

Mt. Lebanon School District
School Board President Report – September 21, 2015
Lawrence M. Lebowitz

I am pleased to report that the school year has gotten off to a great start. Our students arrived for the first day of school ready and eager to learn, and our teachers were excited to welcome their students back to the classroom. Dr. Steinhauer and our administrators worked diligently over the summer to prepare the groundwork for a successful school year and . . . so far, so good! I will, by the way, be completing my visits to our elementary schools with trips to Howe and Markham over the next few weeks.

I would like to take a moment to thank Principal Friel and all of the teachers at Markham for another wonderful September 11th memorial ceremony. This was, again, a great way to both remember what happened on that infamous day and, at the same time, thank our local police officers, firefighters and first responders for the work that they do to keep all of us safe. I was honored to be included and, as is often the case, made me proud to be a resident of our great community.

I am sure I will have that same feeling on Sunday, October 11, at 2 p.m. when the District will hold a dedication ceremony and open house for the community to celebrate the completion of our new High School. The dedication will take place at the new main entrance on Horsman Drive with a reception to follow in Center

Court. The building will be open for self-guided tours throughout the day while our student musicians and choral groups provide wonderful entertainment. As I have said many times before, the renovation and new construction of the High School would not have been possible without the continued support and commitment of this community, our administrators and this and previous School Boards to provide an excellent education for our children. As a result of their cumulative work, we now have a 21st century academic, fine arts and athletic space that will serve the Mt. Lebanon community for years to come. I hope to see all of you there.

While celebrations of past achievements are always wonderful, we must also continue to look ahead. In that regard, tonight is an important “first” for our Capital Campaign. On the agenda for this evening is a \$100,000 “spend” of money that was generously donated to the Campaign by individuals who believe in what we are doing in this District and want to see it continue into the future. Thanks to not only these donors but everyone who has and will continue to make contributions which will directly impact our students and which would not be available but for their generosity.

In accordance with state law, each year the School Board is required to work with the Superintendent to establish goals for the upcoming year. At the same time, we look back to see if goals set in the previous year have been met. I am pleased to report that both

tasks have been accomplished, and Dr. Steinhauer not only met last year's goals but is eager to do the same for the 2015/2016 school year as well. Dr. Steinhauer's goals for the coming year will be posted on the District's website. We could not be more pleased with Dr. Steinhauer's work and very much appreciate his efforts on behalf of the District.

In this regard, one of the goals of both Dr. Steinhauer and the entire School Board is to achieve an appropriate balance between ensuring the best education possible for our students and the need to do what we can to minimize the tax impact on our residents. Tonight we will discuss an issue which will require us to once again try to find this "fine line." Specifically, and due to some excellent work by our Business Manager and administrative team, we have the opportunity to refinance bonds acquired in 2005 and, in so doing, save the District approximately \$3.9 million. The question, then, is what to do with this money. On one hand, we can take the money "up front" and utilize it for capital expenditures (including, for example, toward air conditioning in our elementary and middle schools). This would also serve to reduce taxes "down the road" when these same expenditures would otherwise require a tax increase. On the other hand, we can use all of that money to offset/decrease taxes imposed on our residents. Alternatively, we can consider some type of combination wherein we take less money "up front" (for capital purposes) and use the balance to reduce taxes

(in a lesser amount). We had a preliminary discussion on this important topic last week, and I look forward to more of the same this evening.

Finally, all Mt. Lebanon High School alumni (including several sitting at this table!) are invited back to the High School for a Tailgate Barbecue on Friday, September 25 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the Plaza at the back of the Athletic Building overlooking the Stadium. As hopefully many of you will learn, this new space provides a spectacular view of the Stadium and a perfect spot to watch the band's pre-game program before the Blue Devils take on Penn Hills. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased on line on our website or at the entrance to the Tailgate.

I wish everyone a great school year and a pleasant evening.