

CANDID CANDIDATES: PART TWO

AKC BOARD CANDIDATES

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CLASS OF 2025

BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR



In last month's issue, I introduced you to the six candidates seeking to be elected to a seat for our American Kennel Club Board of Directors. On March 9, the four individuals who will be voted in by the AKC Delegate Body will begin terms for the Class of 2025.

I presented the candidates with only five questions known to be foremost on the minds of the fancy. These five questions were not addressed or answered by previous questionnaires:

- 1. The pandemic has changed the world of dogs. What is your vision for the future of AKC in this new world?*
- 2. The AKC laid off a large number of employees. Even today, it can be difficult to receive a timely response to club and exhibitor questions. What are the plans for returning to proper staffing levels, and what can the AKC do to offset the inevitable loss of dog/sport knowledge that will occur as staff members leave?*
- 3. The LINK collar and the doggie day care business were controversial and losing business ventures. The AKC has not been transparent with the delegates regarding these activities. (1) What are the lessons learned? (2) What are the AKC's plans to invest in the future of its mission-driven activities?*
- 4. The AKC Museum of the Dog appears to be an expensive and little-used facility, located in a city going through a major transformation. How much does the museum cost the AKC annually? And, what is the future for the museum as you see it?*
- 5. If you have previously served on the Board, what do you enjoy the most about this position and what do you enjoy the least? For the one new Candidate, what do you look forward to the most about having the opportunity to serve on the Board?*

Dr. Gregory Paveza, AKC Delegate for the Elm City Kennel Club in New Haven, Connecticut, immediately responded to my invitation to participate, responding with his answers to the questionnaire.

With disappointment on behalf of members of the sport, I received the following email signed by the other five candidates:

"Dear Linda,

We are in receipt of your questions, and, collectively have decided to respectfully decline to answer them, as well as such requests from any other dog press publications.

As current and former AKC Board members, our fiduciary responsibility is to our Delegates, their respective clubs, and the AKC. The appropriate venue for candidates to inform the Delegate body is through our answers to the Nominating Committee's questions (their questions were well-thought-out, penetrating, and covered a wide range of topics), the Q and A at the December Delegate Meeting, the *Special Election Edition of Perspectives* (the Delegates' Newsletter), and any other communications we may send. The Delegates are free to share all of the information they receive from the candidates with their clubs.

We look forward to a bright 2021 with COVID coming to an end and a return to normalcy."

Rita Biddle, Dominic Carota, Pat Cruz, Tom Davies, and Tom Powers.



Dr. Gregory J. Paveza
Elm City Kennel Club
New Haven, Connecticut

1. The pandemic has changed the world of dogs. What is your vision for the future of AKC in this new world?

While the pandemic has certainly changed the world of dogs, I think we need to be careful in assuming

that these changes are permanent. As I noted in my speech to the delegate body in December, I believe that the most pressing issue that will need to be addressed for the foreseeable future will be how do we help our various dogs clubs, member and licensed, stay in existence. What are the actions we can take to support clubs financially and, if needed, how can we help clubs consolidate without losing the rich history that the consolidating clubs might each bring to that consolidation? Various ideas have been floated on the Delegates List and should be considered, but always within the context of maintaining the overall fiscal integrity of the AKC.

2. The AKC laid off a large number of employees. Even today it can be difficult to receive a timely response to club and exhibitor questions. What are the plans for returning to proper staffing levels, and what can the AKC do to offset the inevitable loss of dog/sport knowledge that will occur as staff members leave?

Since I am not a currently sitting board member, I am not privy to what plans have been developed to return to proper staffing levels. Also, we need to be cautious about assuming what proper staffing levels should be. In general, proper levels would be that the business of the organization and the issues brought to it by constituents could be addressed by employees in a generally acceptable period under normal working conditions. It is entirely possible that prior staffing levels were the proper staffing levels, and it is also possible that current staffing levels, even with the layoffs, are proper staffing levels.

I do find your use of the word “timely” interesting. When I started as a faculty member in higher education, I was considered to have made a timely response if I returned an inquiry in a few days. By the time I retired as a university administrator, my responses were often not seen as timely, by the person submitting the request, if they didn’t happen within an hour or two of the inquiry, and it was often irrelevant to the sender if they sent the inquiry at 2 AM.

As to the second half of your question, there is always a loss of institutional memory when someone leaves. If the departure is anticipated, you can plan for it and have the person prepare an “after-action” report outlining accomplishments, issues facing the unit, and some critical pieces of history. If the loss is sudden, then there may be nothing that can be done about the loss of the institutional memory. If the person who previously held the position is still available, one can hope that they are open to being contacted and consulted concerning the institutional memory or directing the current occupant to where the pertinent information can be located. But, sometimes the institutional memory is just lost.

