

Sachem Legislative Committee Minutes

September 20, 2007

The Sachem Legislative Committee met on Thursday, Sept. 20, 2007 at Samoset Middle School in Library.

Welcome to: New member of Committee: Diane Ziems of Grundy Ave School Area.

Members in attendance:

Sal Nicosia, Chairperson
Michelle Gravino
Sandra Jones

Barry Seidel
Jeff Vinci
Shawn Hymms

Meeting began at 7:00 P.M.

Sal Nicosia presented an outline of the achievements of the Committee since its inception in January 2006.

a. October 2006 Public Forum held at Sequoyia Middle School. 10 Candidates attended the Forum. Candidates included State Assembly persons and State Senators and a representative of Republican-Conservative Candidate for Governor John Faso. A Q&A format was used. Those in attendance were given 3x5 cards to write down questions they wanted to ask a particular candidate and we obliged them by distributing the cards to the candidatures they were addressed to. Representatives from other districts attended the Forum and commented on how well the Forum was organized where each candidate was asked the same question to answer.

b. Ginny Fields, State Assembly person from the Fifth A.D. was a guest at our April 2007 meeting. She gave those in attendance an update on what was taking place in Albany that pertained to State Aid for Local Districts and estimates of how much we would receive. She candidly stated that we should not be too optimistic about how much aid Sachem School Districts would receive because of Spitzer's plan to give districts that needed more assistance from the State (Brentwood, Central Islip, Wyandanch, Roosevelt, would be given more while districts with a greater ability to raise taxes would receive less from the State. We had invited other representatives from contiguous districts to attend our meeting and expressed appreciation for our invitation. Meeting was held at Sachem North.

c. During the period of Late April and Early May, a letter prepared by the Committee was distributed to the Sachem Residents apprising them of the importance to Vote on the Budget. The

content of the letter also apprised the residents of the change in State Aid during the last 50 years. In the 1950's, NYS Government paid for 61% of the Local School Budgets and Local Residents paid 39% of the Budget from their property values. In 2005-6 school year, Local residents paid 57% of the School Budget and NYS Government paid 43%. Over 20,000 letters were printed and distributed through: Elementary School children taken the letter home, Civic and Service Organization in the Sachem Area were given copies to distribute to their members. All Fire Districts were given copies to distribute to all fire personnel, Business organizations were given copies to give to their employees and customers, Churches were visited to ask if they would place the letter in their respective Church Bulletins. We submitted copies of the letter to Our Place and Pennysaver News. The number of voters who participated in the School Budget and Board election was 6400+!

d. Sachem Legislative Committee representatives: Board Members Debbie Slinkosky and Robert Scavo and Co Chairperson, Sal Nicosia, attended a number of meetings held at the Middle Country School District held by a School Board Coalitions consisting of a number of districts contiguous to Sachem School District and even beyond our borders. Smithtown, Middle Country, Sayville, Connetquot, Longwood, Patchogue Medford, Mt. Sinai, Port Jefferson School Board Members were present during these meetings. Members of the Middle Country School District School Board were spearheading the coalition. A meeting of that Coalition will be taking place on October 3, 2007 at the Newfield High School Library in Centereach. Any Legislative Committee member is welcomed to attend the meeting which will start at 7:30 P.M. Senator John Flanagan, 2nd S.D. will be present at the meeting to give an update on doings in Albany at present and answer questions from those in attendance re the State Aid to local districts. Sal Nicosia will give a report on this meeting at the October meeting of the Sachem Legislative Committee.

e. Sachem School District attended a Educational Meeting held at Longwood Middle School in February 2006. Representatives from the State Assembly, Steven Engelbright, 4 A.D., Ginny Field, 5th A.D., Patricia Eddington 3.A.D. (John Eddington spoke on her behalf), Senator Ken LaValle, 1st S.D., John Flanagan, 2nd S.D. Timothy Bishop, 1st. C. D. and Steve Israel, 2nd C.D. were in Attendance. Numerous School Districts were in attendance accompanied by their Superintendents. Sachem Supt. Charles Murphy, Board Member Debbie Slinkosky, Sal Nicosia represented Sachem School District. a Q&A format was used and a moderator selected which candidate to field the question to. An observation made by many was that little was accomplished as to impressing the State and Federal Representatives how dire the circumstances were relating to need for more funding from the State Government and the Federal Govt. to pay for mandated items that have been added to local school budgets.

An interactive process was then initiated by Sal N. as to what the members in attendance felt should be pursued in the coming school year by the Committee:

- a. Hold a Public Form again.
- b. Invite State Representatives from our district to one or two of our scheduled meetings and have prepared questions to ask them relating to Financial Support, state mandated items that have put a heavy burden on local school boards to fund these items (testing, etc).

- c. Continue to educate the public on the importance of voting in May.
- d. Distribute flyers of information at School Events: Concerts, Sports Events, churches, civic groups, businesses, service organizations, schools in district.
- e. take a proactive role in the School Coalition that has formed and is seeking to expand its membership.
- f. Work with Sachem School Seniors to encourage them to attend our meeting and take a viable role in helping to bring information to the community, (National Honor Society members, Student Government, etc)
- g. Encourage our Sachem Residents to write e-mails, letters, make phone calls to our state and federal representatives relating to educational issues.

Members of the committee felt that the committee has great potential to make a difference in its effort.

Need for a Board Member or two to come to our meeting to give their input and help us bring to fruition our important goals.

Periodic articles in the School Paper that is sent to the Sachem Residents would help inculcate them as to the importance of their participation in this endeavor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sal Nicosia, Chairperson