

March 9, 2017

I recently retired from a long career as Managing Director, Executive Vice president and corporate Director of two related companies that have been engaged in the design, manufacture and sale of food service equipment throughout the world.

I will soon complete my thirty-sixth year, twelfth term, as a trustee of our school district. During that time I have been honored with being able to serve as president, vice president and an active trustee of the district.

My wife and I have decided to move into New York City later this summer and, as a result, I will not be able to stand for re-election to the Board of Education. Having decided to make this move and having finalized the timeframe, I told my fellow board members and asked for the opportunity to speak tonight. I thought that I should announce my decision in order to allow interested community members the time to consider whether they would like to join the board through the coming election process.

This has been a long journey for me, starting back even before I became a board trustee. I served as a member of a number of Great Neck school-related groups, including the UPTC and the board's Citizen's Budget Advisory Committee. Of special note was my service as chair of STOP, a group that arose in 1979 to oppose a plan to close two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. At that time the need for such an organization became apparent and a large number of Great Neck residents dedicated considerable amounts of their ability and their time to maintaining and enhancing the quality of our schools and the educational opportunities provided to each and every one of our students. Though we could not stop the closure of the Kensington-Johnson and Parkville Elementary Schools, we did ultimately prevent closure of North High School and North Middle School. Although the organization STOP itself dissolved, people remained actively and positively involved with our schools for decades.

Over the years, I have had the extreme pleasure and honor to be involved with so many people who, each in their own way, worked to improve the quality of public education in our hometown, our state and nation. We all were dedicated to providing an educational environment which delivered the curriculum and activities that provided the opportunity for each of

our students to develop and grow to their full potential. Our District was focused on this objective and has always been willing to adjust its methods to improve its ability to accomplish such a far-reaching goal.

In order to achieve a significant level of mastery, one of the primary responsibilities of a successful board of education is to develop and conserve a district culture which will attract and keep outstanding educators within the ranks of its employees. We have certainly been successful in doing this and, as a result, I have had the wonderful privilege to know and interact with so many great educators in Great Neck. This flows from our superintendent, through the superintendent's cabinet, school principals, assistant principals, other administrators, all of the other hard-working members of our educational team, and, of course, our nationally top-rated teachers.

So many issues have required board action over the years. I am proud of the success of many of our actions, am pleased with our transparency and our willingness to revisit decisions we have made and to make changes where warranted and, particularly, enthused with the quality of the staff we have assembled and the educational programs we have supported, developed and enhanced.

Considering the referendum, which was the subject of discussion earlier this evening, I must admit that I am very sorry that I will not be able to be on the board for the full process of making these much needed improvements. The board has faced a number of similarly difficult issues to resolve in the past and I have always been happy to have been able to contribute to the favorable resolution which has always been reached. Now it is imperative that others come forward to join in the work to maintain and enhance the solid educational foundation that the Great Neck public schools have always enjoyed. We are #1 in New York State and #5 nationally because all of the Great Neck community worked together to ensure that our kids have available all of the resources and opportunities which will enable them to reach as high as they possibly can.

Anyone who is considering running for the board or whom the public is asked to vote for must be aware of how a board of education should consider and act upon district matters. A board is a deliberative body which must review all facts, determine community and district thoughts with regard to the issue, and, then, undertake actions by consensus after such thorough discussion. Elected trustees must be open to different

opinions and work with fellow trustees to determine the best course of action. This openness is essential in the candidates whom you, the public, will be considering for this and future boards.

A school system is a very unique body and requires special attention continually to ensure that it is doing its job. This is so true because each child who goes through our schools, goes through each grade only once but needs the foundation of facts, experiences and skills provided by their teachers at each grade level to move on to the next level. A school board, and a school trustee, must provide community direction and oversight to maximize the success of the schools in achieving this goal. I believe that we have done this and, at the same time, have been open to criticism of things which could be done better and to new actions which could help to better achieve this goal.

I believe that such programs are in place in the Great Neck Public Schools. Current board members are open and supportive of positive actions. The urgent need exists for others to come forward and offer their services to the community, not on behalf of any special interest, but on behalf of all children. Also, there is an overwhelming need for interested parents and other residents to participate in district elections, in order to ensure that their support for public education registers where it really counts, at the ballot box. Every vote matters.

In the coming years, I will regret not being a directly involved participant in Great Neck Public School life. Our district will always have my attention and support. I, as you may know, have a grandparent's connection to the schools and will have such for a number of years to come.

I will not be far away and expect to return for a variety of events and occasions.

Thank you for all of the good things that each of you has done for our schools, our students and Great Neck. Thank you for the many kindnesses and consideration which you have always extended to me.

Larry Gross