

Mt. Lebanon School District
School Board President Report – May 2016
Lawrence M. Lebowitz

After months of hard work by the administration and my fellow Board members, tonight we will be voting on the School District's budget for the 2016-2017 academic year. As we discussed last week, we will be considering a budget which reduces expenditures by \$592,000, utilizes \$750,000 from our Fund Balance and increases millage by .38 mills, i.e., \$38 on a home assessed at \$100,000. If approved, this millage increase would be solely for our mandated PSEERS increase and would represent the smallest millage increase in the past five years. This amount would, by the way, be significantly lower than the Act One index amount of .57 mills as well as the maximum permissible increase (representing the Act One index plus allowable exceptions) of 1.03 mills.

I want to personally thank Dr. Steinhauer, Ms. Klein and the whole administrative team for putting us in this position which enables us to reach the "happy medium" of maintaining the excellence of our schools (which our community demands and our students deserve) while simultaneously running the financial affairs of the District in a fiscally responsible manner. It is, in fact, due to smart budget forecasting and planning that we hold a Moody's rating of Aa1, i.e., the highest for a School District in Western Pennsylvania. On top of that, and as we discussed in detail last week, we were able to pass this budget by maintaining the focus on

our students and, therefore, filling the currently vacant School Counselor, Campus Manager and Athletic Coordinator positions.

I also want to thank my fellow Board members for their hard work over these past many months. Our job has, in fact, been made particularly hard through no fault of our own. Instead, and as we have discussed at length, we really were “handcuffed” by the legislature’s inability to adopt a budget in a timely manner along with their ongoing difficulty in awarding us the Plan Con money to which we are entitled. For these and other reasons (not the least of which being the impact that these decisions have on people and their jobs), this is always a very difficult process and, in fact, the hardest decision that we make as Board members every year. Nobody, and I repeat nobody, likes to increase taxes. However, sometimes difficult decisions need to be made and, fortunately, we were able to reach a millage increase which, again, strikes the appropriate balance between fiscal responsibility and ensuring the best education possible for each and every Mt. Lebanon student.

Turning now to other news, and due to a “technical glitch,” tonight (as opposed to last week) I am pleased to present Forensics Awards to two Mt. Lebanon High School seniors. Specifically, both Suzy Bushman and Madelyn Rice are now here with us so that we can recognize their outstanding achievement of winning the State Championship in their respective events at the Pennsylvania High School Speech League State Tournament held at Susquehanna

University in April. Ms. Bushman won for Humorous Interpretation of Literature and Ms. Rice, for her part, won for Persuasive Speaking. The Pennsylvania High School Speech League was founded in 1961 with the purpose of stimulating through education competition, an understanding and appreciation of all areas of speech. The team is coached by Mr. George Savarese, and we congratulate both him and these students on this wonderful accomplishment.

Talking about wonderful accomplishments, and as I am sure many of you will agree, April and May are filled with activities throughout the District which showcase the many talents of our students. Just by way of example, in the month of April we had the following: (i) High School Orchestra Concert; (ii) Washington Elementary Snuggle Up and Read; (iii) Jefferson Elementary Art Night; (iv) Jefferson Middle School Jazz Concert; and (v) Mellon Middle School and High School Jazz Band Concerts. In May we have either already have or soon will have: (i) Hoover Elementary International Night; (ii) Howe Fifth Grade Colonial Day; (iii) Lincoln Elementary Spring Sing; (iv) the High School Percussion Concert; and (v) the High School Spring Sports Recognition Ceremony. I hope that many of you have either been able to attend or will be able to attend one or more of these great activities. Thanks to the students, their parents and all of the teachers/coaches who make these events happen and showcase the incredible talents of students throughout the District.

Continuing with the theme of tremendous contributions to the District, and as Dr. Steinhauer will discuss in a few moments, I want to personally congratulate and thank the teachers who are retiring this year and who will be honored this evening. All of us recognize the incredibly important role the teachers play in the education of our children. This is, of course, not limited to the academic component of their education but, also, everything else which goes into a Mt. Lebanon education. Like the children of several others on this Board (along with Dr. Steinhauer), my kids have had several of these teachers and have most definitely benefited from the energy and expertise which they brought to the classroom each and every day. Thank you for your service to our kids and our community.

Finally, it is hard to believe that this will be my final President's Report before the end of the school year. I want to wish everyone a great last couple weeks of the year (and best of luck to our soon-to-be graduating seniors) and a healthy, relaxing and fun summer vacation.