

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

- If you are in town the Friday after Thanksgiving, November 26, 2004, are willing to help collect signatures on our petition to Governor Romney, and get our message out at the annual balloon parade in downtown Springfield, save the date. Further information will be provided.
- Kudos to the following Executive Board members who spent Friday evening, all day Saturday, and half of the day on Sunday, October 29th, 30th, and 31st, working on a strategic plan to organize the SEA membership in our effort to secure the necessary resources from the Commonwealth to bring an end to our crisis: Jose Bahamonde, Sci Tech; Mary Chamberlain, SEA Vice President; Marilyn Daly, Gerena; Mary Ann Dion Beal/Warner; Peter Dupuis, SEA Professional Relations; Susan Fielding, Balliet; Marguerite Foster Franklin, Brookings; Scott McGinley, Zanetti; Linda Pope, Gerena; Jen Stoganer, Warner; Ronnie Tillman, Indian Orchard; and Donna Kells Wagner, Springfield High!
- Kudos to MTA's Charles Baldwin, Bob McGuinness, and Joe Murphy for facilitating the work of the Executive Board during the weekend of October 29th!
- Teachers who have concerns and/or suggestions regarding the Step Up Springfield initiative should bring them to their S.C.D.M. team. When the S.C.D.M. team comes to a consensus on these issues, they should write a letter to the Superintendent and copy the School Committee. I have spoken to several teachers who have had concerns and some good suggestions of their own. I gave them the same advice as well as noted their concerns on my agenda for my next meeting with Dr. Burke.
- Do you heat your house, apartment, or small business with oil? The Pioneer Valley Oil Cooperative is an oil-buying cooperative that permits individuals, households, and businesses to purchase home heating oil at a reduced cost. The PVOC has made arrangements with oil dealers in Hampshire, Hampden, and parts of Franklin Counties to supply oil to members at a special price below the prevailing retail price. Contact Joanne Levenson at 413-545-0865 or levenson@stuaf.umass.edu.



The Springfield Teacher

The UNITY newsletter of the Springfield Education Association 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109
 TEL: 782-8300 FAX: 783-8812 E-mail: contact@seateachers.com Website: www.seateachers.com

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November 2004

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contact@seateachers.com

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sfornitorres@seateachers.com

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President's Message

The crisis we are in can be resolved! The resolution will take political action on the part of all of us. Many of you have stepped up, and, because of this, there are tangible results to our collective action. Results are evident when, just before the Rally, Senator Brian Lees appeared on "The State We Are In," a Channel 57 program, stating the unions would have to be willing to take pay cuts and cuts in benefits. Since the Rally, Senator Lees had been on the radio and is no longer saying those things. In fact, his statements on the radio since the Rally have been very supportive of the SEA membership.

Representative Stephen Buoniconti, now Senator-Elect Buoniconti, was quoted on the front page of the local section of The Republican. He said, "I want to start convening discussions on how to establish a distressed cities fund to get more money for Springfield and I want to work on reevaluating the state's current (local) aid distribution formula."

We have taken some good first steps in our campaign to bring economic justice to the members of the SEA. There is a lot of work to be done if we are to move the legislature to provide the city with the resources necessary to accomplish our goals.

There is tremendous support in the community for our cause. On Election Day, I saw the evidence. I had a clipboard with our petition on it. As voters were coming or going from the polls I asked, "Would you be interested in signing a petition asking Governor Romney for a fair share of state revenue for the City of Springfield?" The response was tremendously positive. Many people who merely overheard my question turned on their heels and got in line to sign the petition.

We are building a campaign to accomplish our goals. We are getting stronger every day because more and more of you are getting involved answering the call to action. We need to keep expanding the number of members, friends, and allies involved in this campaign.

A Letter To The School Committee & City Council

October 28, 2004

Honorable Charles Ryan
City Hall
36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103

Dear Mayor Ryan,

I am writing to all members of the School Committee and City Council to ask for your help in the campaign to save Springfield. I understand Governor Romney's legislation that created the control board has stripped you of your authority. This legislation has not, however, stripped you of your moral authority. We cannot allow Governor Romney's control board to further jeopardize our quality of life and our children's future. We deserve our fair share of revenue from the commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The time for fixing blame for Springfield's problems has long since passed. Now is the time for all of us who care about Springfield to focus on fixing the problem.

