

# Two board members (Continued from page one)

School Board members serve without pay. The terms of Diederich and Ranney are the only ones expiring this year. The two seats will be decided at the same time as the annual budget vote.

In another matter, the budget workshop at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 25, is being moved from the Clarence High School lecture hall to the auditorium.

"We would love to see people there and get some input on the tough decisions to be made," said Board of Education President Michael Lex.

Also at Monday's meeting, Clarence Supervisor David Hartzell encouraged parents and

teachers to contact him with suggestions for academic scholars the Town Board can honor before its meetings — much in the same way it has been celebrating the district's athletic stars.

"One of the things I am trying to do in the town is honor students from Clarence High School that have been outstanding," Hartzell said. "At the next board meeting we will have a student lead the Pledge of Allegiance with her parents."

"She is a member of the softball team and the women's swim team who just won the state championship — but I don't want to just limit this to athletics," the supervisor said.

Hartzell mentioned that the class valedictorian is an obvious choice every May, but having more input from parents and teachers would be helpful because academic stars aren't featured in the news as much as athletic ones.

"If there is someone that is spectacular at academics, we would like to honor them as well along with their parents because we know what kind of an impact their parents have," Hartzell said.

The next regular Board of Education meeting will take place at 7 p.m. Monday, March 18, in the lecture hall at Clarence High School, 9625 Main St.

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# Legislators (Continued from page one)

"We have had caps, cuts, adjustments and temporary Band-Aids. What we need is to finally, once and for all, align school funding with what it actually costs to educate our students."

Equity, mandate relief and reform were the major talking points of the discussion. State Sen. Mike Ranzenhofer said that while he hears the needs of school boards in his district, getting everyone in Albany to concur on what the right course of action is can be nearly impossible.

"When there are 63 senators and 150 Assembly members, it's sometimes difficult to get agreement," Ranzenhofer said. "We understand the importance of funding education; this year won't be any different."

Bankruptcy was also a hot talking point as some in the audience expressed concern that there might be no other option to address their insolvency.

State Sen. Mark Grisanti said he is looking at all alternatives to avoid having to travel down that path.

"I believe it's important to provide school districts with alternative solutions to raise money," Grisanti said. "So I sponsor legislation for districts to do other things; one of them is advertising on the sides of school buses."

"They've done it in other states, and in Colorado for example, they raised enough money not only to pay for all of their sports programs, but also to pay for all of their music, arts and everything along those lines."

Grisanti called the option a "creative" one that has shown to be effective and could lead to partnerships in the community as well as drive support for local business when they are paying to advertise on a child's bus.

Many district representatives wanted answers on mandate relief, noting that New York has more than 200 state laws that extend beyond federal education requirements.

Assemblywoman Jane Corwin said legislation addressing mandates exists, but it's unlikely to come to a vote.

She added that on every bill there is a spot that is supposed to be filled in as to how to pay for the

action being taken, but often it's either left blank or "to be determined" is penciled in.

"The problem is when you do put a number down, people see that and say, 'I don't know if I should vote for this,'" Corwin said.

Then the discussion turned to labor contracts.

The Triborough Amendment — a 1982 piece of state legislation that prohibits public employers from altering the conditions of an expired contract before a new one is agreed upon — was repeatedly cited by district representatives as a key reason they have been unable to keep up with the cost of running their schools.

"We cannot continue to give automatic raises regardless of a community's ability to pay," said Scott Johnson, Sweet Home Board of Education vice president. "And although our last contract increased the insurance contribution paid by the employee, it is nowhere near the average of the private sector or even that paid by state employees."

The legislators agreed and vowed to push for modifying the amendment to be more favorable to districts.

"That's why contracts don't actually get completed," Grisanti said. "Because when you automatically know you're going to get a step increase in raises, why would you bother negotiating a contract if you know you're going to get a raise anyways? That's a problem, and there needs to be some reform there."

Clarence Central Schools Superintendent Geoff Hicks was glad he attended the meeting but left — like many others — without many definite answers to questions facing his district.

"It's helpful to be able to ask face-to-face questions with our legislators," Hicks said. "Sometimes we'll be able to get more detailed information by meeting with them individually, and we're going to do that in the next couple of weeks."

"I think the major issues were brought forward, and the legislators provided some response, but some things we need to learn more about."

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## Enhanced (Continued from page one)

"For the time being, it was the best thing they could do," Kirisits said. "Someone had brought up blinking lights, like a school sign, which I thought ... would have been an absolutely best-case scenario."

"But they upgraded all of the signs, which is good, because there is much more notice leading up to the intersection."

Kirisits is also planning to make additional changes to the landscaping on his property to improve the safety for himself and his wife.

"One of my buddies is going to be helping with landscaping and is going to help us change our driveway around," Kirisits said. "We are also planning on adding 10 200-pound rocks on the perimeter of the property in case someone drives over the signs."

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