

# Details of Debra Jackson's new contract are revealed

By JOHN ROCHE

As the Bedford Central School District this week announced the semi-finalists in its superintendent search, details emerged regarding Dr. Debra Jackson's hiring to head the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District.

Dr. Jackson, whose resignation from Bedford Central takes effect this June, was hired Feb. 7 by the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery school district, which consists of two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school, serving students from the communities of Highland Falls, Fort Montgomery and West Point in Orange County, and Garrison in Putnam County.

According to Dr. Jackson's new contract, which was obtained this week by The Record-Review via the

New York State Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), she will be paid \$160,000 for the first year of a three-year contract.

Dr. Jackson's salary from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2011, will be determined annually by the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery school board based on an evaluation of her performance as superintendent. Her salary cannot be reduced from the previous year's pay rate, according to the 10-page contract.

The board must notify Dr. Jackson on or before June 30, 2009, whether the district intends to extend her employment an additional two years or allow her contract to expire in 2011, according to the contract. For each subsequent year, the board must notify Dr. Jackson if she'll be retained

*continued on page 15*

# Details of superintendent's High

*continued from page 1*  
as superintendent for another year by that June.

Dr. Jackson is not entitled to health and dental benefits through the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery school district, either while she is employed as superintendent or after, including for her retirement, the contract states.

A settlement agreement reached with the Bedford Central board last June provides medical and dental coverage for the 52-year-old Dr. Jackson and her family for life. Dr.

Jackson also received a lump sum payment of \$650,000 from Bedford Central, compensating her for lost salary for the remaining three years of a five-year contract extension signed in 2006, as well as benefits and credited service for retirement benefits.

The starting salary of \$160,000 in her new post is significantly lower than the \$243,461 in salary Dr. Jackson is being paid for the current school year with Bedford Central, where she has served as superintendent since 2004. The starting salary

listed for Bedford Central's next superintendent is listed as \$200,000, plus regionally competitive benefits.

Dr. Jackson, the previous school board and current Bedford Central board members have repeatedly declined to comment on the specifics of her resignation or the settlement agreement, citing a confidentiality clause in it.

According to the agreement, Dr. Jackson's resignation stemmed from "a certain dispute (which) has arisen between the superintendent and the board of education with regard to

ORU-REVIEW

PAGE 15

# and Falls contract are revealed

the superintendent's performance of her duties."

Nearly two pages of Dr. Jackson's contract with Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery outlines disciplinary procedures regarding the board's evaluation of her job performance. In addition to several provisions outlining procedures for charges, disciplinary hearings and other actions, the contract states that during the term of the contract, "the superintendent shall be subject to discharge for good and just cause, as provided for in the Education Law of the State

of New York, provided that the board of education does not arbitrarily or capriciously call for her dismissal."

Also stipulated in the contract is that the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery board will devote a portion of one meeting in April or May of each year to an evaluation of Dr. Jackson's job performance and her working relationship with the board. That annual evaluation, to be conducted in executive session, would be based on performance criteria established by board members and Dr. Jackson by Oct. 1 of

each year.

In a previous interview, Dr. Jackson pointed to the wealth of educational opportunities her new position offers.

Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery school board president David DeLeo has not yet responded to repeated requests for comment regarding Dr. Jackson's hiring, but "welcomed Dr. Jackson to the district and commented that he believes she will be a great leader," in minutes from the meeting she was hired posted on the districts Web site.