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School Board Election, May 18

From Scott Johnston:

There are two things to vote on next Tuesday, a contested school board seat, and the proposed school budget.

As to the budget, I have a number of misgivings, but I have spoken to Mike Solomon (he is running for one of the board seats) a number of times in recent days and he has persuaded me that the correct vote is yes.

I will briefly explain my misgivings, and then say why we should vote yes anyway.

The stated budget increase is 1.7%, but this is actually quite misleading. This is indeed the increase over last year's budget, but the district didn't *spend* all the money in last year's budget. They way over allocated to such things as medical expenses, and this left them with a multi-million dollar surplus. Rather than returning this surplus to the taxpayers, they kept it and used it as a downpayment on this year's budget. The real increase – which is to say this year's budget vs. what was actually spent last year – is 4.8%. (To be fair, there was also a large forced contribution to the teachers' pension fund. Subtract this out, and the spending increase is 3.5%.)

Then there's the "message" we send, one way or another, to the union. The school board says that since they are standing up to the union, voting for the budget says you're supporting the board, and therefore supporting a tough stance with the union. This is tortured logic, at best. In New Jersey, a majority of budgets were defeated and it was viewed as exactly what it was: an anti-union vote. Public sector unions are killing both New Jersey and New York, and there's no way they will interpret "yes" votes to budgets as anti-union.

On the other side of the equation is the fact that our board hasn't settled with the union. The proposed budget actually assumes the union will make some concessions. (If they don't, more layoffs will be necessary.) Also, in the wake of budget defeats two years ago, the board passed a very reasonable budget last year. Are they doing enough? Probably not, but they are between a rock and a hard place, given state laws. I do wonder, though, why many other districts seem to be getting union concessions, but we don't seem to be able to.

Then there is Jere Hochman, our superintendent. I like Jere personally, and I think he is highly capable. The district made a great hire, and he has led efforts at community outreach, particularly on financial matters. I give him a lot of credit, and we should all be supportive.

Lastly, the difference between the proposed budget and a contingency budget is not all that great. If it were, I might have a different view. But on balance, this is not the year to turn down the budget.

[Record Review Endorses Mike Solomon - "He gets it"](#)

[Nassau County Executive Endorses Mike Solomon](#)

[Letters from Record Review about Mike Solomon](#)

[Letter from Finance Comm. member endorsing Mike Solomon](#)

Last night three of our current school board members abused the power of their office.

Susan Wollin, Donna Marino and Paula Kumar should apologize for their poor behavior at the recent candidate's night.

Sitting board members should not attack candidates in an open forum on a TV channel controlled by Board on which they sit.

[Patch article about candidate night](#)

[Watch the video of the candidate's night](#)

Kumar 25 min and 16 sec into the video
Marino: 28:14
Our President Wollin at 36:16

Our good friend Scott Johnston has started a blog with items of interest to Bedford residents.

We highly recommend you visit the site on a regular basis:

<http://saneinbedford.blogspot.com/>

["Commission For Tax Relief" for the summary report - click here](#)

[Bedford Central School District highlighted in Wall Street Journal Article](#)

[Westchester has the Highest Real Estate Taxes in the nation - Read the Governor's](#)

As to the board set, I strongly urge you to vote for Mike Solomon.

[report here](#)

There may not be a more qualified candidate to serve on a school board in any district, anywhere. He has the state-level experience we need to deal with Albany, and he also has a daughter in the system so he understand the needs locally as well. He was appointed by the governor to the Suozzi Commission, which made a number of excellent recommendations on property tax reform (which are pending – hopefully not forever).

[Special Ed and Taxes from the Governor's Commission](#)

[Read about the cost to our state from mandates and other issues - written by the NYS School Boards Assoc. - Great Read](#)

Most importantly, Mike will stand firm in contract negotiations with the teachers union. As you know, these negotiations are currently at an impasse. The board has asked for some completely reasonable concessions from the union (e.g. they still get raises, just smaller ones), but the union has said no to everything. As a result, they are currently working without a contract. But before you feel sorry for them, know that this means they still get paid all salaries and benefits from the old contract indefinitely. This *includes* raises every six months. Thank you, Triborough Amendment.

