

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- NO SCHOOL on MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2005 in honor of Martin Luther King Day.
- HALF DAY KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS WILL SWITCH SESSIONS ON JANUARY 24, 2005.
- Progress Reports for the 2nd Trimester, if necessary, will be issued for the K-8 schools on January 21, 2005. Marks close for the second term at the high school on the same date. High School Report Cards issued 1/28/2005.
- School Committee Budget Workshops and Meetings begin on Thursday, January 27, 2005 at 6:00 p.m. at the Nashoba Regional High School, 12 Green Road, Bolton. Meetings are in the Media Center.

## Parent Forum on 05-06 Calendar

On Tuesday, January 4, 2005 at the Florence Sawyer School in Bolton a forum was held for all parents in the district to review and discuss plans for the school calendar for the upcoming school year. The parents debated over a number of issues and reported out the consensus of each table. Some of the prevailing concepts were:

1. To have a calendar that is more consistent
2. To have a calendar that had early release on Friday's
3. To have a calendar with fewer early release days

The group as a whole was split on the issue of starting before or after Labor Day and there was consensus that people didn't mind having the religious holi-

days scheduled as no school days. Teachers and Administrators are putting some finishing touches to a fourth draft of a calendar. Plans are to have that one available on the website next week on Thursday afternoon to give all parents an opportunity to reflect before the first reading on January 27th by the School Committee.



## Tri-Town Meeting 1/5/05

Lancaster hosted the January 5, 2005 Tri-town meeting. The agenda included preliminary town department budgets and the schedule of budget meetings for the school department. The Capital Projects definition accepted by the School Committee at its December 16, 2005 meeting was distributed to all town officials. I talked about a number of factors that will be budget drivers in the development of our FY 06 District Budget. They are:

- Teacher and Support Staff Negotiations**
- Transportation Contract**
- Health Insurance Rates**
- Charter School Students**
- School Choice Students**
- Enrollment**

### NEASC Recommendations

#### Capital Plan (For the Administration Building and Nashoba Regional High School)

On the revenue side there are potential factors that will need consideration as well:

#### Chapter 70 Funding (Will remain flat)

#### Transportation Funding (Possible Increase)

#### Circuit Breaker Funding (Will increase over last year)

The HOUSE I Budget will be released in the last week of January and we will probably have our first draft of the Cherry Sheets by early February. The presentation of my recommended budget will be on January 27th with an overview, a rationale, and the detail of the school requests. Subsequent meetings will have administrators presenting on those requests.

# BUDGET PREP

## M.A.S.S. ALERT ON FY 06 BUDGET

Tom Scott and Dave Tobin of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents have shared the following information with association members. House 1, the Governor's budget for FY06, will be released on January 26, 2005. The next day, January 27, 2005, at the MASS Winter Meeting in Marlboro, the Governor will be a featured speaker. I will be attending this meeting. The Governor has indicated that he will talk about House I and its educational content. He has also agreed to engage in a dialogue through comments and questions and answers. I will be sharing this information in my next newsletter and at the School Committee Meeting on January 27, 2005.

### Possible 2.5% House I Increase in Chapter 70

The Governor, meeting with the MMA (Mass. Municipal Association) on Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, did indicate that Chapter 70 aid would increase from \$3.18 billion to \$3.26 billion as reported by the Boston Globe. The great bulk of that increase will come in the form of

Foundation Aid. For those many school districts who are close to the foundation budget on required Net School Spending, MASS's latest estimate is for a 3.7% increase as the inflation factor for the Foundation Budget for FY06. When the Foundation Budget, due to enrollment and this inflation factor, increases greater than the town/city required local contribution to a district, then "Foundation Aid" would be provided to get districts to foundation budget. This should not affect our district. In the short term, the association is also pressing for some stability or minimum aid.

It is also expected that the "Circuit Breaker" to reimburse this year's excess special education costs (75% of amounts spent above, four times the foundation budget) will be close to fully funded.

It is expected that the Department of Education will release the Chapter 70 FY06

"Preliminary Estimate" the first week in February. That is expected to include allocation of local contributions among the school districts that each city and town belongs to. It is further expected that school districts will be in the second year of a four-year adjustment in that allocation of local contribution so that the percentage of allocation will, by FY08, match the percentage of the foundation budget for all school districts of each city and town.

### Other FY06 House I Aid

Lottery Aid is also expected to be increased \$100 million in House I. While the amount is above last year's H-1, it would be \$25 million above what is to be actually received with a late distribution during this year. "Additional Assistance", historic aid to 150 cities and town, would be level funded. Some towns would get an increase in lieu of taxes for state owned property within municipalities.

## M.A.S.S. Task Force

Tom Scott, MASS Executive Director, Gene Carlo, Co-Chair of the MASS Taskforce on "Finance, School Reform and Accountability" and Dave Tobin, MASS Finance, met with Governor Romney's Executive Office of Administration and Finance and the Governor's Special Assistant for Educational Affairs. This is part of an ongoing dialogue concerning years 2006-14. A Report is expected shortly and progress will be reported at the mid-winter meeting. The association is developing a vision for improving: professional staffing; instructional outcomes for all; management

flexibility where needed; and streamlined accountability with a capacity to measure "value added" progress; supported by adequate and stable resources. The "Taskforce" is focusing on both short term and long term objectives to improve school finance and provide improved "management tools" which will help improve student academic performance. The SJC ruling to be made on the "Hancock Case" in the next few weeks hangs over the decision-making capacity of the administration as it relates to financing schools.

