



***Renew the Lake Forest Caucus***  
**William Andersen**

Whatever the outcome of the Lake Forest mayoral election, there is no doubt that the Lake Forest Caucus as an institution has been challenged more seriously than it has in many years. At the core of the problem are the circumstances surrounding the vote that was taken last fall at which the Caucus membership (which includes all Lake Forest residents) was expected to approve candidates for the upcoming election. It is now painfully clear that the current Caucus leadership misread the community with its mayoral selection and was caught off guard when their candidate was rejected by voters. (Their argument that the turnout was not representative of the community makes no sense, as voter turnout is a factor in any election. Furthermore, the Caucus sent out emails to supporters encouraging them to vote at the meeting.)

The leadership then compounded the problem by nullifying a vote of the Caucus' members for the first time in history. In doing so, the Caucus put the credibility it has established over the past eight decades at serious risk. It is imperative that steps are taken immediately to correct this situation and preserve the Caucus as an institution which Lake Forest residents support. Here are the steps the Caucus must take to restore its credibility:

**First, everyone on the Executive Committee of the Caucus at the time the vote was overturned should resign if they won't publicly commit to significant Caucus reform.** In nullifying a vote of Caucus members, the Caucus violated the trust placed in it by the community. This trust is essential to the Caucus' mission of selecting candidates who oversee our schools, commissions, and serve on the City Council.

**Caucus leadership should apologize** for the Caucus' actions in nullifying the vote, and pledge to reform itself. In order to restore trust, it must be acknowledged that a serious mistake was made.

**An independent outsider of impeccable integrity** should be brought in for one year to monitor the Caucus' process and make suggestions for improvement in all elements of its operations.

**An independent body should oversee Caucus elections in the future.** Because Caucus candidates often run unopposed, the vote for Caucus candidates is in effect an election. Given the Caucus' disregard for a vote of its own members in November, outside oversight of its elections unfortunately has become necessary.

**The Caucus must clarify how its elections work.** In the future, will the Caucus hold votes on candidates or leadership positions? Will these votes be real or advisory? This question is more immediate than it might seem since the Caucus is supposed to hold its next meeting in April to choose its leadership. Lake Forest residents deserve to know how this process will work.

## Lake Forest for Transparency

The Caucus system has served Lake Forest well and should continue. But leadership of the Caucus must keep in mind that the Caucus was meant to *augment* our democracy, not to *replace* it. The attitude of Caucus leadership that running against a Caucus candidate is contrary to the community's interest must end.

Voters support Caucus candidates because they believe they were vetted by a group of citizens who share their vision of our community, not just because they were selected by the Caucus. Should the Caucus come to be seen as insular, unwelcoming or even corrupt, then community support of its candidates will erode. This is not what most citizens of the community want to see. What would be welcomed by the community would be a renewal of the Lake Forest Caucus back to its original mission as an integral part of our local democracy, and for those who don't support that mission to step aside.

*William Andersen has lived in Lake Forest for 30 years. He was previously a Lake Forest Caucus-endorsed candidate for the District 67 Board of Education, and served as Board President. He also served on the Board of Trustees of the Lake Forest Firefighters Pension Fund.*