

THE

PENDULUM

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NO NTA LAYOFFS IN PROPOSED 2021-22 BUDGET

BY DARRELL KUHN

Current Newburgh Teachers' Association members do not need to worry about losing their jobs when the current school year ends. In fact, 32 NTA positions are getting filled.

This is the plan in the Newburgh Enlarged City School District's proposed 2021-22 budget. However, the proposed budget calls for not filling 25.6 NTA positions that have been or will be vacated at the end of the current 2020-21 school year.

The total spending amount for the proposed 2021-22 school budget is \$293,207,684, an increase of \$5,775,083 or 2.01% from the current year's amount.

The tax levy, or amount to be raised by taxes, will be 0% again under the proposed 2021-22 school budget.

"I AM HAPPY THERE ARE NO NTA LAYOFFS," SAID MORAN. "HOWEVER, I WANT TO MAKE SURE THE DISTRICT IS FILLING ALL THE POSITIONS NECESSARY TO MAKE UP FOR THE LEARNING LOSS STUDENTS MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED DURING THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC. OUR STUDENTS DESERVE THE SUPPORT."

The proposed 2021-22 spending plan will mark the sixth consecutive year of a tax levy increase of 0% for NECSD taxpayers.

"I am happy there are no NTA layoffs," said Moran. "However, I want to make sure the district is filling all the positions necessary to make up for the learning loss students may have experienced during the

Covid -19 pandemic. Our students deserve the support."

Moran pointed out that the New York State Legislature did right by public education when it passed the state's own 2021-22 budget. For public education, the New York State budget instituted a \$1.4 billion foundation aid increase for the 2021-22 school year, which officially begins on July 1, 2021. The newly adopted state budget

also provides \$100 million in new funding for additional pre-kindergarten seats, rejects a consolidation of expense-based aids, and gives an expansion of costs eligible for transportation during the spring of 2020 shutdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This information is stated on the NECSD's proposed 2021-22 budget document.

Through the 2021-22 state budget, the NECSD for its proposed 2021-22 budget secured funding for another fiscal year through expense-

based aids, got some relief for transportation standby costs from the spring of 2020 Covid 19 shutdown, and is able to have a tax levy of 0%. This information is also stated on the NECSD's proposed 2021-22 budget document.

Voters within the NECSD will officially accept or reject the proposed 2021-22 budget on Tuesday, May 18, 2021. They will also get to vote for Board of Education candidates that day.



START TIME COMMITTEE WASTING NO TIME



BY DARRELL KUHN

All educators have seen it. A student walks into class in the morning, sits at his or her desk, and falls asleep. The teacher tries to wake the student up. The student then yawns, stretches, and drifts back to sleep and misses most, if not all, of the lesson.

Why is this happening, especially on the high school level? The Newburgh Enlarged City School District's Start Time Committee has learned from professional research that high school students perform better academically with a later school day start time. This committee is working hard to learn if starting the school day later in the morning is possible for all NECSD schools.

Zoe Matthews, a Newburgh Teachers' Association Representative on the Start Time Committee, said that the NECSD has the earliest high school day start time (7:07 a.m.) for students compared to neighboring school districts. Starting the day later would require a revised plan to transport students to and from the schools.

Matthews explained that the NECSD currently has three tiers of school start times. For each NECSD school, the start time depends on what tier it is organized in. There

are NECSD schools that currently have earlier start times than others.

"We have reviewed the current (school bussing) ridership in the district, and the percentages (of students riding school busses) for the morning and afternoon routes," said Matthews, who is an Academic Intervention Services Math Teacher at the Fostertown School. "The committee has selected and hired an external consultant to review the district's current transportation system and make recommendations. The committee has discussed the possibilities of all schools having a change in their start time."

The NECSD currently contracts out to companies to bus its students to and from the schools. Matthews said that the Start Time Committee has also studied whether it is feasible for the NECSD to own its own school busses for the job instead of contracting out for it.

The Start Time Committee's first meeting was on October 10, 2018. Three members volunteered to represent the NTA when it began in March of 2021.

NTA President Stacy Moran asked for more members to participate and four more NTA representatives were added to it. Of those four,

two of them are from middle schools and two are from the high school.

Eileen DiLeo, also an NTA Representative on the Start Time Committee, explained that any modifications to the current school day start times will impact all students within the NECSD.

"Pushing back the start times of all schools impacts the dismissal times of younger students, resulting in our youngest students being dismissed later than 4:15 p.m.," said DiLeo. "This gets them home at dark during the winter months."