City and school department workers are not the cause of this problem. The past three city budgets have balanced at our expense. Some of us have not had raises in three years and have taken furloughs and all of us have had wages frozen for two years. Our ranks in the city work force have been reduced to the extent that even Governor Romney's control board has concluded that further cuts should not occur. Year after year workers have been asked to do more with less. In spite of these ever-increasing demands on city workers, they continue to answer the call for the citizens and children of Springfield.

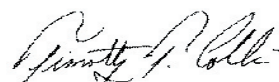
I ask you to speak out against any attempt by the control board to divert Chapter 70 funds from the school department to the city. In testimony on the Hancock Case, even Attorney General Reilly's office admitted that the state is not meeting the constitutional standards for public education for the students in Springfield who are not meeting the educational standards set by the Department of Education.

I am asking you, as our elected leaders, to exercise your moral authority. Pass resolutions calling for home rule legislation that would:

1. Give Springfield an equal voice on the control board (end our citizen disenfranchisement).
2. Take the authority to put the city into receivership out of the hands of the Governor and put it in the hands of the legislators (where it rightfully belongs).
3. Any action taken by the control board that by state law is irreversible will be revisited and reversible by our elected officials when the control board is no longer in existence, e.g. 32B section 19.
4. Call on the legislators to give the city a fair and equitable share of revenue. Chapter 70 money should not be counted because this money is restricted to the schools and the formula for the distribution of these funds is a direct result of the state supreme judicial court's ruling in the early 1990s that the state has a constitutional responsibility to educate the children of the commonwealth and must do it in an equitable fashion.

As a union leader and citizen of Springfield, I implore you as my elected leaders to exercise your moral authority and join us in the campaign to move the legislators to do what is right and just for the citizens of Springfield.

Sincerely,



Timothy I. Collins
President

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING DATES 2004-2005

December 2, 2004

Student Reps. 7:00 p.m. (Ante-Rm.)
Regular Session 7:30 p.m.
City Hall Rm. 220

December 16, 2004

Working Session 7:00 p.m.
School Dept.
Board Rm.

January 6, 2005

Speak Out 7:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting 7:30 p.m.
City Hall Rm. 220

January 20, 2005

Working Session 7:00 p.m.
Central High

February 10, 2005

Student Reps. 7:00 p.m.
(Ante-Rm.)
Regular Session 7:30 p.m.
City Hall Rm. 220

March 3, 2005

Middle School 7:00 p.m.
Reps.
Regular Session 7:30 p.m.
City Hall Rm. 220

March 24, 2005

Working Session 7:00 p.m.
High School
of Commerce

April 7, 2005

Student Reps. 7:00 p.m. (Ante-Rm.)
Regular Session 7:30 p.m.
City Hall Rm. 220

April 28, 2005

Chapter 74 7:00 p.m.
Vocational Putnam High
Committee

May 12, 2005

Speak Out 7:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting 7:30 p.m.
City Hall Rm. 220

May 26, 2005

Student Reps. 7:00 p.m.
Working Session 7:30
Sci-Tech

June 2, 2005

Retiree Recognition
7:00 p.m.
Regular Session Immediately
Following
Reception
PD Center

June 16, 2005

Working Session 7:00 p.m.
PD Center



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funds be directed to benefit the 26,000 students in the Springfield Public Schools.

The SABIS contract has allowed the company to take in 12 percent of the school's total tuition income in license and management fees in return for limited services rendered the school. These fees have risen from \$1.24 million for the 2002 school year to more than \$1.34 million in 2004.

To put SABIS's charges in a broader perspective, the \$6.75 million the company has taken in over the past three years represents close to 20 percent of the city's entire indebtedness. If the Springfield Finance Control Board is seeking to rollback wages for municipal employees, it cannot sustain public credibility without reviewing the lucrative SABIS contract as well.

It should be noted that this contract – and previous agreements dating to 1995 – were approved by the state Board of Education with no competitive bids. Public school districts are, of course, subject to the extensive provisions of Chapter 30B, intended to ensure that the public obtains services at the lowest reasonable price and, as the courts have ruled, to eliminate “favoritism and corruption as factors in the award of public contracts.”

