

Date: 8/5/99  
To: Members, Board of Education  
From: Chris Manaseri  
Subject: First August Meeting

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*In hopes on taking Friday off, I begin to prepare this missive on Thursday AM with great confidence...*

**NON AGENDA ITEMS:**

**1.0 Capital Project** is STILL on hold. Nada from SED or our architect that is new. Sorry to say that, but it IS the case...

**2.0 Summer work** around the campus is going well according to Terry ( it's always hard to tell when several projects are in process). Johnson and crew were here this morning and I selected blue and white ( surprise surprise) as the color of the siding on the replacement garage which should be up by month's end. Terry is working on the installation of the security cameras. The former business office is awaiting carpeting to become the new high school and guidance offices sometime next week. The new cafeteria tables have arrived and we're cutting a deal to get rid of the old bench ones. The summer cleaning crew is making excellent headway, the gym floor having been done already for this season and ready for use. We even spread out our formerly contaminated soil from the excavation of our underground fuel tank two years ago to make a much nicer looking parking area behind the bus garage.

**3.0 Computer installation** is the big story of the week, with the network down for replacement. Ray and the BOCES crew did a wonderful job planning around our office needs, letting us continue to function on the old system until everything else is ready for the conversion. We even came up with a solution for the old computers we plan to reuse. 25 hard drives at less than \$100 a piece and every machine in the building, including those we upgraded last summer will be operating on Windows 95 and Office 97. It was NOT a mistake to do that afterall! We will gain two labs in this conversion plus the upgrade of operating and utility systems, plus the conversion to ethernet from token-ring, and we will end up with a student to computer ratio of 3:1. Outstanding!

All work on this install should be completed by the end of next week and Ray and Nancy will come in to trouble shoot machines throughout the building before teachers return.

**4.0 RAITN** is still on for September 1, although we haven't seen any actual installation yet. Cabinet maker and Ron Baker were here last week and will return circa the 15th for installation. All components have been ordered. Still don't know about the every-room-a RAITN room scenario yet, but the potential exists. Chris Puylara is scheduled to teach a psych/soc course over RAITN for the Fall, so we have to be up and running. No choice now.

Speaking of choices, Clyde Savannah, I learned by email this morning, is OUT of our grant consortium. Also learned that no actual cash has flowed through to Lyons as the LEA yet, and so the grant expenditure part of this is on hold. We basically will get about \$35,000 of free federal funds eventually to help us pay for this. We will also be part of a Syracuse University connection on this for staff development on effective uses of distance learning technology. Unfortunately, none of that happens without the cash, so we play wait and see on this one, too. IF we need to replace Clyde as a partner, we might offer South Seneca as an option. Something for shared services to think about.

**6.0 Shared Services committee** will be meeting with the folks from South Seneca on Monday the 23rd at 7 PM in the guidance office conference room ( I think that used to be my old office) in Ovid to begin to discuss any other sharing we might wish to make plans for. Barb, Mike, Cornelia and Theresa will be our reps for sure- I still haven't heard back from Don Hagen.

They have Dave Dresser from their Board, Doug Chappell, their superintendent, Jim McKee, community member and owner of the Big M, and Todd Kerzweil, their teacher union president. I think the conversation should lean toward - shared transportation maintenance with the Towns of Romulus, Ovid, Covert and Lodi ( and maybe Varick) along with the two schools, and special education programming where we have small numbers of kids with specific needs ( this might be expanded to a county-wide conversation, but we have a willing partner right now here), and to special interest coursework that has small numbers - physics, technology ( they have two GREAT shops down there), upper end foreign language, etc.. It will be interesting to see what the group comes up with.

**7.0 CBO** - our major sharing effort to the North just recently consummated, continues to go well I am told. I just got off the phone with Larry Driscoll on another matter that you'll see later, and that's his impression as well, along with Gary Alger's. We all get our paychecks and stuff that people ordered keeps coming in the mail, so I guess it's working out... Actually the hassles to date have been minimal - almost solely related to communication and shuttle service back and forth. Gary has been extremely helpful in this regard though, acting as courier as well as boss.

Please remember to pat yourselves on the back soundly about the success of this as RCS was the key pusher and player all along in making this happen. Good work, guys!

**8.0 State Budget** has been passed. As you will see in the items related to establishing our tax levy ( which we MUST do this time out), we do have a slight problem. The good news is that education received its largest funding ever. The good news is also that we will get more money next year than we did this year. The bad news is that we did NOT get as much as we planned on in our budget. I am enclosing a separate sheet showing you what we planned to get versus what we did get and some solutions we need to consider.