Matthews said that many programs within the NECSD will get impacted by starting the school day later.

"Depending on the later start time, it could potentially impact athletics and extracurricular activities," Matthews said.

Matthews and DiLeo both said that the Start Time Committee has much more work to do to ensure equity for all of the NECSD's student scholars. Any change to the start time is extremely challenging and needs further review and discussion by the committee, they said.



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THURS 7am - 2:15 pm
FRI 7am - 2:15 pm

MEET STEPHEN AUFFREDOU: SUB CHAPTER CHAIR OF THE NTA

BY CAMILLE ALAIMO

You might have passed Stephen Auffredou in the halls of your building, lesson plans in hand. Stephen became a substitute for the Newburgh Enlarged City School District approximately 9 years ago after a lengthy career in banking and accounting. For the past two years, Stephen has served as the Per Diem Substitute Chapter Chair for the NTA.



Stephen remembers attending Union Grove Elementary as a child. He has fond memories of the 12 room schoolhouse and recalls being scolded for sleeping in class by a former superintendent, then teacher.

Supporting and engaging the NTA Per Diem Substitute Chapter has been a high priority on Stacy Moran's list of goals, since she became President of the NTA. The chapter is very important because substitutes have a unique set of circumstances that most faculty members are unaware of.

Issues substitutes face vary in degree and by building. Some common problems include securing a bathroom key, lack of access to Google Classroom and Promethean Boards, and changes of assignments after entering the building. At times discipline issues for substitutes can prove challenging in some buildings, and has at times, resulted in a substitute choosing not to return

to a particular building.

Substitute teachers in Newburgh are paid more than surrounding districts averaging between \$105 and \$125 per day. They also enjoy the benefits of a union contract including pay raises for long term assignments, emergency coverage pay, and extra compensation for assignments that are changed or cancelled. They also attend a paid orientation every year to be trained on many topics including the SAVE Legislation and the district's Code of Conduct.

As Chair of the Per Diem Substitute Chapter, Stephen frequently finds himself scouring the buildings for new, unfamiliar faces to greet if he suspects they are substitutes, as due to the nature of their assignments, there is no effective way of keeping track of new substitutes in the buildings. To help, Stacy Moran created a new committee of Substitute Greeters who assist new substitutes and help them understand the importance of belonging to a union and encourage them to join the NTA.

The rise in quarantine rates among faculty as well as fears of exposure to Covid19 has contributed to the shortage of substitutes across the district. Substitutes feel they are more susceptible as they switch between buildings. The NTA has worked hard these past 13 months to insure that the district is following all of the guidelines from the NYDOH and keeping members safe.

AS CHAIR OF THE PER DIEM SUBSTITUTE CHAPTER, STEPHEN FREQUENTLY FINDS HIMSELF SCOURING THE BUILDINGS FOR NEW, UNFAMILIAR FACES TO GREET IF HE SUSPECTS THEY ARE SUBSTITUTES, AS DUE TO THE NATURE OF THEIR ASSIGNMENTS, THERE IS NO EFFECTIVE WAY OF KEEPING TRACK OF NEW SUBSTITUTES IN THE BUILDINGS.

VOTE-COPE CONTRIBUTIONS NECESSARY FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION'S SURVIVAL

BY DARRELL KUHN

The fight to keep public education in New York State alive, well, and equitable for all is a massive and never-ending undertaking. The fight requires hard work, dedication, and a tremendous amount of money.

This is where VOTE-COPE comes in. In November of 2020, VOTE-COPE dollars assisted New York State United Teachers, the statewide public school educators union, with its lawsuit against State Governor Andrew Cuomo regarding his new power to withhold state aid throughout the current 2020-2021 school year. Many state public school districts were prematurely reducing their number of employees. This included the Newburgh Enlarged City School District, which was planning to lay off 43 Teaching Assistants in October of 2020. Due to NYSUT's political action,

these 43 Newburgh Teachers' Association members' positions were not cut.

NTA President Stacy Moran said that VOTE-COPE is NYSUT's and the NTA's non-partisan political action fund. It is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from union members and is used to support political candidates at the state and local level who support public education.

"VOTE-COPE strengthens our political influence locally in regards to Board of Education member elections and school budget votes," said Moran. "Locally, the NTA decides which, if any, candidates to endorse for the BOE because who sits on the BOE is always very important, but that is truer than ever for this year. They are responsible for keeping all of their employees safe as well as the students they serve. They also decide on a yearly school district budget that can affect all of our (NTA) members depending on how they choose to allocate funds."

