



Inside North Colonie

CENTRAL SCHOOLS



CONTENTS

OCTOBER 2007

- 2 Board Comments
- 3 Superintendent's Page
- 4 Vote Details; Financial Benefits; What's Next?

SPECIAL EDITION ANNEXATION ISSUE

Voters to consider annexation referendum on Oct. 11

RESIDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO VOTE ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11 FROM 9 A.M. TO 9 P.M. AT AREA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS AT GOODRICH SCHOOL.

On October 11, North Colonie and Maplewood voters will head to the polls to consider an official, binding referendum to annex the Maplewood-Colonie Common School District into the North Colonie Central School District.

STRAW VOTE GAUGES COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The upcoming vote comes after an unofficial, non-binding vote was overwhelmingly supported

by residents of both school districts in May. Seventy-one percent of North Colonie voters approved the straw vote while 88 percent of Maplewood voters gave their approval.

REASONS BEHIND THE ANNEXATION

The Maplewood School, housing students in grades K-8, has been experiencing double-digit tax increases over the past few years, and now finds itself at risk of losing instructional programs with no relief on tax rates.

During the summer of 2006, district officials began contemplating the feasibility of annexing Maplewood into the North Colonie school system. A Feasibility Study Committee (see article, right) was formed shortly after to determine whether instructional opportunities would be enhanced for all students at a similar or reduced cost to taxpayers by combining the two districts.

Maplewood and North Colonie already share a close working relationship and high academic standards, as well as proximity in the Town of Colonie. Nearly all Maplewood graduates enroll in Shaker

High School to complete their education. These students have been accepted and assimilated into our schools, contributing to the overall excellent reputation of the district. Former Maplewood students can be found among the school's class officers, athletes, and performing artists.

If the referendum is approved, the new district will receive \$30 million in Operating Incentive Aid over the next 14 years, and a major increase in state Building Aid. The additional funds are expected to stabilize future tax rates and enable the district to make needed updates and repairs to all of its facilities with little cost to taxpayers. Further, the funds will help maintain and expand instructional opportunities for all North Colonie Central School District students. ♦

FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXAMINE ALL ASPECTS OF ANNEXATION

A Feasibility Study Committee, made up of 26 members representing both school districts, which included students, teachers, local businesses, non-instructional staff, residents and senior citizens, was organized in November 2006 to thoroughly examine all aspects of reorganizing Maplewood and North Colonie schools through the process of annexation.

The committee met during a series of work sessions over several months, facilitated by consultants Daniel Porter and Lee Peters, to consider the significant financial incentives available to North Colonie and the challenges facing Maplewood.

"There was a sincere effort to consider the needs of both districts and treat everyone fairly and equally," said Shaker High School English Supervisor Anne Kuthy. "We had a very representative committee that thoroughly addressed a number of issues."

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]



PUBLIC FORUM

Wednesday, October 3
7:30 p.m.

Shaker Junior High School
Auditorium

PLEASE REMEMBER TO VOTE!

Thursday, October 11
9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Vote at your area
elementary school,
as well as at
Goodrich School.



Dear resident of North Colonie,

It is an exciting time in North Colonie! On October 11, residents will be asked to cast a "binding" vote regarding the proposed annexation of the Maplewood-Colonie Common School District.

In May, a non-binding vote was held and residents overwhelmingly supported this proposed annexation, which was recommended by a joint Feasibility Study Committee comprised of administrators, teachers, support staff and community residents of both North Colonie and Maplewood.

As you may know, Maplewood is a K-8 district and many of their 9-12 students already attend

Shaker High School. If this annexation is approved, Maplewood will become part of the North Colonie Central School District on July 1, 2008. Seventh and eighth graders of Maplewood will attend Shaker Junior High School in September 2008, and Maplewood Elementary will become the seventh elementary school in North Colonie.

For North Colonie taxpayers, the \$30 million in additional state aid over the next 14 years will allow us to continue and expand the superior educational opportunities provided to our students while at the same time maintaining a relatively low true-value tax rate. It is important to understand that we will need to continue to be financially prudent so as to not incur additional

expenses that we would not be able to support at the end of the 14 years when the additional aid amount will eventually be discontinued.

Further, we will see our Building Aid increase from 48 to 68 percent. This will enable us to undertake improvement projects identified in a 5-Year Building Conditions Survey at a significantly reduced rate, therefore, saving us substantial money over time.

I invite you to attend a public forum regarding this annexation on Wednesday, October 3 at 7:30 p.m. in the Shaker Junior High School Auditorium and urge you to vote on October 11 for all students of North Colonie.

Joan M. Hart, Board President ❖

FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMITTEE

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

Committee members discussed curriculum, tax rates, governance, transportation and tuition fees. They also helped provide local knowledge, problem-solve, review work of subcommittees and make recommendations to both districts' Boards of Education.

"The committee came together very well. Everyone had something to say, but everyone listened and took it to heart," said Shaker High School Secretary Carol Stearns. "The main goal was to do what's best for both communities."

Other committee members agreed, "The North Colonie Board of Education and administrators were very thoughtful," said North Colonie parent and business owner Tami Callister.

"There was an honest sense of caring on the part of North Colonie as to what our needs were," said Maplewood parent Kathy Dean.

North Colonie is expected to receive \$30 million in Operating Incentive Aid, and a significant increase in state Building Aid. The additional funds will help stabilize future tax rates, maintain and

expand instructional opportunities for all students and enable the district to make needed updates and repairs to all of its facilities with little cost to taxpayers.

Smaller school districts like Maplewood are struggling to stay open as the New York State Board of Regents and the federal government's No Child Left Behind legislation are increasing academic standards in the wake of declining state operating aid and increasing operating costs.