Certainly, the approval of no-bid contracts by the Board of Education, chaired as it is by a partner in a venture capital firm that underwrites the startup of charter schools, raises the question of whose interests are being put first: corporate managers or the public.

The failure to adhere to the public bid laws has been a concern of the state's Inspector General for at least five years. In his 1999 report “A Management Review of Commonwealth Charter Schools” the Inspector General urged that charter schools “be required to use the competitive procedures of M.G.L. c.30B.”

In a subsequent report, “SABIS International Charter School: Management Issues and Recommendations,” the Inspector General detailed a number of troubling aspects of the school's management agreement in Springfield, noting particularly that the contract would “significantly increase (the company's) potential compensation while eliminating the school's ability to invest in programs and operations.”

(The State Auditor also raised numerous concerns about SABIS' management fees and sometimes vague contractual obligations, particularly at its Somerville Charter School, in a 2001 report “On the Activities of the Department of Education's Administration of the Charter School Program.” The school's board of trustees has since terminated the company's contract.)

As part of the city's charter school costs, SABIS's charges are, essentially, deducted from Springfield's state education aid. Striking the contract provision allowing the company to take “budget surplus” and reallocating those public funds to the city would have saved an average of more than \$950,000 annually since 2002 and could have spared the public schools from making hundreds of painful cuts. There is a good reason to believe that more savings could be realized by renegotiating SABIS's fees and by putting the contract out for competitive bid.

In the interest of the financial health of the city and well being of its public schools, we urge the Financial Control Board to initiative a review of the SABIS management contract forthwith.

With regards,

Paul Dunphy
Policy Analyst

Addresses of School Committee & City Council Members

Please write or call the School Committee and City Council members to ask for help in the campaign to save Springfield.

School Committee

Honorable Charles V. Ryan Jr.
City Hall
36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103
787-6100

Thomas Ashe
45 Rencelau Street
Springfield, MA 01118
739-5866

Nicholas Fyntrilakis
389 Trafton Road
Springfield, MA 01118
782-2281

Marjorie Hurst
60 Brickett Street
Springfield, MA 01109
782-3520

President
Domenic Sarno
109 Carroll Street
Springfield, MA 01108
Office - 787-6170
Home - 734-1173

Vice President
Rosemarie Mazza-Moriarty
95 Osborne Terrace
Springfield, MA 01104
Office - 787-6170
Home - 781-3908

William Foley
221 Wildwood Circle
Springfield, MA 01118
Office - 787-6170
Home - 783-2201

Daniel Kelly
301 Plumtree Road
Springfield, MA 01118
Office - 787-6170
Home - 782-6588

Angelo Puppolo Jr.
44 South Shore Drive
Springfield, MA 01118
Home - 782-5862

Jennifer Dugan Murphy
144 Washington Road
Springfield, MA 01108
731-8545

Antonette Pepe
108 Kerry Drive
Springfield, MA 01118
783-8593

Kenneth Shea
120 Bridle Path Road
Springfield, MA 01108
783-2811

City Council Members

Timothy J. Rooke
50 Overlook Drive
Springfield, MA 01118
Office - 787-6170
Home - 747-1825

Jose Tosado
22 Birch Glen Drive
Springfield, MA 01129
Office - 787-6170
Home - 782-1949

Kateri Walsh
42 Magnolia Terrace
Springfield, MA 01108
Office - 787-6170
Home - 781-8042

Bud Williams
71 Joanne Road
Springfield, MA 01119
Office - 787-6170
Home - 783-9592

WHAT'S OUR UNION DOING FOR US?

Mary Chamberlain

The Springfield Crisis: Your Dues Dollars at Work

Some of the feedback from the October school visits was the continuous request for internal SEA communication concerning the crisis. It is intended that this monthly article be a part of the solution in filling the communication gap. As this article articulates the actions taken during this crisis, it is necessary to realize that any active involvement or resources provided translates into **your dues dollars at work**.

NEA:

- Ed Sullivan, Executive Director-Treasurer of the MTA, has applied to NEA for additional monies to help out the Springfield Education Association during this time of crisis.

