

THE BOARD REPORTS

Highlights of the White Plains Board of Education Meeting

March 14, 2011

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET: Superintendent of Schools **Dr. Christopher Clouet** said this is one of the most difficult and most troubling budget years he has ever experienced, with state and national situations combining to affect local implications. He reviewed major program changes which include elimination of the district's Prekindergarten Program, to be replaced by a program run by the Family Services of Westchester at Rochambeau School; and moving the Adult Education Program to BOCES. There will be no elementary level summer school, and those at the Middle and High Schools will be cut back significantly. Cuts in staffing will result in a 15% decrease in staff over the last three years.

The budget of \$184,812,230 is a slight increase -- 0.7% -- over last year, and the tax rate would be increased by 2.81%, which is lower than last year's increase of 3.78%. Assistant Superintendent **Fred Seiler** provided detail on the figures.

Several members of the public spoke in opposition to the elimination of the PreKindergarten Program, citing the importance of early childhood education and the success of this quality program. Other comments questioned the prioritizing of programs to be cut; vendor contracts, particularly for transportation; and the ramifications of a sixth grade academy. Another speaker cautioned that voting against the budget would hurt the community in terms of use of facilities and in property values.

Later in the meeting, the Board reviewed the second part of the Instructional Budget and had questions on the cost of substitute teachers, the Special Education budget, and the Continuing Education program.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Dr. Clouet asked for a moment of silence in memory of five staff members: **William Clegg**, Foreign Language Teacher at the High School for 31 years; **Emily Lindon**, Elementary School Teacher for 27 years; **Mae Muhlrad**, Fourth Grade Teacher at George Washington School for 22 years; **Neil Stevens**, Senior Custodian at Ridgeway School for 27 years; and **Dorothy Thornton**, Teaching Assistant at Mamaroneck Avenue School for 24 years.

DONATIONS: Dr. Clouet thanked the following donors for their generosity to the district: **Jill Abraham**, **Catherine Monahan** and **Bradford Pickar**, for \$575 to establish the Class of 1980 Scholarship; **Ernestine Glenn**, for \$1,400 to establish the Paul Glenn Art Scholarship; **Raldnea Teixeira**, for \$1,000 for materials, enrichment and cultural experiences for students in the Rochambeau ESL Program for Adults; **Sandra Serrano**, for three computer monitors for the Community School; and **Skip Weinstock**, for a Roland digital piano and amplifier for the High School Music Department.

BOARD MEMBERS: Rosemarie Eller, President; Charlie Norris, Vice President; Peter Bassano, Sheryl Brady, James Hricay, Donna McLaughlin, Randy Stein

PERSONNEL: The Board approved the resignations for the purpose of retirement of **Diane Dean**, Teaching Assistant at Church Street School, and **Linda Freeman**, Elementary Education Teacher at Mamaroneck Avenue School.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Clouet introduced two reports on initiatives in curriculum. First staff members from Eastview Middle School made a presentation on AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a national program which began this year for 24 sixth grade students at Eastview. Teachers **Ernie Spatafore**, **Jane Turk** and **Caryn Capalbo** provided detail on the program, whose mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college, using acceleration, not remediation. Students **Nicole Maria**, **Nyla Robinson** and **Steven Serna** added their messages about how the program has benefited them. Dr. Clouet commended the participants and Principal **Joseph Cloherty**, and noted that the program will be expanded to seventh grade next year.

Dr. Clouet and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction **Jessica O'Donovan** then provided an overview of the implementation of the district's Five-Year Vision. The purpose is to introduce everyone to some of the methods to be employed to improve student achievement and to some new terminology. These include the I-Block, Great Books Program, Dual Language Program, and 6th and 9th Grade Transitions, among others. The goal is to provide effective instruction, focusing on the basics, with appropriate data analysis.

OTHER BUSINESS: Tax certiorari refunds to three commercial property owners, totaling \$304,173, were approved by the Board. This brings the total payout for the year to date to \$5.8 million.

The Board also approved the transfer of \$600,000 from the Reserve for Debt Service to the General Fund, for the purpose of repayment of debt on the High School Capital Project. This transfer will be continued for the next four years, until the debt is paid off and the Reserve Fund is depleted.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:
March 23: Budget Forum, High School B-1 Room, 7:30 P.M.
March 28: Special Meeting, Education House, 7:30 P.M.
 Final Review of Proposed Budget
April 11: Regular Meeting High School, B-1 Room, 7:30 P.M.
 Board Adoption of 2011-12 Budget
 Recognition of Science Research Students
 Recognition of Scholar-Athletes

Editor: Michele Schoenfeld