

**SPECIAL EDITION  
Newsletter**



October 2007

## **An Open Letter to the Brighton School Community**

As your elected school officials, we have decided to join our colleagues in other school districts across Monroe County in issuing a Special Edition Newsletter to our constituents. While school budget mailings usually occur in the spring, this year the threat of losing significant revenue from Monroe County beginning as early as January 2008 has us concerned. We believe it is our duty to make certain our constituents understand the facts of the current controversy being played out in the media about the proposed "F.A.I.R. Plan." This newsletter will lay out those facts for members of the Brighton school community specifically.

We have also joined our colleagues on school boards across Monroe County in a lawsuit to stop the county's proposed reduction of sales tax revenue sharing with schools. While we believe that is absolutely the right thing to do, we also recognize that joining that suit alone will not solve the problems this situation presents us as a Board. The loss of revenue, even while the lawsuit is underway, will have real short and long-term impact.

We hope you share our concern and will want to learn more about the impact of the F.A.I.R. Plan on our schools. We invite you to join us for a special discussion of the issues surrounding the county's F.A.I.R. Plan during our regularly scheduled meeting of November 27. We are working with the PTSA to create an opportunity for call-in questions, and will televise the discussion live on Channel 12.

We hope you will read this Special Edition Newsletter carefully, participate in our discussion on November 27, and feel free to contact our Superintendent, our County Legislator, or any of us with any questions you may have about this issue.

Thank you for sharing our concern about the impact the F.A.I.R. Plan would have on Brighton school programs and budget.

Your Board of Education

- Dr. Marvin Sachs, *President*
- Martha Sciremammano, *Vice President*
- Rome Celli
- Julene Gilbert
- Mark Kokanovich
- Linda Morrison
- Dr. Morton Stein

# Questions and Answers about the impact of the Monroe County F.A.I.R. Plan

## **Q: How much money is at stake for Brighton Schools in the F.A.I.R. Plan?**

**A:** The proposal calls for a reduction of sales tax sharing with suburban schools of 50%. In 2006-07 we received \$2,363,227 in sales tax sharing from Monroe County. That represented roughly 4% of our budget. If we lose 50% of those funds, we will not receive \$1,181,614 we otherwise would have planned on for next year's budget, and we will lose half of that, or \$590,807 in our *current year* budget, money we already planned to receive in the budget voters here approved last May.

## **Q: Why is there an immediate current year impact?**

**A:** The County budget cycle runs on a calendar year basis and their new budget, yet to be released in full, will begin on January 1, 2008. School budgets run July 1 to June 30. The current school year budget was developed and approved in the spring of 2007, and budgeted sales tax revenue of \$2.25 million, a quarter of which we would not see.

## **Q: Will the current year impact result in mid-year reductions in Brighton?**

**A:** We do not anticipate layoffs or drastic program cuts this spring. However, we will need to be more conservative with our expenditures than our budget would allow, and we will have less money left in fund balance at the end of our current year to apply to reducing next year's taxes.

## **Q: If we don't need to cut programs to kids today, what's the big deal?**

**A:** Good school budgeting involves long-term planning. In Brighton we have been consistently conservative with our budgets, have created reserves from which we fund capital and technology purchases annually (with voter approval), and have buffered the taxpayer from drastic swings in the tax rate by using appropriated fund balance each year. Losing 1% of our revenue between January and June 2008 will limit our ability to continue those sound practices and impact what we can hope to have available for those purposes at the end of this year.

## **Q: Won't state aid to schools make Brighton whole?**

**A:** There is no proposal from the Governor's office regarding the aid we are likely to receive for school year 2008-09. That figure usually becomes available in January.

## **Q: What about the record state aid increases last year?**

**A:** Brighton received a million dollars more in state aid than we had planned when we first prepared the 2007-08 budget. At the end of the state budget process, when it became clear that money would be coming to us, we applied it to the proposed tax levy and reduced that from a planned 4.9% increase to a 2.9% increase in time for the budget vote. The record state aid increases alluded to in the County's F.A.I.R. Plan were already part of school budgets approved by voters last May and enacted beginning this past July. They are no longer available to use to counter the lost revenue the county proposes. In some schools, additional state aid was used to support specific programs to improve student performance. In Brighton, because our student performance is so strong, the state aid came without strings attached. Consequently, we used it to reduce the tax impact of our current budget. That money has already been returned to local taxpayers.

