

Board of Education

Fall/Winter 2005

Meet Your Board Members

Thinking for Today... and Tomorrow

For those who attend Board of Education meetings, it might seem that most of our business is short-term pro forma: approve minutes, listen to a few reports, talk over a new policy, then disappear into executive session to talk over negotiations with one of our seven bargaining groups. True, but there is another component to our business that is less visible, but no less important: long range planning.

Much of our thinking, particularly around budget time, looks beyond the next year. In our maintenance program, for example, we use a five-to-seven-year plan to spread out large expenditures and to make sure that non-immediate but important projects are not forgotten.

In program planning, we ask what needs we will face in the future (and what mandates we will be required to fulfill) and how we can plan for them now. A current example of this is our Chinese language program. We had been fortunate to have been granted two teachers by the Chinese government for the current year. Then what? Do we commit resources for more years? Will the Chinese government help? Will knowledge of Chinese help our students? If we continue the program, we must line up Chinese teachers soon or risk going without.

Another opportunity we are considering is right around us, literally. The land to the north and east of the school—some 90 acres—is for sale. It's the last piece of undeveloped land contiguous to the school. Do we need it? Do we need it now? Can we afford it? Can we afford not to buy it?

At this point, we have only authorized a survey to confirm exactly what the boundaries are and what exactly is for sale. Then we will decide whether to make a proposal to the town governments. We don't want to rush the process, but the land is for sale publicly. Developers move fast.

There is yet another factor to our long-range planning. We think five to ten years ahead, but board membership is likely to change every two years after town elections. The Board that approves a project may not be the same Board that implements it. Thus, communication and consensus become critical, so that any long-range plans stand on their own merits, and are understood and accepted by the stakeholders in our towns. We extend our invitation to you to be part of this process by contacting your Board representatives and by attending our meetings.

—Schuyler Thompson

Schuyler Thomson has been Chair of the Regional Board of Education for two years; previously, he served on the Norfolk Board of Education for eight years. A former teacher, Schuyler lives in Norfolk with his wife, Heather, and son, Andrew, a senior at the high school. A graduate of the University of Connecticut, he majored in History and Classics. He is the owner of a business where he builds and restores wooden boats. 🏠



Front row, l-r: Dan Jerram, Jean Lafave, Steve Egbertson, Tara Yard. Second row: Schuyler Thomson, Martin Gregor, Terri Kenneson, Kaye Sweeney.

Tara Yard

Tara Yard, newly elected Secretary/Treasurer, has been a very active member of the Board for the past five years. Representing Norfolk, she chairs the Communications Committee which is responsible for the Board newsletters, as well as the increased positive media coverage for Regional. In addition, Tara serves on the Buildings and Grounds and the Curriculum Committees. She credits the ad hoc Anti-Smoking Committee, though, with ensuring her significant involvement in our schools. With Kaye Sweeney of Colebrook, she helped to institute the Mountainside Program into our secondary program. This program, in its fourth year, provides direct services to students who choose to eliminate their cigarette dependency in exchange for healthier living; she is "passionate about the wellness of our students."

Tara's three children, Mary, Chuck, and Sarah, all attended Regional, with her youngest currently a senior. With husband Charlie, they are members of the Lions Club. She also serves as an EMT for Norfolk Ambulance.

Tara believes that it is essential to think outside the box to meet the complex needs of today's schools and communities. She believes that "our schools and staff are creative and that leads to the best possibilities for all." 🏠


A special thanks goes to Dan Jerram. In his four years on the Board, he served as Vice-Chair and Secretary. He also chaired the Negotiations Committee and served on the Budget and Finance Committee. Our appreciation for many contributions go to Dan, his wife Carlene, sons Michael and Jack, and new daughter Elizabeth.

Jean Lafave

For the past 19 years, Jean Lafave has served on the Regional Board of Education, for five years as Chairman. During that time, she has supported a significant renovation of buildings, the development of a middle school, curriculum improvement at all levels, new efforts to communicate with parents and towns, and the expansion of the Vocational Agriculture program, as well as the implementation of the Strategic Planning Process.


Jean also contributes on the State level. Serving on the Board of Directors of the CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE) for 14 years, she has chaired the State Relations Committee and testified at a number of State hearings in Hartford. As Area I Director, she hosted at Regional one of the most effective Legislative Breakfasts in the State this past spring.