Upshot is that we operated under the premise of Governor's proposal plus the reinstatement of BOCES aid. That had us receiving some \$2,865,576 in all categories of aid OTHER THAN building and BOCES aid. That's the figure we used in our budget planning. We then added our calculations for building aid from Bernie Donnegan's office and our calculations of BOCES aid from Larry Driscoll, including the computer upgrade adding some \$100,000 to our anticipated BOCES aid. Larry called Albany for us on this in December before we went forward with the SAA on this install we're doing right now. Using the Governor's numbers plus building plus BOCES as anticipated, we planned to receive a grand total of \$3,519,098. Instead, the run which came out yesterday with the new budget has us receiving only \$3,363,791, a difference of some \$155,307. NOT what we wanted to hear.

Wherefore is the problem? Well the first \$100,000 of it is in BOCES aid. The state runs do not show us receiving aid on this computer upgrade. I have a call in to Larry Driscoll on this and expect him to get back to me later today with an answer about what's what. Worst case scenario on this one is that we get the money the following year, and we could live with that by raiding the fund balance temporarily. So, no big deal there.

BUT, the remaining \$55,000 IS a problem. The governor's proposal had us getting some \$52,000 as a block grant for "educational improvement". The final budget run does not include this category. Hence our shortfall. This is one we have to consider addressing at least in part this year, or we will be faced with a \$55,000 problem in the spring when we do budget prognostications once again. Gary and I have talked about this and we both feel we need to make up some of this in the tax levy. When you get to the agenda section you will see blank numbers for the levy and tax amounts. We want to present you with three alternatives and one suggestion.

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1. The first alternative would be to tax only at the level you anticipated, with a levy increase of \$41,343 or 1.9%. The problem with this is that we have to absorb all of the \$55,000 lack of anticipated aid through local sources off budget and that's a lot.
2. The second alternative is to nudge the levy up 1% higher than we told people it would go. This would raise the levy to \$2,184,000 which is \$62,967 higher than last year or 2.9%. This is the suggested option as the levy goes up less than 3% ( our original goal in the budget process), but we also recoup \$21,000 of the lost \$55,000. The remainder we would need to fudge by counting Medicaid payments, BOCES refund from the prior year, and/or unanticipated back impact aid. The danger with using any of these as planned revenue sources is that we currently do NOT budget for them and they help us establish a positive fund balance. If we start to rely on them, they erode our cushion and make subsequent year's planning even tighter.
3. The third alternative would be to increase the levy by the full \$55,307. This positions you very well for next year, but may strain the your/my credibility with the public. If you tack this whole amount on to the levy, it becomes \$2,218,341, an increase of \$97,308 or more than 4.5%.

In discussing these options, Gary and I recommend option 2, the partial pick-up through the levy with a very slight increase, allowing most homeowners to still see the full impact of their STAR exemption. In a perfect world, I'd ask you to take the full hit of close to 5%, but my fear is that we've done that once too often over the past six years and it's getting old.

We can make any of them work if we have to, but the middle ground looks like the safest and surest way to muddle through another year of disappointment with school aid to Seneca County. The question we all should be asking our legislators is "*Where DID that largest ever increase in school aid go?*" It sure didn't come to Seneca County! I'm sure we'll see and hear more about the distribution of aid in the coming days and weeks, and that it will continue to be an issue when we lobby for the 2000-01 budget. It's just sad that we seem to be gaining no real ground at all, and in fact our assessed values for the District are dropping rather steadily these past four years. That means that dropping real estate values combined with static State aid can only lead to local tax increases.

Well, at least it's not a story that is new to us.... or specific to us. It is a systemic issue. And my money says the State is going to lose one of those lawsuits on equity of funding sometime soon. THEN we'll see a forced wholesale change of the formulas. Until then, same old same old.

**9.0 Foundation Design Team** has been meeting and is ready to seek candidates for Trusteeships. They will invite a group of 22 people to a reception to explain the role of the foundation and its Board of Trustees on Wednesday September 22 at 7:30 PM at Goosewatch Winery. As BOE members interested in this foundation's development you should plan to be invited as well. Please mark your calendars now... Thanks.

**10.0 Policy Committee** - Cornelia, Norm, and Rhonda - we need to meet to discern which of a pile of recommended changes we might like to address. Can we meet at 7:00 to get the ball rolling?

7:00 PM Committee meeting - Policy Committee will precede our full group. Thanks.

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**1.0 Minutes, Warrants and Payroll** should be fine. Thanks Cornelia for your help!