Mike's opponent is Jen Gerken. I'm sure she's very nice, but my biggest concern is that she stated in the debate the other night that she didn't think it was in Bedford's best interests to have teachers working without a contract. *This is precisely wrong*. The alternative is simply to hand them what they want. We cannot elect someone predisposed to settlement.

NY Times article about teachers taking cuts all around NY - but not in Bedford

Forbes.Com Article on Westchester - [Where Americans Pay Most In Property Taxes](#)

As an aside, I am extremely upset with the behavior of three of our current board members, Susan Wollin, Paula Kumar, and Donna Marino. At the debate, they got up and asked questions that clearly exhibited a bias against Mike. This was highly inappropriate behavior. Whatever their views, as board members they should remain publicly neutral, especially since they will have to potentially serve with Mike very soon. I was frankly shocked.

E-Mail recently sent around by a town resident. - **our comments in red:**

Hello Friends,

I've done a lot of research over the past week about the Bedford Central School District Budget Vote next Tuesday May 18th. I am in agreement with the GetOutTheVote Committee so I'm planning to vote "yes" for the budget, and I'm hoping you'll allow me to tell you why.....

1. The current budget proposes a 1.70% increase in expenditures (**Not True**) equalling a 1.54% tax levy increase (**True**). By town, this translates to:

The dirty little secret is that the budget increase when compared to prior years expenditures is approximately 5.7%. They took this year's under spending in medical and rolled it forward into next year's budget in order to lower the increase (see the Wall Street Journal article) – thus kicking the can down the road.

Town	Actual 2009-10	Estimated 2010-11	2-Yr Avg. Change
Bedford	-3.26%	+4.45%	+0.60%
Mt. Kisco	-0.35%	+1.82%	+0.74%
Pound Ridge	-0.32%	-2.27%	-1.30%
New Castle	-3.12%	+0.83%	-1.15%
North Castle	+0.88%	+1.90%	+1.39%

True

Most of our district costs are state controlled and out of our hands, yet we only receive 5% of our funding from the state.

Not True. 70%+ of our budget is teacher union costs - we negotiate the contract - we pay the taxes, we control this issue not the state.

2. If this budget is defeated, we will most likely go straight to a contingency budget. Despite what you think, taxes will still go up 1%, so for a difference of half a percent, we

lose control of our spending, cut more teachers and programs and Albany MANDATES how we spend our money in this district.

Not True. We control the cuts, not Albany. Albany has a set formula for the total budget we select what gets funded.

An additional \$2M in cuts will be made. Our schools and children will loose academic and support positions, enrichment programs, elementary band, library services to name a few.

Not True. What gets cut is up to the board, maybe they will cut adminstration and staff and not teachers - what a novel idea!

3. A "no" vote for the budget sends the wrong message to the Teachers Union. The School Board's proposal to the Union for the new teacher contract includes asking for a greater contribution to healthcare. It slows the direction of salary increases and offers innovative concessions on staff evaluations and performance reviews. A "no" vote for the budget says we side with the union in these negotiations, not with the Board of Ed!!!

This is childish. We are at impasse. The union has rejected all of the board's proposals. This is not an afternoon tea, this is hardball union tactics at work.

To send a message to the Teachers Union, email Adam Yuro, President of the BTA at ayuro1191@bcscsny.org and copy Dr. Hochman at jhochman2785@bcscsny.org. We can love our teachers and still ask for concessions from the union at the same time!

Great Idea - do it!

4. 70% of the voters in this district do not currently have kids in the public school, either their children are grown or in private schools. It is so important that every voice is heard by the school board. All adults in your household need to vote on Tuesday, May 18th!!!

Let 30% of the population drive 100% of the taxes.

Complete budget information can be found on Bedford website
www.bedford.k12.ny.us/district.cfm?subpage=9619

PRESERVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR OUR CHILDREN, don't lose sight of that when looking at the numbers.

I agree. Quality education - at a resonable cost.

From Scott Johnston

All:

The road to reform is a long one, but we have made some enormous strides in the last two years. Two years ago, we defeated two terrible school budgets that represented the old, union-driven way of doing business. Last year, the school board got religion and proposed a responsible budget, and it passed, with our help. We also defeated an incumbent and got the incredibly qualified Graham Anderson onto the board. Graham has proved a hard working and responsible board member. None of the disaster scenarios propagated by our opponents came to pass.