Jean holds a Bachelor's Degree in Microbiology and has served as an adjunct instructor at NCCC; she clearly recognizes the resources that the college can offer our students. With her husband, Phil, and two sons, Gregory and Marc (both Regional graduates), she has shown her commitment to New Hartford and to Regional.

"Currently, state and national demands have put us in a position of over-reliance on local property taxes. I am dedicated to getting the money from the State to address any new requirements and mandates," Jean states. Such dedication has recently earned Jean the 2005 Distinguished Friend of Education Award from the CT Association of Schools. 


Kaye Sweeney

For ten years, Kaye Sweeney has proven to be a dedicated member of the Board. She resides in Colebrook with husband, David, daughters, Suzanne and Jill, and son, Will. All three of her children are Regional graduates; her two daughters participated in the Agriculture Education program. In fact, both young women have achieved the highest award given by FFA, the American Degree. In addition, Jill served as the Parliamentarian for the State organization.

A registered nurse, Kaye worked tirelessly with Tara Yard to bring in the resources of Mountainside to assist our students. Kaye also is dedicated to the development and expansion of Agriculture Education; as she reminds us, in the future, "one in every three jobs will be agriculturally-related." On both the Policy and Curriculum Committees, Kaye served as Board Secretary/Treasurer for four years. 


Terri Kenneson

Loyalty to Regional School District No. 7 has no limits in Theresa (Terri) Kenneson's household! Raised in Barkhamsted, Terri is one of seven children—all of whom are Regional graduates. For the past twenty years, Terri has lived in Colebrook with her husband, Doug, and their two children who have attended Regional. Her son Brett is a sophomore at Western New England College, and her daughter Chelsea is a junior at the High School.

Having served on the Board of Education since October, 2004, Terri brings with her 23 years of experience and skill serving as a Sales and Service Coordinator at Vollmer America, Inc. Goal oriented, she would like to see "programs and opportunities for the students continue to grow and improve as much as they have in the past year (AP classes, Chinese language, the Banking Program, for example)." She also firmly believes that we must ensure that "our building and facilities are maintained" and takes pride in the compliments that she has received on our schools. Terri emphasizes at the same time that she recognizes the amount of "work" with the budget that will be needed to accomplish these goals and looks forward to continuing her role of active participation. 

Marty Gregor

A newly elected member of the Board, Marty Gregor, a computer programmer, has an active history in his nine years in Barkhamsted. He was a former member of the Zoning Board of Appeals and served as Chair. Currently, he produces and sometimes hosts a cable talk show at Charter Communications, called "Conservative Chat." In addition, he belongs to an active writer's group in New Hartford that meets once a month.

His daughter Jennifer is a Regional graduate, and his son Bryan is a sophomore. Marty believes strongly in ensuring that our students are academically challenged, and, at the same time, are prepared for either college or entry into the work force. He hopes to play an active role in increasing "confidence and subsequent support for the school from a larger percentage of community members." 




CABE representative Jean Lafave and member Steve Egbertson receive the Leadership Award for the fifth year at the recent CABE conference. The Award represents commitment, professional development, political activity, policy quality, and state representation by the Board members. Districts are invited to meet the State standards on a yearly basis. Pictured are: Dr. Roberta S. Ohotnicky (Superintendent), Jean Lafave, State Commissioner Dr. Betty J. Sternberg (presenting the award), Steve Egbertson, and Roger Newbury (Business Manager).

John Griffey


John Griffey is familiar to many because of his Dunkin' Donuts shops which dot Route 44. With his wife Jean, daughter Angela, and son John, he makes his home in New Hartford. A newcomer to the political arena, John believes that the mission of the Board is "to ensure that our students get a great education considering financial constraints."

He advocates strongly for the many successes of Regional, which both of his children have attended, and cites the athletics programs and the band program, among many, as successful recent expansions. In addition, he is concerned that our schools remain safe and drug-free environments and supports the role of a School Resource Officer.

John recognizes "the importance of us all working together" and looks forward "to contributing in a way that has a positive impact" as the elected Vice-Chair of the Board. 

Mark Lanctot

Mark Lanctot, an engineering auditor, will formally join the Board at the first meeting in January. With his wife Dr. Ellen Farmer, and three children, he is a long-time resident of Barkhamsted. Oldest son Daniel is a graduate of Regional, Brian is a sophomore, and Emma will be at the Middle School next year. A strong advocate for youth community activities, Mark has coached basketball, soccer, and baseball!

