

Date: 11/19/98
To: Members, Board of Education
From: Chris Manaseri
Subject: Backup for November 23

Assuming most of you do not take the day before Thanksgiving off, this should be just like any other workday-night session of the Board, and we hope you'll all be able to attend. We want to focus on the new standards and their assessments, the new tests the kids are going to have to take beginning this year in Language Arts and Math.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

1.0 Charter School Legislation being shoved down the throats of New Yorkers is the latest concern of near hysterical proportions. There is a special meeting of the Four County School Boards scheduled for Monday night in Canandaigua - which some or all of you might wish to attend. See enclosed. Here's the scoop:

George Pataki wants to keep up with the Bush brothers in potential for national office. He needs a Charter School Bill to do that. Sheldon Silver needs a pay raise for the Assembly to maintain his power base and Speakership. The two have offered each other what they need and they plan to have a special session of the legislature convene right after Thanksgiving to enact both. No debate, no public input, - a one day deal and go home until budget time. Not exactly a shining example of democracy in action.

The problem? The Charter School Legislation as proposed would present a burden to local school districts and their tax-payers by adding another expense to our budget over which we have no control. The bottom-line is that we would need to pay the average per-pupil cost directly to the charter school for each Romulus resident attending. That figure is @\$8400. Imagine that next year a charter school opens in Waterloo or Geneva and ten Romulus kids decide to go there. We now pay an additional \$84,000 out directly to them with no say in the matter. That's a 4% increase in the tax levy! And 10 kids would not allow us to reduce our costs anywhere in house. Sounds like an unfunded mandate to me.... and look what it does to our budget. That decision alone would increase our expenditures 1.5%. (Don't forget the double whammy of the fact that our expenditure increase is now limited to the cost of living if we can't get voter approval. THAT would be interesting, if we had to cut program for kids who stay here because of the limit and the fact they we're spending money on kids who choos not to stay here - a choice which currently doesn't cost the taxpayer a cent).

Whether you favor school choice or not, whether you favor allowing public dollars to be used for private education or not, it seems to me the issue is too important to be signed into law in the dark of the night and sprung on people at budget season. If you'd like to go to Canandaigua on Monday night, I'd be glad to drive the school van up. Please call in about attending if you wish to do so. Otherwise I'll add a discussion item to the agenda about the issue. (I have already alerted the FLTimes and their crack undercover investigators are on it - but given their anti-school bent, I'm not sure they wouldn't be co-sponsors of the legislation if given the chance.)

2.0 OSHA Continues today - looks like three more weeks before Mr. Sharp is done.

3.0 Good News from BOCES. Larry Driscoll checked with Albany and we CAN modify our expected BOCES aid to include a major computer install. Once we have one more month of under billing in special ed, and a bottom line cost for the SAA, I am likely to suggest to you that you go forward with lab replacements as we discussed last time. We can then go Office 97 and Windows 95 for the entire network and add workstations to the network (that we've already upgraded). Old Macs would be sold, and newer ones reused in the Tech lab for mechanical drawing.

4.0 Good News from Albany: They posted our expected State Aid on the Web on Monday based on the material we submitted in September (SA100 and ST3) and it looks like I've learned Tom Cummings' tricks. We appear to be getting \$65,000 more than what we budgeted to receive in State Aid for the year. This will start the clock running on a budget cycle which I will prepare for in December.

5.0 CBO Efforts: Mike and I met with Larry and the other School reps on Monday at the new business offices in Waterloo at the Sessler building downtown (nice). Larry gave us a report that showed a real \$30,000 savings over current costs without BOCES aid and a \$200,000 savings combined for the three schools after BOCES aid. Some numbers still need to be clarified and so I do not have a final draft of his report for you yet. We did agree to have a joint meeting of all three boards in January (the 11th - mark your calendars) in Seneca Falls to review the data together and ask Larry any questions we might have. The presumption is that each of us would then decide to buy in or not after that meeting. My read is that a three way is a go, a two way with Waterloo a maybe, depending on your read of our situation here. Both Bonnie and Gloria would go to the CBO under Larry's proposal - that's pretty bare bones here....