We need to send the board someone else who has the experience and backbone to stand up to the union, because it is the union and their insane demands that threatens our town and our children, and drives up our property taxes to the highest in the nation. That someone is Mike Solomon.

You have heard me speak in the past of the Suozzi Commission. This statewide commission made some excellent recommendations to the governor on how to control spiraling property taxes. Mike was *on* that commission. How fortunate are we that he's willing to serve on our school board?

Albany, in partnership with the teachers union, is now at the heart of our problems, passing laws like Triborough. Mike knows the people and the landscape in Albany like no one else in our town. He would be a tremendous asset to the board, but most particularly in the area of legislative outreach, something board member Erika Long is also working hard on. (Two years ago, the board was part of the problem. Now, I'm pleased to say, they have become part of the solution. The voters may have helped with this epiphany. Our union and our state legislators need a similar epiphany.)

There's a lot of other great stuff about Mike. He has a daughter at BVES, so his campaign is not simply about controlling costs. Mike knows that great schools and reasonable budgets are not mutually exclusive. I have attached an introductory letter from Mike so you can learn more.

Mike is not running unopposed for the seat, though, so there will be a campaign.

What can you do?

Volunteer – there will be multiple opportunities to help with your time. Let me know and I'll forward your name to Mike.

Give Money – it's not like running for Congress, but these races cost money. Can you make a donation? Checks are made out to me, Scott Johnston, and sent to 87 Clinton Road, Bedford Hills 10507. (Note that all donations are accounted for and filed with the school district.)

Vote – The election is on May 18th at your local elementary school. If you're out of town, please apply for an absentee ballot using the attached form. Please do this soon.

Thanks!

Scott

Pay Table for Teacher's in the Bedford Central School District

Work 10 months of the year, great health care and a job for life.

Example: College Degree BA, Second Grade Teacher, 10 years in district - First column row 10. BA30 is a college degree with 30 credits towards an MA.

Plus you get paid for any lunchroom duty, sports or afterschool activity.

Bedford Central School District
Teachers' 2007-2008 Salary Schedule

Step	BA	BA30	BA60	MA	MA30	MA60	PHD*
1	56,297	58,170	60,042	59,369	62,237	65,104	66,076
2	58,047	59,917	61,792	61,118	63,986	66,853	67,824
3	60,749	62,620	64,490	63,817	66,685	69,554	70,525
4	62,272	64,142	66,011	65,341	68,205	71,077	72,047
5	64,263	66,133	68,005	67,333	70,200	73,066	74,040
6	66,678	68,549	70,420	69,749	72,616	75,483	76,452
7	69,750	71,620	73,491	72,819	75,686	78,555	79,527
8	73,054	74,924	76,796	76,121	78,993	81,858	82,831
9	76,788	78,661	80,531	79,860	82,725	85,596	86,566
10	80,582	82,454	84,325	83,652	86,519	89,390	90,358
11	84,334	86,207	88,076	87,405	90,271	93,132	94,105
12	87,961	89,834	91,704	91,032	93,899	96,768	97,737
13	91,658	93,528	95,401	94,727	97,595	100,461	101,435
14	95,322	96,573	99,278	98,304	102,589	107,065	108,236
15	105,809	107,400	110,247	109,139	113,407	118,023	119,206

Scarsdale Teachers Vote to reduce pay increase

[Download a copy of the Union Contract or other important information](#)

Stop the Mega - Church

Progressing somewhat under the radar of the town population at large is a proposal of the Bedford Community Church for the corner of Buxton and Bedford Center Roads. The capacity of the combined main sanctuary and the children's is over 1000 with an expected generation of over 350 cars (3 people/car). The church programs will operate daily.

The size translates to a sewage load on a piece of property that drains into Broad Brook, which flows into one of our drinking water reservoirs. As residents we are greatly troubled by the size of the proposal on this location in an area accessed by local roads, shared with riders and bicyclists. PLEASE take the time to read the following letter. If you have only a minute, you can get the gist by reading the facts and thoughts highlighted in red. But if you truly care about preserving this very special place in which we live, take the ten minutes to read thoughtfully the entire letter and *take appropriate action*.

Thank you! Nancy & Roger Vincent

MORE INFORMATION



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