

November 14, 2005

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Superintendent of Schools **Timothy Connors** asked for a moment of silence in memory of **Rose Russell**, a Social Worker in the district for 8 years, and **Nancy LaVigna**, a Secretary in the High School for 10 years.

HONORS: Board President **Donna McLaughlin** congratulated the **Boys' Soccer Team** and **Coach Marcel Galligani** for their great record, and wished them good luck in the State Championships this coming weekend.

Assistant Superintendent for Business **Terry Schruers** announced awards to the district for financial reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association and the Association of School Business Officials International. He thanked the Business Office staff, and particularly Business Manager **Jackie Macken**, for their hard work to bring this recognition to the district.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Mr. Connors said that the budget process for next year is about to begin and he distributed the Budget Calendar, noting that this will be a very difficult year fiscally. The district must devise ways to use its resources better, rather than introduce new costs.

Mr. Connors asked members of his Cabinet to report on various subjects:

Mr. Schruers reviewed measures being taken to conserve energy, including some building operational efficiencies, an examination of possible facility improvements, and staff efforts to reduce energy consumption.

Dr. Joseph Casbarro, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services, spoke about the attendance process that has been put in place this past year for elementary students. He said significant gains have been made in reducing excessive absences and a similar process will be instituted in the Middle School.

Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources **Dr. Lenora Boehlert** reported on the new substitute calling system. Teachers can enter absences in advance, so that substitutes can sign up for specific assignments, or, in the case of last-minute absences, the system automatically calls substitutes. Dr. Boehlert said the process provides information and consistency and its cost has already been recovered several times over. She added that the pool of substitutes has grown from 51 to 167.

PASSING GRADE ON REGENTS: As part of the continuing efforts to raise expectations and academic performance, the Board voted to accelerate the requirements for passing grades on Regents exams. The current situation permits students to receive a local diploma with minimum Regents exam scores of 55. The State is proposing a phase-in of scores of 65 or more on five exams by 2012, for a Regents diploma. The district's plan will move this up a year, requiring two scores of 65 or above from current Juniors and Sophomores, for a local diploma; three scores of 65 or above from current Freshmen, for a local diploma; four scores of 65 or above from current eighth graders, for a local diploma; and 65 on all five Regents exams from current seventh graders, for a Regents diploma.

POLICY ON HOLIDAY DISPLAYS: The Board voted unanimously to adopt a new policy which it hopes will foster mutual understanding and respect for the diversity of our students. The policy requires that all displays of religious symbols be in an educational setting and contain written statements, supplied by the district, to explain their significance. The displays must be non-proselytizing in nature and will be accompanied by a statement that they should not be construed as an endorsement of any religion.

DONATIONS: The Board accepted a donation of books from the **George Little Management Company**, for the Post Road Media Center; two television sets from **Michael and Barbara Koff**, for the Middle School-Highlands and PreKindergarten Program; and \$750 from **William and Georgia Pollak**, for musical instruments at the High School. Mr. Connors thanked these donors for their generosity.

PERSONNEL: The Board accepted the resignation for the purpose of retirement of **Julia Waterman**, Secretary at the Community School, after 13 years with the district.

At the Special Meeting of October 24th, **Jenifer Berenberg** was appointed to the probationary position of ESOL Teacher at the Community School.

ARCHITECTS' REPORT: **Russ Davidson**, of Kaeyer, Garment & Davidson, described the process for which his architectural firm was engaged. There were two objectives: to examine facilities needs for educational instruction for the next 5-10 years, and to address the district's responsibilities to the State to insure a safe, healthy environment. The Board will be looking at prioritizing projects in the architects' recommendations but must now satisfy various legal requirements of the State, including the SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) process. Attorney **Mark Chertok**, of Sive, Paget & Riesel, explained the procedures and the timeline required, leading to a possible referendum in May. His firm has extensive experience with school districts on such projects.

The Board will discuss this further on November 28th.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Several parents of children in the district expressed dissatisfaction with the holiday display policy, noting that diversity should be taught in the classrooms, and that the policy will be difficult to implement. They suggested that more creative and meaningful approaches be explored.

UPCOMING MEETINGS: November 28: Special Meeting, Education House, 7:30 P.M.
December 12: Regular Meeting, High School, B-1 Room, 7:30 P.M.

Editor: Michele Schoenfeld