MTA:

- The MTA Executive Committee and Board of Directors voted to make Springfield their top priority this year. This action sanctions the availability of any MTA resource needed by the SEA.
- MTA lawyers are working on the wage freeze court case.
- As reported in the October issue, Ed Sullivan, Executive Director-Treasurer of the MTA and Charles Baldwin, MTA UniServe Representative, Tim Collins and MTA President, Cathy Boudreau, and Mary Chamberlain and MTA Vice-President, Anne Wass, visited many schools to get feedback about the current crisis.
- Ed Sullivan, Anne Wass, and Charles Baldwin met with Tim Collins and Mary Chamberlain several times to discuss the feedback from the school visits.
- MTA mailed postcards to all Hampden county teachers, encouraging them to attend the Rally on October 15.
- Ed Sullivan, Cathy Boudreau, and Anne Wass attended the Rally as well as the members of the MTA Executive Committee.
- MTA Communication specialists, Bob Duffy and Jerry Spindel, videotaped the Rally and wrote the article in MTA Today about the Springfield Rally.
- Cathy Boudreau, Ed Sullivan, and Anne Wass met with Tim Collins, Mary Chamberlain, and Charles Baldwin at the MTA Auburn office to continue discussions about the Springfield crisis. MTA lawyer, Sandra Quinn, attended to update everyone on the lawsuit about the wage freeze and other legal issues.
- MTA Board of Directors voted to send the petition to all local MTA presidents for signature collection in their districts.
- Communication specialists, Bob Duffy and Jerry Spindel, have been assigned to work on the Springfield crisis as needed.
- Richard Sanders, a professional organizer, has been hired by MTA to work on the Springfield crisis.
- MTA's Center for Educator Quality and Professional Development is working with a Springfield school on the Priority Schools Initiative. This initiative works with schools that have been declared underachieving.

SEA's internal crisis coordination and organization:

- Citywide Coalition: Since the Rally, Tim Collins continues to meet with the Coalition to plan the next steps for the coalition. Tim recently met with all of the presidents of all of the city unions. Tim also met

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Help From Across the State

Paul Dunphy, Policy Analyst from Citizens for Public Schools in Boston, recently wrote this letter to Alan LeBovidge, Chairperson of the Springfield Control Board. Thank you Paul and the Citizens for Public Schools for helping us in our cause.

The SEA sent a copy of this letter to each member of the School Committee, City Council, and State Senators and Representatives who represent Springfield.

CITIZENS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

18 Tremont Street
Boston, MA 02108
617.227.3000

October 25, 2004

Alan LeBovidge
Chair, Springfield Finance Control Board
c/o Mass. Department of Revenue
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Commissioner LeBovidge,

In an effort to address the financial challenges facing Springfield you have enumerated more than a half dozen recommendations to increase revenue or reduce expenditures, ranging from aggressively collecting back taxes to cutting take-home pay for municipal employees. Citizens for Public Schools would like to advance an additional proposal for the board's consideration.

We believe the taxpayers and the public school children of Springfield would be well-served if the multi-million dollar, no-bid contract for operating the SABIS International Charter School were renegotiated. The management and license fees levied by SABIS, Inc., doing Business as Springfield Education Management, could be reduced, and the contract provision that allowed SEM to take any so-called "budget-surplus" at the close of the school year could be removed. We believe the city would further benefit if the contract were subject to competitive bidding, as is the procurement of goods and services by public schools.

In the past three years, alone, SABIS, Inc. has taken more than \$2.86 million in budget surplus, and almost \$3.9 million in management fees – a total of more than \$6.75 million – even as municipal services have been decimated and as children in the Springfield Public Schools have seen their class sizes increased, beneficial programs eliminated, and hundreds of teachers forced out of work.

By definition, "budget surplus" is money not needed to run a program or school. When a municipal department has a year-end surplus, the dollars are returned to the general fund, not dispensed to management or awarded to investors. Can you imagine the outrage if the superintendent of schools or the city's teachers had a provision in their contract allowing them to take any unspent school department funds at the close of a year?