If the annexation is approved, the Maplewood community will see their tax rates decline, while retaining their school building as the hub of their community. This is significant considering the school community is currently experiencing double-digit tax increases and risks losing instructional programs with no relief on tax rates.

"If this [annexation] doesn't pass, I don't think we'll be in business very much longer," said longtime Maplewood resident and business owner Robert Rentz.

Although he's lived in Maplewood for 60 years and is a former graduate of Maplewood School along with his parents, siblings, children and grandchildren,

Rentz recognizes the need for change.

"I think it's [the annexation] going to be good for Maplewood students," he said. "They are going to get a good education as they're getting now—maybe even better."

"I don't think there are any disadvantages for North Colonie," added Kuthy. "We are not going to relocate students from their present elementary schools or overtax our junior high school with too many additional students, and our classes are not going to be overcrowded."

All conversations eventually led back to a central question: "Would instructional opportunities be enhanced for all students at a similar or reduced cost to taxpayers by combining the two districts?"

Ultimately, committee members agreed it was in the best interest of the students to move forward with the annexation process.

"It's a win-win situation for both districts," added Dean.

Following the meetings, the consultants wrote and presented a report to both school boards and the public on their findings. The complete report is available at www.northcolonie.org. ❖



■ RANDY A. EHRENBERG

Dear Community Members,

October 11 is a very important day for residents in the North Colonie Central School District and Maplewood-Colonie Common School District. I would like to take a moment to urge residents to vote on the proposed referendum to annex Maplewood into North Colonie.

Both communities showed their support in a straw vote held this past spring. The second vote in October is an official, "binding" vote that will take place in our district and at Maplewood.

In addition to both districts being wholly within the same township, we have developed a positive relationship between our students, our districts and our communities. Over many years, nearly all of Maplewood students continue on with their secondary education in the North Colonie school system.

At our graduation last year, I was proud to announce that 97 percent of our students who walked across the stage had earned Regents diplomas. But these are not just North Colonie students; they are already a combination of Maplewood and North Colonie students who have worked hard to achieve this wonderful academic result that our district has come to be known for year after year. These students have forged meaningful relationships with one another during their four years together at Shaker High School.

Throughout the course of this annexation endeavor, our students' needs, staff and community concerns have been at the forefront of this

discussion. We have strived to provide our communities with an open and transparent annexation process. Both districts intentionally wanted to move slowly and methodically with the feasibility study so that community members could voice their concerns, ask questions and give feedback at every stage. Mutual respect has marked the work at all times.

A major outcome of this process has been that the North Colonie Board of Education agreed to assure that the Maplewood school building would remain open for a number of years, something which was critically important to the Maplewood community.

The Operating Incentive Aid that North Colonie will receive is approximately \$30 million over the next 14 years. This aid will help the district to stabilize the tax rate, while adding and improving upon our academic and extra curricular programs. In addition, there will be quite a sizeable increase in State Aid for approved building projects. This aid will enable us to address infrastructure needs in our buildings,

at very little cost to taxpayers.

North Colonie always strives to do "the right thing." In presenting the community with the opportunity to exercise their right to vote, we hope to do the right thing for all of our students. Our residents will decide what's best for North Colonie and the Maplewood students who have been a part of our community.

We are proud of the Maplewood students who already play a significant role in the life of our school district. If this annexation occurs, we



look forward to enhancing the educational lives of students from both sides of district lines.

I hope you will attend the Public Forum on October 3 at 7:30 p.m. at Shaker Junior High School to learn more about the annexation. ❖

"NORTH COLONIE ALWAYS STRIVES TO DO "THE RIGHT THING. IN PRESENTING THE COMMUNITY WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE, WE HOPE TO DO THE RIGHT THING FOR ALL OF OUR STUDENTS."

-Superintendent Randy Ehrenberg



VOTE DETAILS

WHEN AND WHERE TO VOTE:

The vote will take place on Thursday, October 11, 2007, at all area elementary schools, as well as at Goodrich School. Polls will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

VOTER QUALIFICATIONS:

All voters must be U.S. citizens, age 18 or older and residents of North Colonie for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS:

Qualified voters who will be out of town or unavailable on the vote date should call 785-8591, or stop by the District Office at Goodrich School from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. to request applications for an absentee ballot. Applications for absentee ballots will be received until 9 a.m. on October 10. Absentee ballots must be received by 5 p.m. on October 11.

Financial benefits

While the North Colonie Central School District continues to be financially secure, the district will receive significant financial incentives following an annexation:

- Receipt of \$30 million in Operating Incentive Aid over the next 14 years.
- A major increase in state Building Aid, from 48 to 68 percent, for approved building projects.
- The infusion of Operating Incentive Aid coupled with Building Aid will allow the district to update its facilities to meet the demands of the 21st century without further burdening local taxpayers.
- The additional funds will allow the district to stabilize future tax rates and make needed purchases and improvements, such as upgrades to instructional computers and other equipment.
- Maintain and even expand instructional programs with the additional resources that will follow the annexation. ❖

What's next?

Should residents of both districts approve the referendum, Maplewood will be annexed into North Colonie on July 1, 2008.

Maplewood students in grades K-6 will remain at Maplewood while their seventh and eighth grade classmates move on to Shaker Junior High. As a good-faith gesture, the North Colonie Board of Education provided Maplewood with a set of assurances, including keeping the Maplewood School open as an elementary school for at least the next 7-10 years, with the goal being to increase student population at the school to a greater extent. Beyond that, the future of Maplewood will be determined by the Board of Education. A complete list of assurances is available at www.northcolonie.org in the Feasibility Study Report. ❖

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Audrey Hendricks, *Editor*
Mike Cavaleri, *Photographer*

North Colonie CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
91 Fiddlers Lane, Latham, NY 12110

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