**SARAH POHLSON SMITH REPORT**



**CASCADE STRATEGIES – JULY 2020**

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BIOGRAPHY

Name: Sarah Jo Pohlson Smith

Birth: Nov. 26, 1975

Residence: 1415 Main St.

 Grinnell, IA 50112

Family: Husband, Dustin; Two children, Alex and Josie

Education: B.A. in Psychobiology, Luther College

Religion: Catholic

Military: None

Professional Experience: Director of Outreach Programs and Events, Grinnell College

 Executive Director at Imagine Grinnell

Underwriter for First Penn-Pacific Life Insurance Co., Hoffman Estates

Political Experience: None

TIMELINE

Nov. 26, 1975 Born

1994 Graduated from Grinnell High School

1998 Graduated from Luther College

July 17, 1999 Married Dustin Smith

2001 Purchased home in DuPage County, IL

2006 Moved back to Grinnell

2015 Began working at Grinnell College

PROPERTY TAX

* **In 2018, Sarah Pohlson Smith advocated for a yes vote on both of the Grinnell-Newburg School bond issues**
	+ On Jan. 23, 2018, on the ipetitions website for “Vote YES for our kids,” Sarah Pohlson Smith posted, “I have voted yes twice! We have an amazing community that works together to accomplish so many wonderful initiatives that allows for a high quality of life in Grinnell. The schools need to be next, please vote yes and together we can continue to make Grinnell a fantastic place to live!”[[1]](#footnote-1)

* + According to the petition, “We the undersigned commit to voting yes twice in support of the Grinnell-Newburg School bond on February 6. Our goal is to reach 1600 signatures by voting day. Help us spread the word and vote twice for our kids! For more information visit www.schoolbond.org/grinnell”[[2]](#footnote-2)

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* **The first question was for the district to do the projects; the second question was to raise the debt service property tax levy to $4.05. The district would balance the total school levy so that taxpayers would see a net increase of $2.60, approximately $20 per month for the average residence**
	+ In a Jan. 24, 2018, op-ed in the *Des Moines Register*, Janet Stutz wrote, “The Grinnell-Newburg Community School District has spent the last year and a half listening to the community, staff and students while assessing current conditions of district facilities. Internal and external audits indicated the need for an immediate remedy.

“The average lifespan of a school facility is 65 years. The average age of our five school buildings is 62 years old. Critical updates to major systems will cost the district $33-$47 million dollars, without providing any educational improvements and leaving many necessary updates undone. Knowing all of this, the district has developed a new plan to build a new PreK-5th grade elementary school on the 4th avenue site, completely gut and renovate the current middle school, as well as renovate major critical systems and upgrade spaces at the high school, including a safe and secure entrance. These concepts would extend the life of our school facilities for many years to come.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

* + According to the same op-ed, “The district is asking for proceeds from bonds up to $60 million dollars. The sale of bonds, while interest rates are low, would enable the district to complete the proposed projects. The districtwould use $8 milliondollarsof SAVE money toward the construction and renovation projects. Voters who reside within the Grinnell-Newburg School District’s boundaries may vote on February 6, 2018. The ballot, on February 6, 2018 contains two questions in which each question must pass by 60 percent +1 of the total votes. The first question is for the district to do the projects; the second question is to raise the debt service property tax levy to $4.05. The district would balance the total school levy so that taxpayers would see a net increase of $2.60, approximately $20 per month for the average residence. Even with this increase, Grinnell would have one of the lowest tax rates of all other Little Hawkeye Conference districts. The district paid the last bond levy off seven years early saving taxpayers $287,000 in interest charges.”[[4]](#footnote-4)
* **Voters rejected the proposal, as the measures did not exceed the 60 percent necessary for passage**
	+ In a Feb. 9, 2018, article, the *Des Moines Register* reported, “In Grinnell, voters rejected a proposal for a new elementary school complex and renovations to both the middle school and high school.

“For Public Measure A, 52 percent of the Grinnell voters, or 1,392, marked ‘Yes.’ The vote for ‘no’ was 1,283.

“For Public Measure B, 51 percent, or 1,364, voted ‘Yes’ while 1,309 voted No.