6.0 Parent Conferences went well with the usual good attendance (and apparently some of them voted while they were out).

7.0 A copy of Jim Delia's request for a **Sabbatical** is enclosed FYI - I neglected this last time, though we discussed briefly in exec. No action required yet. Committee work to be done after Jan.1.

8.0 RFA Xmas party is being held December 12 at the Ken-Cin Manor in Fayette. Board members are always welcome to attend, and it gives you a chance to get to know some of the teachers better. I'm looking for a flier to enclose.

9.0 BOCES Board has heard (through me I assume) that we have our own little Docushare collection and they had Camille Sorensen, the Director of Edutech, call me to see what we were doing. I gave her permission to access our files for a week or so, so that they might steal some ideas. If you're adventurous - you might want to post something to the Bulletin Board for her to notice (challenge, challenge).

10.0 Seneca County Demography: The Health Department does a periodic study and their latest was just released. It had some interesting demographics about the people we are and whose children attend our schools. Add this to your pile of interesting reading to do sometime. (Note the data on Varick - the township which is wholly in RCS's service area - interesting that we ARE still here!)

This section seems *short*, but it's only been 5 working days since we last met. And there **WAS** that vote thing in there....

AGENDA ITEMS:

1.0 Approving the **minutes** of the last meeting includes approving the minutes of the Vote (which was outstanding!). A six to one margin of victory should make you feel like you read the tea leaves right this time!

2.0 Under my section you will find a discussion of pending **Charter School Legislation**. Enclosed FYI is a copy of the proposed law, and I will use the bully pulpit of our meeting to make sure something gets said if not printed about the shafting all public schools are about to receive at the hands of our State leaders.

3.0 We await actual **bond resolution language** from Bond Counsel McGill, now that we are authorized to do the borrowing. Premise here is borrow ASAP, hold the cash as long as you can, earn interest on it while you do, and wait for the architect and SED to get plans approved

before we go to bid. The longer we hold the money, the more interest we earn, so even if we don't do the bulk of the work until summer 2000, we're fine on paper.

4.0 Another STAR error. Pesky little problem that's likely to grow as the number of eligible people does.

5.0 Tax Collection is complete and once again we have collected about 89% of the levy ourselves- typical with other years that I've kept track of. Alice has done an excellent job, and has turned over to the county what they need to collect the rest. Note the levy is some \$140,000 less than we set it at originally in our budget planning, because of STAR.

6.0 SDM heard from guest speaker Cornelia Johnson most recently about the peer mediation program she helps coordinate in Seneca Falls. Our own foreign language teacher Sue Mitchell is looking into getting something started here.

FYI - Some reluctance expressed by this group to be as active in our budget process as in past years. Seems nobody likes that much, or at least some people don't.

7.0 The Focus of our evening will be Barb's presentation on the **new ELA assessment** at 4th and 8th grade to be given this January. We think it's very important for you to understand the nature of the questions which will be asked of relatively young children on this new test. (Plus this is the one we keep telling you about the hellish and costly nature of the scoring design). Expect to spend some time tonight seeing as the teachers and the kids do. We get caught up too much (as too many Boards do, I suppose) in the dollars and cents and bricks and mortar. This should be a good change of pace for you.

8.0 Mike's update will let you know how things are 7-12 and beyond.

9.0 We have a couple of **personnel** items and that's about it.

Looks like a healthy session with a range of topics - just what a school board meeting should be.

PS - There is *some* possibility of a certifiably crazy parent showing up to complain about the way I handled a discipline situation in Mike's absence yesterday. Two boys got in a small fight and they BOTH were punished. Imagine that. Please remember to be sensitive to the need to call an executive session if we are going to deal with personnel - either professional or student personnel. (Names should not be something Lori Thillman puts in the paper.) This FYI and to entice you to attend.

Please call in if you'd like to go to Canandaigua Monday night. Thanks.

See you Tuesday!

CM/CM