3. The LINK collar and the doggie day care businesses were controversial and losing business ventures. The AKC has not been transparent with the delegates regarding these activities. (1) What are the lessons learned? (2) What are the AKC’s plans to invest in the future of its mission-driven activities?



**I BELIEVE THAT THE MOST
PRESSING ISSUE THAT WILL NEED
TO BE ADDRESSED FOR THE
FORESEEABLE FUTURE WILL BE
HOW DO WE HELP OUR VARIOUS
DOGS CLUBS, MEMBER AND
LICENSED, STAY IN EXISTENCE.**



I am not quite sure how to respond to this question as I am not currently a sitting board member. Here are some general thoughts, however. I hope that one lesson not learned is that taking investment risks should never happen. Secondly, it seems to me that we need to move beyond either/or thinking, that is, either invest in activities that do not appear to be mission-driven or invest in mission-driven activities, and move to both/and thinking, that is, it is possible to invest in both activities that do not appear to be mission-driven and in mission-driven activities. Moreover, given the financial situation at the time, the decision by the board, which I have no doubt was well discussed within the board, was to take a risk in these investments to help shore up the overall finances of the organization. Finally, I think it is time that we move beyond reacting to the Board as if it is some nefarious group of marauders out to destroy the sport, and grant the same presumption of grace that we want extended to the delegate body and members of the fancy in general as we express opinions and make decisions about the sport, which is that we are all working in the best interests of the AKC and its mission-driven activities.

4. The AKC Museum of the Dog appears to be an expensive and little-used facility, located in a city going through a major transformation. How much does the museum cost the AKC annually? And what is the future of the museum as you see it?

I’m glad you used the term, “appears to be,” since I do not know how much the museum costs the AKC annually, nor do I have information concerning how much traffic passes through the museum annually. Also, I’m not aware of any major transformation taking place in NYC that isn’t part of the temporary aberrations caused by the current pandemic. As to its future, we need to continue to help it be more self-sustaining through its fund-raising efforts. However, the museum, as are all museums and libraries, is our archives; the keeper of our institutional history and memory. Your question above raised concern about the loss of institutional memory due to the layoffs, but this question seems prepared to suggest that we discard the physical artifacts and written records that document the importance of dogs in our lives. The museum may be one of the stronger arguments that we

Dr. Gregory J. Paveza (continued)

possess in our fight against the AR people. We just must learn how to best use that argument. So, I will work with my fellow board members, should I be elected to the board, to ensure that it survives and prospers.

5. *If you have previously served on the Board, what do you enjoy the most about this position and what do you enjoy the least? For the one new Candidate, what do you look forward to the most about having the opportunity to serve on the Board?*

Since I don't serve on the Board currently, I cannot answer the first part of this question. I will share with you an answer I gave to a person once who asked me a similar question about a board I was serving on at the time:

Most Enjoy: Working with my friends and colleagues on the Board.

Least Enjoy: At times, working with my friends and colleagues on the Board.

The thing I look most forward to, if elected to serve on the Board, is the opportunity to work with a truly dedicated group of folks to set the policies that will advance the well-being of our breeders, our member clubs, the sports of purebred dogs, and the AKC as a living organism.

Not having anything to do with the questionnaire, the following quote just happens to be at the end of Gregory Paveza's email. I think it reflects something about the character of this candidate, the man.

"You do not lead by hitting people over the head. Any damn fool can do that, but it's usually called 'assault'—not 'leadership'.....I'll tell you what leadership is. It's persuasion—and conciliation—and education—and patience. It's long, slow, tough work. That is the only kind of leadership I know—or believe in—or will practice."

Dwight D. Eisenhower
34th President of the United States of America. ■

Tumultuous times have clouded our lives in 2020. Each of these qualified candidates is owed gratitude for their passion, hard work, and devotion for our sport.

Scripture teaches us that tribulations in life may be opportunities to grow endurance, character, and joy. As we conclude an unprecedented year, may we turn to our faith, focusing on hope and joy over fear and despair.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! ■

THE FOLLOWING CANDIDATES CHOSE NOT TO RESPOND TO THE QUESTIONS:



Rita J. Biddle, Esq.
Ingham County Kennel Club
Lansing, Michigan



Dominic Palleschi Carota
Pharaoh Hound Club of America
Selkirk, New York



Patricia Cruz
Heart of Plains Kennel Club
Corham, New York



Dr. Thomas Davies
Springfield Kennel Club
Brimfield, Massachusetts



Thomas S. Powers
Kennel Club of Beverly Hills
Encino, California