“Each measure in Grinnell needed 60 percent plus one (1) vote to pass.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

* **In 2015, Sarah Pohlson Smith was a co-chair of Citizens Building Schools for a Better Future, which was pushing for the passage of Grinnell-Newburg school system’s 23-year, $28 million bond referendum**
	+ In an April 8, 2015, article, *Our Grinnell* reported, “The outcome of a hotly contested and eagerly anticipated community issue has been announced. The April 7 vote resulted in failure for the Grinnell-Newburg school system’s 23-year, $28 million bond referendum.

“The bond would have been employed to construct, furnish, and equip both elementary (PK-5) and middle school (6-8) facilities.

“The result of the vote has been met with disappointment by its supporters, one of whom is Caleb Elfenbein, an assistant professor of History and Religious Studies at Grinnell College. Elfenbein and his wife, Tina Iyer-Elfenbein, have a young daughter enrolled in the Grinnell school system.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

* + According to the same article, “Dustin Smith, Sarah Pohlson Smith and Doug Cameron, co-chairs of Citizens Building Schools for a Better Future joined Abrahamson in his praises of the community who aided the bond’s approval.

“‘Thank you to all of our supporters and we will be asking for your support again in six months. Our district’s problems will not go away by putting our heads in the sand,’ Pohlson Smith said. ‘We encourage everyone to work together to ensure this bond passes in six months.’”[[7]](#footnote-7)

* **The bond referendum asked voters in the district to approve an estimated $0.49 increase per $1,000 of assessed net taxable property value starting with their fall 2015 property taxes**
	+ In a March 11, 2015, article, the *Des Moines Register* reported, “The Grinnell-Newburg school district is looking to develop a long-term facilities plan, something school officials say they have not had for years. That plan calls for relocation and construction of schools in the district, including new middle and elementary schools.

“To get there, the district is holding a bond referendum on Tuesday, April 7, asking voters in the district to approve an estimated $0.49 increase per $1,000 of assessed net taxable property value starting with their fall 2015 property taxes.

“‘It’s about the kids, staff and programing,’ said Todd Abrahamson, superintendent Grinnell-Newburg Community Schools. ‘The needs and problems associated with enrollment, building space, educational programming and efficiencies still exist and will not go away without action.’”[[8]](#footnote-8)

* **The measure was defeated, with approximately 58 percent of voters opposing the referendum**
	+ In an April 8, 2015, article, *Our Grinnell* reported, “Diana Dawley, Poweshiek County Auditor/Commissioner of Elections, cited an approximate 35% voter turnout for the referendum. According to the unofficial tally from the Poweshiek County Auditor’s office, 3,130 voters cast their ballot in the special election, with 1,302 voting Yes and 1,828 voting No.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

PIONEER RENTALS

* **Sarah Smith is a 25 percent owner of Pioneer Rentals, LLC**
	+ According to her Personal Financial Disclosure form, as filed with the Iowa House of Representatives, Sarah Smith disclosed herself as a 25 percent owner of Pioneer Rentals, LLC.[[10]](#footnote-10)

* **In 2019, Pioneer Rentals was late on the second half of its 2017 property tax in Poweshiek County, and paid an additional $31 on top of the $885 tax that was owed**
	+ According to the Poweshiek County Treasurer, Pioneer Rentals LLC is the owner of the property at 602 10th Ave., Grinnell IA. According to the treasurer, Pioneer Rentals, LLC purchased the property on June 1, 2010.[[11]](#footnote-11)

* + According to the Poweshiek County Treasurer, Pioneer Rentals owed $885 for the second installment of its property tax. The tax was due on March 31, 2019. Pioneer Rentals paid the tax on May 6, 2019, and paid $27 additional dollars (1.5 percent over two months, rounded up to the nearest dollar), plus an additional $4.[[12]](#footnote-12)

* **The late tax payment came nearly six years after the business was administratively dissolved by the Iowa Secretary of State for failing to file its biennial** **report**
	+ According to an Aug. 14, 2013, Declaration of Dissolution from the Iowa Secretary of State’s office to Pioneer Rentals LLC, addressed to Dustin J. Smith of 1415 Main Street, Grinnell, IA, “The limited liability company named above is hereby administratively dissolved pursuant to Iowa Code section 489.705 effective August 9, 2013 for failure to deliver the 2013 Biennial Report as required by Iowa Code section 489.209.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