VOTE-COPE financial contributions are taken from NTA members' paychecks every two weeks if they elect to donate.

NTA Vice President Matthew Scully said



VOTE-COPE helps at the state level to support legislation that is pro-union and pro-public education.

"VOTE-COPE money also helps boost NYSUT's advocacy

by the Committee 100, a statewide, grassroots network of member volunteers," said Scully. "The committee travels to Albany (the state capital) for political action to meet with local legislatures to discuss important issues. At the local level, we use (VOTE-COPE) money to send out postcards and street signs (to promote endorsed BOE candidates and school budget votes) as well as hold phone banks.

"Every year, NYSUT and the NTA look at and make adjustments to what initiatives to support," added Scully. "Without these funds, public school educators would lose every battle to the corporate interests who lobby against educators and quality public education. VOTE-COPE funds don't begin to compare to the private sector money used to promote an agenda to privatize public resources."

For more information on how to contribute or contribute more money to VOTE-COPE, call the NTA headquarters at (845) 562-8120.



NTA SPOTLIGHT

SPOTLIGHT ON MELISSA HIGGINS

BY CAMILLE ALAIMO

Here at *The Pendulum*, it is our intention to highlight those individuals who put forth exceptional effort for the welfare of all Newburgh Teachers' Association members and Newburgh Enlarged City School District students. One such individual is Melissa Higgins.

Melissa has been serving our NTA community for the past 19 years as a fourth grade teacher at Temple Hill Academy. Additionally, Melissa is certified as an English as a New Language Teacher and as a Literacy Teacher. Her most recent accomplishments include National Board Certification.

Melissa has served as the NTA Head Delegate for Temple Hill for the past two years. Her role as Head Delegate, especially during the Covid 19 pandemic, consumes a considerable portion of her time. Health and safety have taken the forefront this year. With the help of her NTA Health and Safety Building Representative, Myra Matos, Melissa has ensured that our workspaces are adequately maintained, socially-distanced, sanitized, and shielded (upon request).

Higgins is in the unique position of having to know the language in the NTA contract that affects both the elementary and secondary teachers as Temple Hill, along with Meadow Hill, is a K-8 school.

Melissa takes exceptional interest in our diverse student population.

She saw the need to seek additional training to further serve the needs of an ever-



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— MELISSA HIGGINS

increasing population of English Language Learners. As a result, Melissa invested time and resources into furthering her expertise to include an advanced certificate from Long Island University in English as a New Language. Melissa's passion for language acquisition was born partly from necessity and partly from seeing the benefits of incorporating new strategies into the regular school day. Along with her co-teacher, Josephine Giglia-Byrne, Melissa sought to elevate the content areas by making language more accessible to general education students as well. She believes that adding diverse cultural components to the class elevates the learning of all students.

Covid 19 brings special challenges to classrooms. We have all experienced a higher-than-usual absentee rate. "I am fortunate that 11 of 20 students are now in the classroom and being able to use content area vocabulary in conversation is particularly important for ELLs. Group work has become more difficult," says Melissa. We are all familiar with the challenges of gauging for comprehension, and encouraging students to mute, unmute, present, turn in,

and log on. Making and editing videos and designing lesson plans to fit remotely requires a great deal of time. Now half in person, half online instruction is an even bigger challenge. "I am grateful to NTA President Stacy Moran for fighting long and hard to get those Asynchronous Wednesdays included in our weekly schedules. Now we need to stand united to protect them because the district will keep piling things on," says Melissa.

Melissa, along with John Eitel, coordinates ER&D (Educational Research and Dissemination) for the NTA. The Summer Institute sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers serves to turn key professional development opportunities through the Newburgh Teachers' Center. Courses are research-based and geared towards adult learners.

In addition, Melissa's union work also involves the New Teacher Orientation. This includes monthly meetings with specific topics of interest to facilitate success for our new educators. Says Melissa, "The union is so important and I am grateful to our previous members at the very beginning who really fought hard to get all those things that are in the contract. It's important to all educators, especially newer ones, not to take the contract for granted. In the past, educators did not get compensated for course credits. You have health insurance, a prep period, and a lunch period because someone before you cared enough to fight for you. These were not gifts from the district. Educators fought long and hard for these benefits. Let's remember that Newburgh is the only district in the area to still have Empire as our health insurance provider."

In terms of the future of the NTA, it's really important to stand united. Says Melissa, "You don't just want the union when you are in trouble. I would encourage each member to do at least one union related thing, like join a committee or participate in the phone banks. The union is so much more than having somebody represent you in case you are disciplined."