# FY 06 State Budget



We anticipate the release in mid-January of the governor's budget request, usually referred to as House I. In advance of this the Board of Education finalized its budget request for FY 06 at its last meeting, giving us early clues as to what we should monitor as the budget process proceeds.

The following are highlights of the requests made by the Board For FY 06:

- Level Funding, Chapter 70
- Increase Circuit Breaker by \$14.4 million to fully fund the 75% reimbursement rate
- Increase Charter School Reimbursement by \$10.5 million to fully fund 100%/60%/40% reimbursements
- Establish Educator Database Program—\$1.5 million
- Development of Certificate of Occupational Proficiency—\$1.1 million
- Increase Student Assessment Program by \$8.3 million to fund pilot Value Added Data system, implementation of science and history tests and on-line assessment system
- Increase METCO by \$716,000
- Increase School and District Intervention by \$1.5 million to fund oversight and technical assistance to under performing schools.

The backdrop to this year's budget process is not encouraging. There is a projected structural defect in the budget of roughly \$700,000. This is the result of one time events and other budget strategies used in developing the FY 05 budget. Additionally, the legislature is faced with significant challenges around health care costs, likely to be the primary interest of the legislature.

We will also be watching for outside sections which may affect the membership, including any retirement proposals. We will keep you informed when House I information becomes available.

## FEDERAL BUDGET

The Congress seems directed to solve the \$400 trillion deficit on domestic funding programs. Recent budget decisions provided the USED a 1.6 percent increase resulting in:

- Title I—Added \$397 million to a \$12.7 billion program. This will result in further reductions to those who recently experienced declines in Title I funding.
- IDEA, Part B—An increase of \$513 million to the \$10.6 billion program. This brings the federal contribution to 19 percent, not the promised 40 percent.
- Title II—Teacher Quality—Cut by \$13.5 million to \$2.9 billion
- Title II, Part D—Education Technology—Cut by \$196 million to \$496 million

## Value Added Assessment

The Value Added approach to collecting and reporting data to assess student academic performance is growing in interest. The Board of Education has recommended funding in the FY 06 budget to begin the development of this program. Value Added Analysis begins by measuring the growth of individual students' performance over time. Looking at this growth over time allows educators to assess the impact of schools and programs on student learning.

Articles on pages two and three are from the MASS Superintendent's Report by Thomas Scott.

# OPERATION RECOGNITION Gene Dwinells

During the 1940's, thousands of young men and women across this country left high school and the comforts of home and hearth to serve gallantly in the armed forces during World War II. Their sacrifice ensured our freedom, built our county into a superpower, and shaped the entire course of history throughout the world. After the war, many of these veterans were not able to finish high school for various reasons, but led productive lives and built

our communities over their lifetime. In recognition of their outstanding standing contribution, The Massachusetts Department of Veteran's Services, through a program called "Operation Recognition" for WWII Veterans, is working with individual cities and towns to award full high school diplomas to qualifying WWII veterans. This is a small, overdue, gesture of our society's gratitude for the sacrifice these individuals made in the name of freedom.

Mr. Donald Eugene, "Gene" Dwinells expected to graduate from the Hale High School in Stow with the other members of his class on June 13, 1945. Instead, Mr.

Dwinells entered the service on March 19, 1945. Under the Operation Recognition legislation, some veterans of World War II who were unable to finish high school, may now be awarded their high school diplomas. Because the Hale High School is no longer operating and the Nashoba Regional School District is responsible for the education of the students residing in Stow, we may now honor Mr. Dwinells with his diploma from the Nashoba Regional High School.. Mr. John Smith, Principal of the high school, will award Mr. Dwinells his diploma at the school committee meeting on Thursday, January 13, 2005 at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Dwinells is still a resident of Stow.

## Finance Advisory Board

On January 5, 2005, the Finance Advisory Board met at the Department of Revenue Local Offices in Boston. The main focus of discussion was the use of the money remaining in the deficit bond as one of the revenue sources to finance the court mandated handicapped accessibility needs at the Nashoba Regional High School. The Finance Advisory Board approved the spending plan laid out and approved at our School Committee meeting in December. That

plan would have revenue from four sources:  
 Deficit Bond Remaining Balance  
 High School Construction Account  
 Extended Day Revolving Account  
 Foundation Reserve Pothole Money (DOE Grant)

We expect to put the matter out to bid soon and begin demolition on the bleachers early in the spring. The full scope of the project is to address the ADA violations

with the bleachers, concession stand, and the front ramp on the high school.

In other matters, the FAB discussed and approved the one time spending of Pre School Revolving Account money to pay for the addition of two buses. The District approved this back in October.

The FAB has not scheduled its next meeting.

## WEB Site Use

I have been very pleased with the number of people that have called or emailed commenting on the use of our website. I continue to want to make it the place to go for news and information about the District and the place to start regarding the schools that your children attend. One comment that has been heard on several occasions, and we now have been able to respond to, is the

*No School or Delay of School Announcements.* The District will be putting the message under announcements for the time being, but it will also be in the form of a banner with the announcement prominently displayed on the front page without having to click onto the site map.

I appreciate the use of the web site and appreciate the comments.