SABIS is being rewarded for not spending education dollars on education. Under the terms of this contract, the fewer tax dollars the company spends on its charter school, the more money it puts in its pocket. According to the school's financial statements, SABIS took \$1.85 million in "surplus" in 2002, \$422,000 in 2003 and almost \$586,000 in 2004. Responsible fiscal management requires that this abuse be ended, and surplus

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The fifth annual “Therapies in the School Conference” will be held on December 9 and 10, 2004 in Westboro, MA from 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Concurrent afternoon sessions on day one deal with topics like management of spasticity, autism and communication disorders, and speech and language best practices. Day two topics include the IDEA, fitness for special needs students, occupational therapy, storytelling in language intervention, and medication management of ADHD, ADD, LD, and other challenges. The fee is \$425 and must be received by November 24, 2004. Contact Educational Resources at 508-359-6533 or fax 508-359-2959.

The Bureau of Education and Research is hosting “Powerful Discipline Strategies That Reduce Behavior Problems” (Grades 6-8) on December 2, 2004 in Hartford, CT and December 3, 2003 in Boston, MA. The conference will address topics like strategies for reducing behavior problems, how to assist students to assume responsibility for their own behavior, creating efficient discipline plans. In addition, a discipline handbook will be provided. To register, call 800-735-3503 or register online at www.ber.org.

Members, who apply for professional development funds and wish to be reimbursed for expenses in a timely fashion, should make sure that the submitted paperwork includes an Application, the Request for Payment form, and documentation of each expense for which you want money. Remember that both required forms and the guidelines are available online at our web site, www.seateachers.com. Your cooperation and attention to the requirements make our job and your reimbursement quicker.

The Professional Development Committee wishes you a Happy Thanksgiving.



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FIVE SATURDAYS

December 4, 11, 18, 2004
January 8, 22, 2005

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(413) 596-3309

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- with Pioneer Valley Project representatives.
- The SEA Executive Board has been meeting weekly as the Crisis Committee.
- The Crisis Planning Subcommittee has been meeting on Wednesdays to plan SEA's next steps. Thank you to the following people who have stepped up for us: Peter Dupuis-SEA, Peg Fitzpatrick Homer, Sharyn Kakley-Homer, Kathy Mallett-Boland, Scott McGinley-Zanetti, Jennifer Stogner Warner, Ronnie Tillman Indian Orchard, Susan Triolo-Indian Orchard, and Chris Williams-Ells. Tim Collins, Mary Chamberlain, and Charles Baldwin also attended.
- Both the Crisis Committee and the Crisis Planning Subcommittee have been using the feedback from the October school visits.
- Two sessions were held on November 8 and 9 to train Association Reps and other interested members how to organize their individual schools. These teachers are part of the cadre of crisis coordinators. November 18: The Crisis Committee will roll out the strategic plan to the crisis coordinators and Association Representatives who attend the meeting.

WAGE FREEZE UPDATE

One of the major frustrations currently affecting SEA members is the pay freeze. We are in our second year of being denied the step and column raises promised in our Contract. We are, however, making progress to secure the step and column increases.

The freeze began during Mayor Albano's administration, is continuing during Mayor Ryan's term, and now, Governor Romney's Financial Control Board is perpetuating the wage freeze. So, we are dealing with a new set of adversaries in a situation that does not have any precedent.

Our MTA attorneys are continuing to pursue a legal reversal of the wage freeze. In October, MTA attorney Sandra Quinn deposed Superintendent Burke. Under oath, Superintendent Burke testified that, in the 2004 – 2005 budget, he has the money to pay last year's and this year's step and column raises (money to end the wage freeze).

Another important factor in ending the freeze is the SEA's request for arbitration to resolve the grievance about the failure to pay the step and column raises. Resolving the arbitration is important because of its relevance to the court litigation. If the court finds that the manner in which the wage freeze was implemented violated the law, then we need a mechanism to force the payment of the step and column raises. The arbitrator's ruling is that mechanism. At this time, both sides, the SEA and Governor Romney's Financial Control Board, have agreed to arbitration. We are working to find a mutually acceptable arbitrator and set a date for the arbitration hearing (Attorney Sandra Quinn is representing the SEA in the arbitration process).

We are making progress. It is glacially slow and not at all visible to all of you who continue your dedication to students while in a situation that seems as if there is no end in sight, but there is.

Happy Thanksgiving