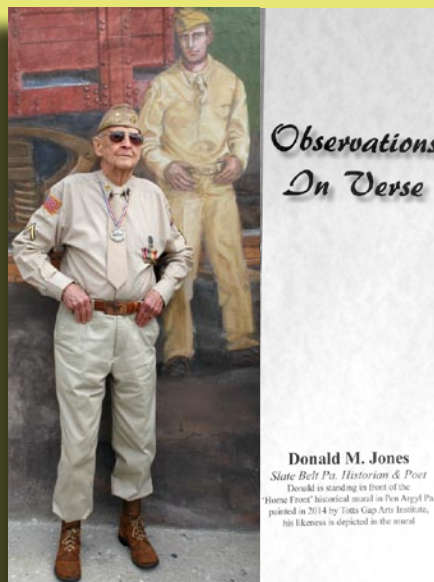


A Poem from the Archives of Donald Jones

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

SNOWFLAKES

Six-sided bits of perfection falling without a sound.
 Each a different pattern; like dainty lace.
 Dusting the ground gradually creating a blanket of white.
 Piling layer on layer smoothing out the terrain.
 Silent and still until blown about by sculpturing winds
 Creating magnificent new shapes.
 And sparkling like fire from bits of broken stars,
 The common snowflake is a beautiful creation of God.



School Property Tax Elimination Update

By State Senator Mario Scavello

PEN ARGYL - I want to provide constituents of the 40th Senate District with the latest update regarding the school property tax elimination fight in Harrisburg and what to expect in the near future.

Citizens across the Commonwealth voted November 7th to support the expansion of the state's existing Homestead Exclusion program, allowing for up to 100 percent elimination of school property taxes on owner-occupied homes. Passage of the referendum was the first step in providing this critical elimination.

We now need legislation that provides the revenue for residential school property tax elimination.

I have been working since before the referendum vote with Senate leadership and the Independent Fiscal Office to develop a bill that will provide 100 percent elimination of school property taxes on owner-occupied homes through an increase in the state personal income tax (PIT). My bill does not increase the state sales tax.

While I hoped my proposal would be ready mid-December, we are continuing to verify and finalize the revenue estimates from an increased state income tax to ensure there are no weaknesses in the bill. We have very few opportunities to "get this right," so we must make sure the bill is sound. In the meantime, I have distributed a co-sponsor-

ship memo to my colleagues to gain their support for the proposal.

After discussions with Senator Dave Argall, the prime sponsor of The Property Tax Independence Act, I agreed to hold off introduction of the legislation until members of the Senate were polled regarding their support of various elimination proposals.

Because of the limited session days in January, I plan to officially introduce my bill at the end of this month and hold a press conference at the Capitol.

School property tax elimination remains my number one priority and it is my hope that elimination of school property taxes on owner-occupied homes relieves the pain of those on fixed income and moves us toward full elimination proposed under Senate Bill 76, the Property Tax Independence Act.

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Sean Schmoyer, intern for the Blue Valley Times

New Superintendent

Continued from page 1

Mr. Schlegel said, "I was a state auditor for five years until 1992 when I became Business Administrator. For 26 years I have worked close with Dr. Haberl; he is a great man."

The process for finding any new staff member for the district is an in-depth process.

While Mr. Schlegel has been with Pen Argyl since 1992, he still had to meet all the qualifications needed to appointed superintendent.

"We wanted someone who had good people skills, an understanding of the Pennsylvania school laws, and a good financial background. Knowing things like budgeting, and they had to be able to deal with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and board members. The most important thing we do is educate children. So surrounding yourself with people who understand the education process is critical."

In his position as Business Administrator, Mr. Schlegel's day to day responsibilities are transportation, cafeterias, building and grounds, district wide technology, and athletics. He has a role in all committee levels, is involved in all litigation matters, and when Dr. Haberl is unavailable, he has made calls to call off school for snow days.

Mr. Schlegel said, "I am looking forward for a change and to be able to be more involved with the staff and students."

There is a long 26 year history for Dr. Haberl in this school district. The average superintendent's career is 3.5 years; the reason is often that school boards feel they can find someone better. Over 26 years in the district, that problem never existed between Dr. Haberl and the school board.

Dr. Haberl said, "I've had a great time working with them and that hasn't been a problem. No one has been luckier than me to work WITH a school board that cares as much as they do."

Dr. Haberl is leaving big shoes to fill, with all of his accomplishments it may cause some to worry that the same kind of hard work and dedication might be lost or be lacking. To ease worry, it is important to state that over those 26 years Dr. Haberl did not work alone, and most importantly one of the key people he worked with over the years was Mr. Schlegel.

"I was tasked with turning Wind Gap Elementary School into a middle school when I first started. I was principal for two years. We were one of the first, if not the first, school district in the county to establish full day Kindergarten. For over 10 years we have had it while some schools are just now getting their full day programs up and running," said Dr. Haberl.

"Together we both put together a new way to do budgeting. We made a sustainable budget that needed to work with the community and staff. Both the community and staff needed to make sacrifices and they did," said Mr. Schlegel.

A fact that may not be known is that the Pen Argyl Area School District has no debt.

"Think of it as parents who do not have a mortgage on a house. It allows them to have money to spend elsewhere. In our case that was the buildings and programs in the district. It frees up money to be spent elsewhere," said Mr. Schlegel.

A key player in this was Mr. Schlegel. Starting in 1992 when

he was hired as Business Administrator, Pen Argyl Area School District began working towards slowly lowering the amount of debt and saving money. No easy feat, and not something that could just happen overnight or over a single year.

