

Moreover, local municipalities play a role in governing over activities that impact air and water quality. It would be beneficial for council members to begin to take progressive steps in exercising the role they play, and take such steps for the betterment of the environment. Lastly, communicate with the residents such actions and allow community buy-in.

How can council members/school board directors address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues?
Great Question. It would be beneficial for council members to first acknowledge these issues exist in Swissvale. A second progressive step to addressing these issues can be exercised by encouraging the inclusion of diverse opinions, backgrounds, and experience on leadership boards, community based activities, etc.

Lastly, selective inclusion of local business owners, program participants, and activities should be denounced. Opportunities to work for, participate with, and join with community based initiatives should be extended broadly to intentionally reach and include diverse participants.

What can council members/school board directors do to attract more business and economic development to the area? Are there any complexities that need to be considered in economic development or is any business good business?
There is a lack of extending opportunities for business and economic development to the community at large. Council members should intentionally extend opportunities to conduct business broadly, with the intention to reach individuals and business owners that are not only related to leadership or currently connected through friendship and
Swissvale Borough Council continued

existing business initiatives. Lastly, create resources to share opportunities for economic and business development.

For example, the free legal clinic Ask A Lawyer welcomes business owners to bring their contracts for review and there is no fee. I have received feedback that such contracts aided with the startup of business partnerships, receive funding, and develop the initial customer contracts to start the process of conducting business.

It would be beneficial for Council members to begin to work just as hard to develop opportunities to provide the opportunity to develop business in Swissvale, and sustain business in Swissvale.

How can council members/school board directors address the increasing concerns about police actions in our schools and communities?
Permit community buy-in on the issues that impact them with the local police. Secondly, actually develop a strategic plan to incorporates these concerns. Lastly, follow through with the promises made.

What responsibility do council members/school board directors have to preserve affordability and accessibility of opportunities and housing to long term and lower income residents?
Council members are responsible for permitting these opportunities, and enforcing them. Lastly, actually follow through with the local ordinances in place to protect these individuals and create such ordinances that are lacking.

What is the role of council members/school board directors in communicating with residents?
To build trust and confidence requires council members to first recognize the importance of communications with residents, and that such communication is a requirement to succeed as trusted advisors. Once such recognition is achieved, take the progressive steps to actually build strong communications with the residents. Such communications can exist through the use of resources, and strategic methods of communication with residents. It is essentially important to communicate with residents on actions that impact the community, but to also permit residents buy-in through communication.
Swissvale Borough Council continued

Shawn Alfonso Wells

Please provide a brief bio.
My name is Shawn Alfonso Wells. I have a PhD in Anthropology which I earned from the University of Pittsburgh. Currently, I am an adjunct professor in the History department of Carnegie Mellon University and the Africana Studies department at the University of Pittsburgh. When I am not teaching I serve as an Academic Advisor at Pitt. My husband and I have made our home here in Swissvale, where we have been raising our two human children and one dog child. I have served on the boards of the Pittsburgh Toy Lending Library, Garden City Pool, and the Woodland Hills Aquatic Team.

What should council members/school board directors be doing to address environmental concerns like air and water quality?
Firstly, we need to acknowledge that there are issues and raise public awareness about them. The same ways we advertise for community days we can advertise for forums and meetings where the issues are explained and the explanations made publically available through a variety of outlets. We need to actively advocate for clean water and air and not think that there is nothing we can do. We can also join other communities in their efforts to keep our water and air safe. We can be progressive and proactive in considering innovative means to protect and test our water and air quality.

How can council members/school board directors address diversity, inclusion, and racial disparity issues?
Super loaded question, but you have to acknowledge that there is a problem first. Doing nothing and continuing with the status quo while repeating the same strategies that have lead to lack of equity will not change anything. For example, you cannot say that you just cannot find any diverse employees or teachers if you are not making the effort to advertise for them using new networks.

What can council members/school board directors do to attract more business and economic development to the area? Are there any complexities that need to be considered in economic development or is any business good business?
There are so many things council members can do to attract more business and economic development to Swissvale. We can start by showing them what business are here already. We need a strong business directory or app that can support our local businesses and show new start ups that this is a thriving area to be in. And yet, not all business should be welcomed. I don’t want a cracker plant in my backyard. We should support intentional revitalization that still allows for us to maintain our affordable housing. We want to maintain our strong working class neighborhood and help young families to buy and rent their homes here. We also want to make sure our elderly and low income residents are not priced out of their homes and that they can afford to buy things locally.

How can council members/school board directors address the increasing concerns about police actions in our schools and communities?
Council is supposed to have oversight of our borough. They should take their role seriously and make sure we have policies that promote good hiring practices and on going professional law enforcement training and development.

What responsibility do council members/school board directors have to preserve affordability and accessibility of opportunities and housing to long term and lower income residents?
Council members ultimately approve or disapprove of projects that will help or hinder
Swissvale Borough Council continued

affordability and accessibility. Council should be intentional in its decision making to maintain the character of our neighborhood.

What is the role of council members/school board directors in communicating with residents?

I believe that council members, and any elected official, should be for the people and by the people. This means that Council should be actively trying to communicate with residents and listen to their needs. The role of a council member is to be responsive to the community and to ensure community input. For me that means making sure as many people as possible are informed about issues before the council. Effective communication through a wide variety of means is essential. I also think council needs to listen to public opinion not just during the three minutes before a meeting, but actively on social media and in our community spaces at least once or twice a month. Government should not be a top down but a bottom up process that allows for as much participation as possible.
Swissvale Community Action Committee (SCAC) is comprised of impassioned residents of the Borough of Swissvale. The mission of SCAC is to connect Swissvalians to create a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable community. To learn more or get involved, visit www.swissvale.org.