

## Five announce run for RCSD board; Hallmark to leave

### Justin Murphy

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

The 2019 Rochester school board election is still nine months away but already has attracted a crowd of contenders for four seats, at least one of which is sure to turn over.

Commissioners Liz Hallmark and Willa Powell's four-year terms expire at the end of 2019. Hallmark said Monday she is not running for re-election; Powell did not respond to a request for comment.

Current board members Beatriz Le-Bron and Judith Davis, meanwhile, are serving one-year terms and will need to run for full four-year terms this year.

Besides Powell, LeBron and Davis, five other people have announced their intention to run for the school board:

- Andria Bryant, 46, a child care provider.
- Howard Eagle, 64, a retired RCSD social studies teacher and anti-racism activist.
- Clifford Florence, 61, associate minister at Central Church of Christ.
- Anthony Hall, 33, a gang specialist with the city of Rochester's Pathways to Peace program.
- Robert Hoggard, 26, a graduate student at University of Rochester Warner School of Education.

The current school board hopes to have a permanent superintendent hired by the summer, meaning that person will immediately face the prospect of a board that differs, in whole or in part, from the one that chose him or her.

Bryant, Eagle and Florence are running together on a slate with Davis. As leaders of the Movement for Anti-racist Ministry and Action, the four have taken a confrontational approach in pressing the current school board and district to do more to support students of color. Eagle and Bryant (as well as Hoggard) signed a petition calling on School Board President Van White to resign in 2016 after, as a private attorney, he

Hall has extensive volunteer experience working with children in Rochester, including running an organization that provides free school supplies and coaching youth sports. He said his greatest priority is reducing the disproportionate rate at which students of color are suspended.

"They're falling through the cracks because of a lack of communication and transparency and alternative schools in our district," he said. "I believe most of the work I've continuously done is to build relationships with young adults, youth, parents, families and the community."

Hoggard recently worked as a longterm substitute teacher in RCSD high schools and is now studying for his doctorate in education. He said the district needs to become more studentcentered in its approach.

"We need to actually listen to (students') experiences and what's going on in their lives so we can actually move things forward," he said.

Among the five new candidates, only Eagle has run for school board before — six times, all unsuccessfully. "I never thought I'd be doing this again," he said. "But I have people telling me the time is now and the dynamics have changed, so here I am."

Hallmark is in her first term on the board after having been elected in 2015. She has focused on reforming the student placement system as well as the board's governance structures.

The general election is Nov. 5, though the winners generally are settled in the Democratic primary.

*JMURPHY7@ [Gannett.com](mailto:JMURPHY7@Gannett.com)*



**Hallmark**

represented a man charged with sexual abuse of children. In a statement posted on Facebook, the slate of four said their primary motive is to “equalize power dynamics between school and district administrators and low-income parents and community members.”