Mr. Schlegel said, "It took us twenty years to get to no debt. We had to figure out how to complete projects without financing them."

While this may sound almost implausible the fact remains that currently our district stands with no debt. To understand how we got to this point, Mr. Schlegel's background is crucial.

Mr. Schlegel graduated with a degree in business from East Stroudsburg University. He went on to get the title of CPA, a certified public accountant, and then his MBA, the Master of Business Administration, at Moravian. Earlier one of the requirements mentioned that the school wanted was someone with a good financial background and who knew budgeting.

The superintendent needs to be familiar and proficient with Pennsylvania school law. This is also something Mr. Schlegel has experience with, after all, one of his many jobs was litigation, the processes involving legal action.

While Dr. Haberl has been working as superintendent for 26 years Mr. Schlegel history with Pen Argyl dates back 50 years.

Mr. Schlegel said, "I graduated in 1980. I did not expect to be here but it feels great. A and C-wing are still here but now they are connected by B-wing. My wife, my three kids, and my five siblings are all graduates. I have deep roots here; I lived here my whole life except for college."

Mr. Schlegel and Dr. Haberl have both seen the high school itself grow. At a point and time, the high school was both a junior and senior high, connected from one wing to the other by a tunnel that ran underground. Students would use the tunnel to move between classes and sides of the school on days where the weather didn't permit going outside.

"I remember one of the former guidance counselor took me down to the tunnel and turned off all the lights in it. Do you know the expression you cannot see your hand in front of your face? Well you it was so dark with all the lights off that you really could not see your hand in front of your face," said Dr. Haberl.

Both of them also remember the construction of the B-wing and how there was a small amount of backlash, but only due to one particular issue. Former alumni were worried that despite the renovations being an addition to the school that the district could possibly chose to remove the white bell tower that sits atop C-wing today.

"When it came to the B-wing construction so many people came out to support the bell tower. They said as long as the bell tower was not touched, everything that the district wanted to renovate was fine. It was about a sense of pride, that bell tower can be seen from bottom parts of the hill. It is even a part of our Alma Mater," said Dr. Haberl and Mr. Schlegel.

A key factor to the position of superintendent is the ability to work and communicate with the community.

"We were the first in the county to institute farmland preservation. Members of the community approached us and said, 'What do you think about this we really like the idea,'" said Dr. Haberl.

"It was important to the community that it kept its identity. In Plainfield, when a farmland sold its development rights it froze its tax rate. It helped to keep the identity of the community intact. So many schools districts used to be rural and they lost something with construction and development. We retained our identity, pride, and tradition," said Mr. Schlegel.

There is a sense of school pride and pride as a community that is still strong to this day in Pen Argyl. That pride and tradition will only continue to grow when Mr. Schlegel, a former graduate, becomes the next superintendent.

Dr. Haberl said, "It is extremely important that I work with the next superintendent. The nice thing is that if it was someone from the outside I would have to work with them for the half year before my retirement. In this case, I have been working with Mr. Schlegel for 26 years. He is a graduate and



Mr. Schlegel and Dr. Haberl

his kids graduated Pen Argyl; he has 50 years of history with the school district. He has been working as an administrator, a student, and a parent. I think it is really cool that a Pen Argyl graduate will be superintendent."

Dr. Schlegel said, "I am feeling very fortunate. This is a tight knit, hardworking, blue collar community. We have a hard working and dedicated staff. I am blessed to work with them. The one thing that helps me out is that I have built relationships with the community, the school board, and the administration already. We have such a great school board that does such a tremendous job. I understand what is important for the community and I think that bond really helps me."

In the Pen Argyl Area School District mission statement, our school promises through partnership with home community, that it is the school district's mission to promote academic excellence in a safe and nurturing environment to ensure that all students become lifelong learners and are able to successfully develop critical-thinking and problem solving skills, positive attitudes, and knowledge necessary to become productive and socially responsible citizens in a technology-based global society.

"We want to keep welcoming students and make them feel comfortable, that is one of the things we do so well. Students who feel more comfortable are better learners. Student achievement, career and college readiness are top priorities. Having a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere for students is critical, the more they want to be here the better they learn," said Mr. Schlegel.

"One of the main focal points come this summer will be the transition of the library into the media center. We expect construction to start as soon as the school year ends. We plan to strip down the old shelves and books to make room for an open floor plan consisting of three to four work areas, and the updated TV studio. Books will still be there in good number, but since most resources are online those books will have less of a physical presence," said Mr. Schlegel.

Dr. Haberl said, "I think we have everything in place, we have a well-qualified person to take my position and Jamie Achenbach will move up from Assistant Business Administrator to Business Administrator. What pleases me most is that there is a smooth transition in place, and I expect the school district will continue to do the great things it has been for the past quarter of a century."

This is a historical passing of a torch in Pen Argyl history. As a school and a community we are built upon legacy, tradition, pride, and spirit. Students are pushed and guided to be able to take the next steps and be the next leaders. It is because of the massive amounts of support, and hard work that goes in behind the scenes. In just the last 26 years, not just Dr. Haberl and Mr. Schlegel, but all members of the administration, the school board, the community, and the student body have put in tremendous work to get to where we are.

With such a smooth transition into a new superintendent come the end of the school year there is only the possibility of continued growth for our school district. Never has a torch burned higher, or shined as bright in the colors of green and white then when Dr. Haberl passes the torch to Mr. Schlegel.