## **Q: What impact will this have on the 2008-09 school budget and programs?**

**A:** The 2008-09 school budget process is just getting underway. Even though we are convinced that we will prevail in the courts, we likely will not have access to these funds until all appeals are processed. That will force us to be much more conservative in the expenditures we plan for the school year ahead. It will have a chilling effect on program growth and improvements, and will cause us to consider program reductions or tax increases.

**Q: Will Brighton school taxes go up as a result of the F.A.I.R. Plan if it is imposed?**

**A:** Either school taxes will need to be increased to cover this shortfall in next year's budget planning, or programs and services to children and families offered by the schools will need to be reduced by \$1.2 million, or some combination of the above. There simply is no way to absorb the proposed loss of 2% of our total revenue. If the school district chose to keep all programs whole and pass the cost of this revenue loss on to taxpayers, it would result in a 2.8% increase in the tax levy before any other additional costs for next year's budget are considered. Given contractual mandates, employee benefits, and energy costs, holding the line at current year expenditures would require cuts in program.

**Q: Is the F.A.I.R. Plan a done deal?**

**A:** The F.A.I.R. Plan is a proposal offered by the County Executive. The Monroe County budget for 2008 has not yet been released or approved by the County Legislature. That will likely happen in early December.

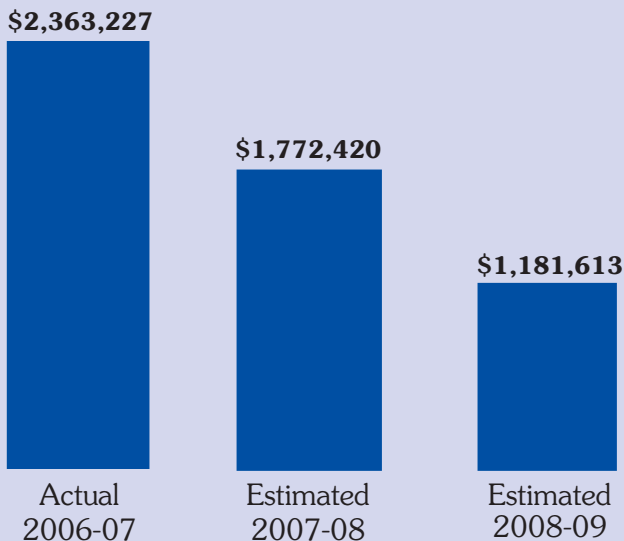
**Q: What can concerned citizens do?**

**A:** Citizens should voice their concerns to the County Executive and to the County Legislature. They have not yet made final their budget for 2008 and could make other choices than to pass the County's budget problems on to schools. Additionally a county-wide petition drive has been organized. See the clip-out section for details.

**Q: Is there an opportunity to discuss the impact of F.A.I.R. with the School Board?**

**A:** Yes. A special joint meeting of the Brighton PTSA and Board of Education is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. Tuesday November 27 as part of the Board's regular meeting schedule. All parents and community members are invited to attend. The meeting will be aired live on Channel 12 and the PTSA will have a call-in number available to viewers, similar to what we do on Meet the Candidates Night. Further discussions will be routinely held as part of the 2008-09 budget development process at open meetings of the Board of Education from January to April.

**Brighton Sales Tax Revenue**



The F.A.I.R. Plan's financial impact on Brighton results in a 2.8% tax rate increase or a corresponding \$1.2 million in budget reductions, which could include, *for example*:

- Expenditures for sports for one year
- 24 teaching positions
- 12 Administrative positions
- 60 Paraprofessional positions
- Summer school for the next decade
- Kindergarten for three school years

**The impact of the F.A.I.R. Plan results in a loss of \$29 million in sales tax revenues to Monroe County School Districts**



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**Special**

**Brighton PTSA &  
 Board of Education**

**Joint Meeting**

**on F.A.I.R. Plan**

**Tuesday November 27**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Administration Board Room**

**2035 Monroe Avenue**

**Join Monroe County Schools' Petition Drive**

Community members concerned with the County's action to cut school funding can let their voices be heard by becoming part of a county-wide petition drive. Sign and return the petition below to Monroe County School Boards Association, or log on to [www.gopetition.com](http://www.gopetition.com) and type "Stop Monroe County" in the quick search field to participate electronically.

We, the undersigned, feel that Monroe County broke its promise to local school districts by reducing the amount of sales tax revenue going to local school districts by 50%.

Monroe County residents approved school budgets in May to best serve students. Now, money will be taken away from school districts' budgets mid-year.

We agree that the Medicaid problem needs to be addressed; shifting the burden to schools is not the answer.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

Please send completed petition forms to:

**Monroe County School Boards Association  
 1250 Scottsville Road  
 Rochester, NY 14624**