



Happenings

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Message from the President

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Everyone can't wait to say goodbye to the cold, freezing, and snowy winter we have all come across these past few months! Spring will be here before you know it, which, in the world of education, focuses our attention on the issues of the budget!

Grievances

PJTA filed a grievance for a member who requested the health insurance buyback in retirement. The district, through the business department stated that the buyback no longer existed, and it was negotiated away for retirees. PJTA looked into the situation and found there is a standing BOE resolution providing the buyback for retirees, and a letter from the superintendent directing the business administrator to provide this benefit. Both of these documents were ignored by the business administrator. PJTA presented this grievance before the BOE in executive session. The BOE agreed with PJTA that the buyback should have been provided for this member. PJTA also respectfully requested that two other retirees who were also denied the buyback in 2008 and 2012 receive the buyback. The BOE agreed to provide these members the buyback with back payments.

PJTA filed a grievance on behalf of members who receive the health insurance buyback. PJTA found new contract language that impacted the amount some members were receiving. It was later determined that the new language was improperly placed by the district's attorney. This was confirmed by our Labor Relations' Specialist that the language was indeed a mistake. The grievance was withdrawn by PJTA.

PJTA filed another grievance on behalf of a member in regard to Health Insurance and the Flex Benefit.

Snow Days Left

We have three snow days left in our calendar to date.

2014-2015 School Calendar

The board of education will pass the calendar at its March 4 board meeting.

President's Message

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Capital Project Referendum Set for May 20

The board agreed at its February 20 meeting to seek voter approval to make needed school improvements. The \$5.2 million capital project referendum, which includes school safety and classroom improvement projects, will be put before voters Tuesday, May 20.

If approved, the district would be able to address several school safety issues identified by the buildings and grounds committee, which include the need to replace non-fire rated interior school doors, install a new generator at the Route 209 complex, and upgrade exterior lighting. The referendum would also allow the district to make improvements that will directly enhance the student learning environment. These include upgrading Smart Boards, changing dated chalk boards to white boards, and replacing cabinetry that is original to the Route 209 complex and Hamilton Bicentennial Elementary classrooms.

The school improvement referendum would be funded partially by \$500,000 from the district's fund balance. Additionally, since the proposed projects qualify for state building aid, New York State will reimburse Port Jervis for 84% of the renovation costs.

The estimated cost for the average local taxpayer with a home valued at \$100,000 would be approximately \$5 per year after the basic STAR exemption or \$3 per year after the senior citizen enhanced STAR exemption.

Retirement

If you are considering retiring this year, your letter stating your intent to retire must be submitted to Mr. Bongiovi by March 15 in order to take advantage of the unused sick day salary adjustment. Remember, you can be compensated for up to 225 of your sick days. If you would like, you may donate 10 of your sick days in a letter to the district to the PJTA sick bank.

School Budget

At the last meeting, the school board received preliminary budget figures for the 2014-2015 school year. Using the state aid projection from the governor's executive budget released earlier this month, Port Jervis is facing a budget shortfall of approximately \$1.6 million.

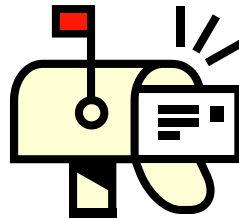
The preliminary \$64 million budget presented to the Board is essentially a rollover of the current year's operating expenses with adjustments made for the rising cost of employee health benefits, retirement contribution, and other mandated expenses.

Next month, the district will be presenting next year's budget. I reminded the district that staff reductions should not even be considered unless the district uses their financial reserves or provides an incentive to our members.

Stay warm and united!

Regis Foster

Correspondence



Cards Sent

Sympathy

Sherri Patterson on the loss of her grandmother, Sophie M. Ulbrich

Get Well

Cathy Michalenicz

Thinking of You

Susie Onofry