As part of serving the District to the best of his ability, he first plans to "be a good listener." In preparation for assuming his responsibilities, he has attended Board meetings leading him to positively view the role of the student representatives, as well as the new Chinese program. The challenges of assuming this new position, combined with knowledge about the school and maintaining an open ear, will set the tone for his future membership. 

Musings from a Departing Member

This December, I will be stepping down from the Regional No. 7 Board of Education. It has been a decade of great change for Northwestern, and I leave with a warm feeling of pride and affection for the staff, administration, and students—a good feeling that will remain with me for the rest of my life. Having played a small role in the development of education at Regional, I wish to make a few short comments before I go.

First, on the role of Public Education in our society: The United States is the most successful country in the history of the world. We have our tradition of public education to thank for that. A vibrant, dynamic participatory democracy requires an informed and educated electorate. Our Constitution provides educational opportunity for all, not just for an elite aristocracy. It is true that we have not effectively addressed many large gaps and inconsistencies of opportunity that exist in our country. This is the best reason for anyone to get involved. It is my belief in our system of public education that has motivated my participation over the past twelve years.


Second, on the role of a Board of Education member: There is no place for partisan politics on a board of education, except in its broadest sense. Politics is the art of working with others who may hold different views and priorities. On a board of education, it is necessary to work past the differences towards a common goal. This goal is to improve and advance opportunities for learning for the students. It is to provide the best resources possible, within the capabilities of the supporting community. At Regional District No. 7, we have been fortunate to have members come on the board with every intention of working for the students. Every new member was willing to set aside whatever particular special agenda that inspired him or her to run for the school board. I cannot think of any member of the Region 7 Board of Education who placed their own political agenda over the needs of the students. They have all worked diligently towards finding consensus with their colleagues. This is to the credit of the four communities that support Region 7.

Third, on Northwestern Regional 7: So much has changed over the past decade. Our communities pitched in to provide a wonderful, newly renovated and enlarged facility. The technology available to our students is state of the art. Our music and arts programs are flourishing. An ambitious expansion of the curriculum has begun. The Middle School has taken its first steps towards accreditation, under the enthusiastic leadership of its first principal. It now provides a strong transitional experience between the four feeder elementary schools and the high school. Northwestern has always been a good school. With the support of our communities, a skilled and caring faculty and staff, a strong and innovative administration, and a stable, forward-looking Board of Education, it has become so much better.

Northwestern Regional No. 7 has a brilliant future ahead. There is much more to do. I would hope that in the future, the four towns will be able to get together to bring the elementary schools under one administrative umbrella with the high school and middle school. It has been shown that this would provide a more cost-effective and efficient delivery of education.

I thank the voters of Barkhamsted for giving me the opportunity to serve the students of Northwestern Regional.

—Stephen Egbertson,

Steve Egbertson has spent a fruitful eleven years on the Board, five of those as Chair. Previously, he served on the Board of Finance in Barkhamsted, where he resides with his wife, Joan, who is an instructor at Capitol Community College. Both his son, Erik, and daughter, Joy, are Regional graduates (his daughter as valedictorian of her class). Recently retired as Supervisor of the State Department Public Health Virology Lab, we thank him for his devoted and caring service to so many students! 



Regional School District No. 7
Board of Education
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Summary of Board Goals 2005-2006 School Year

Each year, the Board sets specific Goals and develops an Action Plan to coincide with those Goals. What are some of the Board goals and actions that you can expect to see this year?

- More communication through our newsletters and information on our website
- Closer communication with the towns on budget development and presentation
- Improving the Board Self-evaluation process and orientation
- Supporting a review of the 7–12 Guidance Program for all students
- Monitoring the progress of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation and standards for the Middle School
- Reviewing the progress of the newly developed Strategic Plan 2005–2008
- Continuing advocacy for public education (including funding) at all levels

We welcome your suggestions, input, comments, and ideas in these very important areas!

Regional School District No.7 Board of Education

Schuyler Thomson, Norfolk –
Chairman

John Griffey, New Hartford –
Vice-Chair

Tara Yard, Norfolk –
Secretary/Treasurer

Mark Lanctot, Barkhamsted

Martin Gregor, Barkhamsted

Terri J. Kenneson, Colebrook

Jean Lafave, New Hartford

Kaye Sweeney, Colebrook

Tara Yard, Norfolk

Reminder: The Board of Education holds regular meetings on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month. Meetings usually begin at 7 pm and are held in the Newbury Media Center at Northwestern Regional School.

**We wish all a Happy Holiday
and a Safe, Healthy New Year!**