* **The fee for a biennial report for a domestic LLC in Iowa was $45 in 2013**
	+ According to the Iowa Secretary of State’s website, as accessed through Archive.org from July 31, 2013, the biennial report fee for a domestic LLC was listed at $45.[[14]](#footnote-14)
* **Pioneer Rentals has been operating since 2013 as an inactive business in the state of Iowa**
	+ According to the Iowa Secretary of State, Pioneer Rentals, LLC was administratively dissolved on Aug. 9, 2013, and is currently listed as an inactive business with the state.[[15]](#footnote-15)

DISORDERLY HOUSE

* **In 1997, Sarah Pohlson was cited for “Keeping a Disorderly House” for hosting a party which resulted in neighborhood noise complaints, resulting in a total of $90 in fines**
	+ According to a Sept. 11, 1997, citation from the City of Decorah against Sarah Jo Pohlson, “The above named defendant is accused of the crime of Keeping a Disorderly House for that on or about the 5th day of Sept. A.D. 1997 at Decorah in the County of Winneshiek, State of Iowa, said defendant did unlawfully permit, without taking legal steps to prevent the same, loud noises to the disturbance of the neighborhood upon a premises in the person’s possession, to-wit: hosted a party which resulted in neighborhood noise complaints on the above date at 10:08 p.m. and 10:52 p.m. contrary to the statutes in such case made and provided by 92 Code of Decorah, Section-Ordinance 9.28.050.[[16]](#footnote-16)

* + According to the court file in the City of Decorah v. Sarah Jo Pohlson, Sarah Pohlson pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay a $65 fine and $25 in court costs.[[17]](#footnote-17)

ABORTION

* **On the topic of abortion, Sarah Smith is quick to advocate for women’s rights, saying, “It’s a woman’s right to decide”**
	+ In a Feb. 24, 2020, article, *Our Grinnell* reported, “Following Sarah Smith’s official announcement party—she’s running as a Democrat for the District 76 seat in the Iowa House of Representatives—when the signatures were tallied, 76 people had registered their support.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

* + According to the same article, “Smith does not shy away from sensitive issues. On the topic of abortion, she is quick to advocate for women’s rights. ‘It’s a woman’s right to decide,’ she states, stressing that ‘no woman ever wants to be in that position.’ Her stance is built on the premise that a woman has the right to make decisions about her body; such decisions should not be made by someone else.”[[19]](#footnote-19)
1. “Vote YES for our kids!” IPetitions, Jan. 23, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Vote YES for our kids!” IPetitions, Jan. 23, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Janet Stutz op-ed, “Grinnell Newburg school district bond proposal,” *Des Moines Register*, Jan. 24, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Janet Stutz op-ed, “Grinnell Newburg school district bond proposal,” *Des Moines Register*, Jan. 24, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Dann Hayes, “Bond fails in Grinnell,” *Des Moines Register*, Feb. 9, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Community Reacts to Bond Referendum Failure,” *Our Grinnell*, April 8, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “Community Reacts to Bond Referendum Failure,” *Our Grinnell*, April 8, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Dann Hayes, “Grinnell school district to hold referendum April 7,” *Des Moines Register*, March 11, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “Community Reacts to Bond Referendum Failure,” *Our Grinnell*, April 8, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Personal Financial Disclosure Form: Sarah J. Smith, Iowa House of Representatives, April 10, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Parcel Report: 0575600, Poweshiek County Treasurer, Accessed July 8, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Parcel Report: 0575600, Poweshiek County Treasurer, Accessed July 8, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Business Entity Filings: Pioneer Rentals, LLC, Iowa Secretary of State, Accessed July 16, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Business Entity Forms and Fees, Iowa Secretary of State’s website, as accessed through Archive.org, July 31, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Business Entity Filings: Pioneer Rentals, LLC, Iowa Secretary of State, Accessed July 16, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. City of Decorah v. Sarah Jo Pohlson, Case No. SMCR005874, Winneshiek County District Court, Sept. 11, 1997 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. City of Decorah v. Sarah Jo Pohlson, Case No. SMCR005874, Winneshiek County District Court, Sept. 26, 1997 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. “Smith Pledges New Energy, New Focus in Bid for Iowa House,” *Our Grinnell*, Feb. 24, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “Smith Pledges New Energy, New Focus in Bid for Iowa House,” *Our Grinnell*, Feb. 24, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)