**2.0 BOCES survey** ( enclosed) needs to go back on Thursday. Please think about how we wish to respond to the questions and we'll do so in unison from the table.

**3.0 Music Program** changes. Well, I did miss the boat on the very interesting developments last meeting. And **I DO WISH TO APOLOGIZE** for not having an actual resolution worded for you to consider on the agenda. I miscommunicated with Leanne on that and I hope that was not a crucial omission that cost us the opportunity to add this element to our program.

The discussion we need to have now is, since we didn't approve a new position full or part time at the last meeting, what DO we wish to do about our music offering, specifically as it relates to marching band? I've heard from Anne, Mike and Rhonda since the meeting last week, but no one else. What I think the feedback consensus is so far is to try to get an objective opinion from the outside about our needs and react after that. In the meantime, should we advertise for an extracurricular marching band director? Let's talk *briefly* about the direction in which you'd like me to head on this one.

I usually offer you a solution and you usually accept it, but since that didn't happen this time out, I'm at a bit more of a loss than usual.

While I have the floor on this issue - let me reiterate please that the solution proposed was proposed by ME, not Pete or Betty. It was my idea to add staff, they never would have dared to suggest such a thing. I was trying to be entrepreneurial and proactive in my approach and throw a positive spin on the problem. If you are not happy about the proposal to throw money and staff at the issue, please blame only me for that suggested solution and no one else. Thanks.

**4.0 Gary** will come from a BOE meeting in Waterloo ( on a night they don't usually meet) to our meeting at some point, probably by 8:00. I wanted to make certain everyone has the chance to meet the gentleman whose nine year's experience as a business administrator we gain in part through the CBO configuration recommended by Harvey Kaufman. I am convinced that Gary will offer the Romulus Central School a quality of service in school business administration that we have not seen this decade at least. I also know that no matter who your superintendent is at any point in the future, he or she will be well served by Gary and the added assistance of the shared position.

**5.0** We seek approval to continue to **share a drug counselor** through the county-wide share established over a dozen years ago now.

**6.0** Now to the question of the **levy and the tax impact** of your choice of the three options outlined above. ( I vote for number 2). Please see the spreadsheets enclosed showing how we came up to this problem and the impact of the three levies proposed. I will plan to highlight items from these spreadsheets with you at the table Tuesday night.

**7.0 Tina has bus runs** for us to approve which are not drastically different than last year. Note that we will be adding time to the parochial school run ( which Mary Lynn Faiola had last year) to provide courier service to the CBO for all three schools. Another one of your contributions to making this all work out. Aided at 80%, the additional hour per day is certainly not going to kill us.

**8.0 Barb and Mike will have updates** for you.

**9.0** Mike will have a proposal on soccer as the **AD** that is worthy of support.

**10.0 Karen Sabara** surprised us with her resignation on Monday and we will be looking for a new Teacher Assistant to put in the elementary computer lab for the Fall.

**Marion Curle** has been on leave for some time with health related concerns and has finally decided to let us move on to the next person. We had created our first TA for Marion when she

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wanted to retire as a bus driver and we hired her back in a non-affiliated title. We will replace her with a teacher aid at a lower salary.

**11.0 Sandy Steele** will act in Mary Jennings' place taking attendance as well as handling the phones and transportation dispatching. Sandy will do this as a leave from her bus driver route, so that Mary can return to an office position if able to do so in January. Sandy will be eligible for the \$.30 per hour differential for out of title work for four hours that she would normally be driving, and we save having to hire a sub for Mary. Sandy's leave of absence from driving duties shows up this time.

**12.0** If we have a final name, we will **replace Cheryl Farley** during her leave of absence.

**13.0 Barb will present the annual summary of the special ed program** and seek your approval of that report for paperwork she needs to file as part of our funding for this program.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Anticipating Laurie's departure, I'd like the Board's direction about seeking a replacement. Interview, run an election, or leave vacant and let BOCES DS act to fill the slot. I hope you decide to replace Laurie using the same process that brought her here to begin with - the interview and selection process by the remainder of the Board. Such an appointment is only good until the next vote ( May ) anyway, and gives a person willing to step forward now a boost up by their incumbency.

And that should do it. Three major discussions - music's next move, which tax levy to use, and the special ed report. Mike will be out of town - of all places at a Harley Davidson convention with brother Bill ( only in Romulus would the school board president be at a Harley convention) - so Tom will need to run the meeting. That being the case, we might be home by 9:00.

See you Tuesday! Call with any questions....

CM/CM