

THE BOARD REPORTS

Highlights of the White Plains Board of Education Meeting

January 12, 2009

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Superintendent of Schools **Timothy Connors** asked for a moment of silence in memory of four retired staff members. **Mary Jane Johnson**, Director of Reading at Eastview School, was with the district for 21 years until her retirement in 1986. **Isabel Levy** taught at Rochambeau School's Manpower Skills Center for 23 years, until 1987. Music Teacher **Thelma Rockwell** retired in 1995, after 38 years at Ridgeway School. **Michele Stevens** was on the Civil Service staff at Education House and Rochambeau School for a total of 14 years.

RECOGNITION: Mamaroneck Avenue School Principal **Gail Epstein** proudly introduced the three fifth grade students on the school's Chess Team who won the National Scholastic Chess Championship in their division in Orlando last month. **Michael Ainsworth**, **Joshua Colas**, and **Andrew Teller**, along with their coach **Michael Ellenbogen**, a White Plains High School alumnus, proudly displayed the three-foot-tall trophy they brought back. Individually, Joshua placed third in the nation and Michael placed fourth. Board President **Donna McLaughlin** thanked the school staff and the boys' parents for their support.

Mr. Connors presented a Developmental Achievement Citation from the New York State School Boards Association to Board Member **Sheryl Brady**, who completed 40 credits of participation in various NYSSBA activities. Mrs. McLaughlin thanked Mrs. Brady for all the time she invests and for bringing important information back to the district.

Mr. Connors announced that the dedication of the High School's North Gym in honor of **Harry Jefferson** will take place at half-time of the January 29th basketball game.

Board members commented on wonderful holiday concerts and celebrations as well as the Girls' Basketball Team Banner Night, recognizing players who have scored over 1,000 points.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH: Mrs. McLaughlin provided an update, noting that five impressive, well-qualified candidates were narrowed to three, with several district and community people included in final interviews.

DONATIONS: The Board accepted donations of \$750 for musical instruments at the High School and \$250 for "Project Early Read" from **William and Georgia Pollak**; a clarinet from **Joan Roberts** for Ridgeway School; photography paper from **Margarita Mateo-Saha** for the High School Art Program; and a 35 mm camera from **Mr. & Mrs. Fred Palma**, for George Washington School.

PERSONNEL: **Francis Lahey** was appointed interim Assistant Principal at the Eastview Campus of the Middle School, replacing retiree Rosemarie Agosto. He will serve for the month of January, until a permanent replacement is named.

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

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Mr. Connors asked Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction **Margaret Dwyer** to discuss two exciting programs. The Dual Language Program at George Washington School serves 88 kindergarten students who are excited about being bilingual. They receive instruction in English one day and Spanish the next. The number of students meeting benchmarks in their dominant language is exceeding district targets and next year the program will be added to kindergarten at Post Road School. Dr. Dwyer thanked **Terri Klemm**, Principal, **Suzanne Lasser**, Director of ELL (English Language Learners) Programming, and the excellent teachers in the program.

On the Emerging Scholars Program, Dr. Dwyer discussed the report from Guidance Director **Lesley Tompkins** and Resource Teacher **Doug Cronk**. This has been an excellent way to open the door to Honors classes for a wider variety of students. Qualifications are academic promise and a good work ethic and students are provided with a summer program and support during the year. Students are representative of the overall demographic population and the rate of continuance is equal to that of the other students. Board members mentioned the wonderful opportunities resulting from high expectations -- one of our core values -- and stressed the importance of further steps to provide additional support.

In an update on Capital Projects, Mr. Connors mentioned the Open House last week for the new addition at Mamaroneck Avenue School, with terrific new space for its students. Assistant Superintendent for Business **Fred Seiler** reported on the Post Road School construction which is on budget and very close to schedule. Mr. Seiler presented a list of projects for the next two summers -- the last part of the 2006 Capital Project. Included are renovations on the High School pool to meet building codes, at a higher cost than projected. Funding for this is within the overall capital project budget.

In response to questions, Mr. Seiler explained that it's desirable to spend the entire amount allotted for capital projects because State Building Aid is applicable to the last 11% of the project. He also said that debt service money can be used only for that purpose; it cannot be moved to operating costs.

Regarding the budget process, Mr. Connors encouraged everyone to attend the Community Forum this week, to offer their thoughts on possible reductions and cost savings as well as suggestions to generate additional revenue. Following this, a preliminary budget will be developed and brought back to the next Community Forum, on February 25th.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: **Jonathan Rodney** encouraged the Board to challenge the idea of annual pay raises and urged a one percent pay cut across the Board.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

January 26:	Special Meeting, Education House, 7:30 P.M. Preliminary Budget
January 28:	Special Meeting, High School Media Center, 7:30 P.M. Introduction of New Superintendent
February 9:	Regular Meeting, Education House, 7:30 P.M.
February 25:	Special Meeting, High School B-1 Room, 7:30 P.M. Community Forum on Budget

Editor: Michele Schoenfeld

IMPORTANT DATES:

MEET DR. CHRISTOPHER CLOUET, SUPERINTENDENT FINALIST
Wednesday, January 28, 2009, 7:30 P.M.
White Plains High School Media Center

SECOND COMMUNITY BUDGET FORUM
Wednesday, February 25, 2009, 7:30 P.M.
White Plains High School B-1 Room