

THE BOARD REPORTS

Highlights of the White Plains Board of Education Meeting

April 13, 2009

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Superintendent of Schools **Timothy Connors** asked for a moment of silence in memory of two retired staff members: **Jerry DiStefano**, a Custodian at Eastview and a Districtwide Groundsman, from 1972 until his retirement in 1995; and **Louis Farucci**, a Custodian at Highlands from 1954 until his retirement in 1980.

RECOGNITION: Mr. Connors congratulated National Merit Finalists **Victor J. Brady, Isabella Fante, Jacob K. Paul** and **Scott D. Schwartz**, for achieving this prestigious honor.

Athletic Director **Nick Panaro** presented coaches from five Winter Varsity Teams to honor 82 Scholar-Athletes. Teams represented were Women's and Men's Track, Ice Hockey, Women's Basketball and Men's Swimming and Diving. Mr. Panaro also mentioned seven athletes who had averages of 90 or better from teams which did not qualify, and one cheerleader, a team which is not recognized by the State for this honor. Board President **Donna McLaughlin** congratulated the students, their coaches and particularly their parents for helping them to achieve this honor.

Mr. Connors mentioned an article on high schools in this month's "Westchester Magazine" which includes a very favorable piece on "outstanding programs" at White Plains High School to erase the achievement gap within a diverse population.

Board Member **Sheryl Brady** commended the staff members who gave up their vacation time to chaperone the three student trips abroad and to help these students to become world citizens.

DONATIONS: The Board accepted donations of \$500 from the **Jewish War Veterans, White Plains Post 191**, to establish a scholarship at the High School, and an exercise bike from **Judy Niles** for the Community School Fitness Center. Mr. Connors thanked the donors for their generosity.

RESIDENCY AND REGISTRATION: Following suggestions from the community, the district looked into practices in other districts regarding proof of residence. Mr. Connors mentioned one district which required proof of residence from all students (tried for one year), and another which tracks expirations of renters' leases. One district had no central registration point, as we do in White Plains, and is now following our practice.

Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services **Anne Lillis** reported on investigations into cases of suspected residency issues, a routine practice for the district. Since last July, of the 165 landlord/residency affidavits investigated, 38 families were found not to be residents and registration was denied. In addition, of the 141 residency investigations conducted, 44 families were found to be non-residents and their children have left the White Plains Schools. The district is very vigilant about following up any suspected violations of residency status.

BOARD MEMBERS: **Donna McLaughlin, President; Terry McGuire, Vice President; Peter Bassano, Sheryl Brady, Rosemarie Eller, Charlie Norris, Randy Stein**

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: In an update on the budget, Mr. Connors said the \$300,000+ allowance for the MTA tax remains in the budget, pending a decision by the State legislature. Mr. Connors reminded the public that fees for use of facilities will be charged to outside groups if the budget vote fails. The fee schedule provides a discount for community youth groups, but they would have to pay the full costs under a contingency budget.

Mr. Connors mentioned the Post Road open house and reunion this Saturday, to say farewell to the building in its last few months.

On Strategic Planning, Mr. Connors said the first annual review will take place in all-day sessions on May 20th and 21st. There will be some changes in the composition of the Core Committee.

PERSONNEL: The Board approved the re-appointment of **Daniel Furry** to the position of Interim Director, New York Presbyterian Hospital Program for the coming year.

The resignation for the purpose of retirement of **Vincent Parrino**, Duplicating Specialist at Education House, was also accepted.

ENERGY AUDIT: The Board appointed **Honeywell International, Inc.** to complete the comprehensive energy audit, after three proposals were reviewed by the Finance Committee. The company will begin to establish projects to be completed, along with the projected energy savings that will provide the basis of the official contract, to be executed this summer. Work would begin in March 2010 and take approximately one year. Honeywell provided a preliminary projection of a reduction in energy costs ranging from 21-33%. The energy savings pays for the project, with a guarantee built into the contract. The district is not liable for any costs and would be paid for any shortfall.

FINANCIAL ISSUES: The Board voted to refinance the outstanding debt from the 2000 High School Capital Project. Assistant Superintendent for Business **Fred Seiler** explained that after monitoring the the financial market, the district's bond counsel has advised that the timing is now favorable. The outstanding balance is \$6,250,000 and the projected interest rate is 2.3%. (The current average interest rate is 5.5%.) Projected savings are \$441,688 over the next six years, for an average of \$73,615 per year.

The Board approved a total of \$1.9 million in tax certiorari refunds to six different property owners. This brings the year-to-date total to over \$5 million in refunds.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: **Kerry Broderick**, President of the White Plains Teachers Association, expressed her belief that teachers should be consulted before the budget is finalized.

Augie Zicca said that the cuts are "not smart," and asked if the budget and also the auditors' report and comments will be available on the website.

<u>UPCOMING MEETINGS:</u>	April 27:	Special Meeting, Education House, 7:30 P.M.
	May 11:	Regular Meeting, Education House, 7:30 P.M. Public Presentation/Hearing on the Budget
	May 20:	Special Meeting, High School Media Center, 7:30 P.M. Canvass of Election Teacher Tenure Appointments

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