

## Michael Solomon has 'unique experience' for district board

To the Editor:

Monday's school board debate between Michael Solomon and Jen Gerken reminded me of my most exciting Bedford meal. My daughter rushed into our dining room, "There's smoke upstairs!" She was right, and there was fire, too. So I called Jen Gerken.

Well, actually, I didn't call her. I called 911. Jen Gerken, despite her obvious merits, wasn't the right person for the job. And she's not now.

What's burning in our school district? Per the recent Bedford Central School District survey, 60 percent said they couldn't afford a property tax increase. Add in the silent victims — people not moving to Bedford (fewer buyers) and seniors/retirees driven away by high taxes (more sellers). Bedford Central School District's fire is financial. Costs are surpassing ability to pay. Great public schools won't save property values if high taxes result in too many sellers and too few buyers.

The teachers union plays a role in Bedford Central School District's financial fire; which candidate might they prefer? The New York Post on May 3 reported: The United Federation of Teach-

ers "combined with its statewide affiliate, New York State United Teachers, spends some \$5million on lobbying and campaign contributions to get their way with the State legislature." The local teachers union isn't just a self-help group of the friendly folks from parents' night. Besides them, when you think union, visualize a well-funded statewide network of politically sophisticated, highly organized lobbyists and New York State legislators. When you imagine union/board negotiations, add chairs to the union side of the table for its \$5 million Albany support group, which resists changing laws (e.g., defined benefit, tenure, Triborough) that tie our board's hands.

The teachers union doesn't just negotiate with our board for its objectives. It lobbies hard in Albany to impose union-friendly outcomes by law on New York State school boards that wouldn't otherwise accept them. Sure, nothing illegal about that. That's the system. But if playing the Albany card works so well for them, it's time for more effective Bedford Central School District action in that arena. With his background, Solomon's the candidate more likely to crimp the union's Albany style. He's the candidate

the union won't want. That's a good recommendation.

Viewing Mike Solomon as a same-old same-old "financial guy" misses the point. He has unique and significant experience and knowledge specifically relevant to BCSD's specific major financial problems. As a governor-selected member of the Suozzi commission, he spent a year immersed in statewide hearings and expert research on property tax and educational issues. This is like a member of the 9/11 commission running for New York City Council. The Bedford Central School District is unbelievably lucky to have such a person willing to devote his time and expertise to us. The district's financial situation is the biggest threat to quality public education. View the debate tape on the Bedford Central School District website — note Solomon's understanding of the underlying, long-term problems. He has more knowledge and experience about that than his opponent. He's the better horse for this race and is just what Bedford needs for leadership in fighting our financial fire. Please vote for Mike Solomon on May 18.

Howland Robinson  
Bedford Hills

## West Patent parent endorses Michael Solomon for school board

To the Editor:

I have four young children enrolled in the Bedford Central School District, so I felt compelled to attend Monday evening's debate featuring all candidates running for the Bedford Central School District school board election on May 18. I was pleased to hear from such a highly qualified candidate named Michael Solomon. Michael Solomon is a lifelong New Yorker who grew up attending public schools and has children attending Bedford schools and local private schools.

Michael Solomon served on the Suozzi Commission, which dealt with the burden New York State homeowners suffer from as we currently pay the highest property taxes in the country.

Michael Solomon's background is in

finance, with extensive experience dealing with Albany bureaucrats, who often legislate as an arm of the teachers union. Current state laws are stacked against taxpayers and towns, removing all the necessary flexibility required to manage our budgets. Michael Solomon is a unique candidate whose set of skills will benefit all Bedford residents at a time when many of us feel ignored. Current economic conditions demand board members to exercise fiscal prudence with our tax dollars, crafting budgets that allocate more dollars for our children and less for union salaries and benefits. Homeowners, taxpayers, seniors and our children have all sacrificed in this deep recession, yet the teachers unions refuse to make one concession. Over the last 10 years, prior Bedford Central School

District boards were profligate in their spending — passing reckless budgets two and three times the rate of inflation. They granted massive salary increases and enormous pension benefits that our community and current board deem unsustainable and detrimental to future school budgets. We cannot afford to pay for these; they come at the expense of our children's education. Acrimony has set in among the community as a result of the unions' stubbornness and failure to acknowledge the economic realities of our time. It is time that we elect a school board member with the experience, expertise and devotion to all constituencies in our community. Michael Solomon is that person.

Sal DiCarlo  
Bedford Hills

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