



HOT POTATO

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Rotary Club of Wayland, New York, D7120

Patrice Lysell, president

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School Tax Up By 3.8%, Theater Group Proposal Denied

We could have had eleven Rotarians and two guests last meeting, but one Rotarian left before it started (under regrettable circumstances).

Bob Oswald brought his lovely wife Cynthia, and the other guest was the speaker for the day, superintendent Mike Wetherbee. Although they have both visited us before, they were properly introduced right after the usual formalities of the flag, etc.

The Miller House started us with a nice cup of vegetable beef soup. They went on to serve us a broiled fish fillet, accompanied by their special mashed potatoes and a side of green beans. The dessert was a "peanut brownie," with my limited registry of dessert recipes. It tasted very good!

Bud StGeorge was first to confess. He had visited a sister-in-law for nine days, which were spent doing remodeling of her house. It didn't sound like this would be much of a fine, especially since there was no TV, but then we learned that they went to Southern California to do it. \$5!

Marty Kimmel spent three days in Cincinnati (86 degrees there) for a granddaughter's first communion. \$3.

President Pat volunteered \$5 for two reasons: She finished a 5k "run" for the benefit of two new ambulances in Naples. The other reason was a recent acquisition of wine glasses (at a very inflated price) during the past weekend's Habitat For Humanity auction in Lakeville?

Bob Oswald got into the same spirit and offered five happy ones for the impending arrival of his mother-in-law to the area. He would now be able to "drive Miss Daisy," i.e. said M-I-L and Cynthia in the backseat around the area.

School Budget

Mike Wetherbee was happy to be back to present the budget to an organization he knows is keenly interested in education, evidenced by our donations. He distributed copies of the summary, so that we could follow along.

Last year saw a much higher increase, primarily because the effects of expiring "merger subsidies" (editor's name for it). Coupled with declining enrollment, it led to staff reductions last year. This is the first year with no staff reductions, although there is a continuing decline in enrollment, which is forecast to bottom out in another five years at a 1550 level.



Superintendent Mike Wetherbee

There are school board elections coming up, with two positions open. David Wallace is seeking re-election, and Dirk Traphagen is the only candidate for the position vacated by Michael Parks.

In the General Support category, a BOCES capital construction project was responsible for the lion's share of increase in the one category, which stood out. A recent break in a buried steam pipe had a strange location under Employee Benefits, but that's how NY State wants it(!?) This expense will be recovered by state aid.

The budget has a 3.4% increase, not counting the debt service. That means that the taxpayers' share increases a little, since the increase of the levy is 3.8%. Mike pointed out that the rates have gone up 6% (5% in Cohocton) since 1992-1993 pre-merger rates.

Mike also mentioned that they will add an AIS position (also teaching 9th grade English). A curriculum director for K-12 will be responsible for a coordination of subjects all the way from K through 12. The first years are especially important in a child's learning, and it must be made as

efficient as possible with respect to the needs in high school. Special Education is increasing a lot in this budget.

So what are the options if the budget is defeated? It can be resubmitted for a second vote, but if that is also defeated, then the board must adopt a contingency budget, which cannot exceed the CPI + 20%. Based on 3.2% CPI, it yields 3.84% or approximately \$94,350 in cuts to stay within the contingency gap.

Among the questions asked was the number of home schooled students. It has declined significantly down to about 30. The number of students in parochial school is between 15 and 20, which figure used to be 70 or more before St Joseph's closed.

The graduation rate is about 85% in Wayland, which compares favorably with other districts, except Brighton, etc. The number of GEDs is about 4%.

The number of students per class is between 18 and 19.

Mike did not think that parent education would help the students who need it the most, unless, and this was expressed by one of our members, not Mike, the parents were "brought in at gun point." The good students' parents would come voluntarily, no doubt.

After a long question and answer session, we thanked Mike Wetherbee for his well presented and informative budget presentation. It looks to me that the school system is under good leadership.

Before business, we drew the 50/50, and we thank Janine Miceli for donating her winnings to the club.

Business

The Theater Group proposal resulted in a tie vote, 5 to 5. It won't happen, in other words. I may or may not send a separate account of what transpired before and after the vote.