



COMMENTARY

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*Rangeley Lakes Regional School*  
**New school district, new school board, new budget process**

By Brian Foster

With the issuance of the certificate of organization by the State Board of Education, Regional School Unit #78 has been officially formed. The recent special election on Jan. 19 has formed the new representative school board for the Town of Rangeley, Dallas Plantation, Sandy River Plantation and Magalloway Plantation.

Newly elected members include Ginny Nuttall, Pam Ellis, Barbara Burgess and Laura Haley for the Town of Rangeley. Jennifer Farmer and Rick Godaire were elected from

Sandy River Plantation. William Roy and Nicholas Gumprecht represent Dallas Plantation. Carol Hall represents Magalloway Plantation and Jaime Lavallee was elected alternate member for Magalloway. The Town of Rangeley will have a run-off election on Feb. 11 for its fifth school board member seat.

The elected members will be participating in a new school board member orientation workshop by Maine School Management Association on Feb. 9. The State Board of Education will then be setting the first school board meeting. This meeting should take place at the end of February.

The new board will be busy from their very first meeting. Between the first meeting and assuming responsibility for the district on July 1, they will be working on adopting policies, reviewing legal requirements of the new district and most importantly working on the 2010-11 school budget.

The next school budget will be very challenging given the current state of our economy. School districts in Maine have been dealing with a \$38 million curtailment in the current 2009-10 budget. This translates into a reduction of state funds for RLRS of approximately \$20-30,000 in this year's budget.

The state's commitment to education next year

will be decreasing from 55 percent to approximately 43 percent for 2010-11. It is anticipated that the state will reduce funding to education next year in the amount of \$92 million. This will mean a loss of state revenue for RLRS next year in the \$40-50,000 range.

The state funding formula, the Essential Programs and Services model is based on property valuation and student enrollments. While the student enrollments have remained relatively consistent over the past few years at RLRS, each of the towns in the new district have experienced increases in property valuation. The four towns in the district saw a \$32 million increase in property valuation from 2008 to 2009, based on state figures. With relatively high property valuations in the area, RSU #78 is considered by the state as a "minimum receiving" district when calculating the state's share of education.

The economy and reduction of state funding will all play an important part in the challenge of developing the next school budget. The new board and I will be looking closely at all aspects of the budget in order to bring a reasonable and justifiable proposal to the voters that support the educational needs for children attending RLRS.

With the formation of the new school district, residents will notice that the budget process will be different this year. The new board will work on the budget from the beginning of March through May. As the result of the reorganization, the new board will present the school budget at a district Budget Meeting in May to all of the residents of the four participating towns. Following the successful passage of the budget at the Budget Meeting, a budget validation vote will take place in each of the district's towns.

There will be more information available as we move forward. I encourage your input into the process. Feel free to contact any of the newly elected school board members or myself with your feedback.

*Brian Foster is Superintendent of Schools for RSU #78.*

**QUESTION OF THE WEEK**

*Would you rather be rich or healthy? Why?*



**Armond Hudon, of New Portland:** "Healthy. Money can't by health."



**Michael Hechavarria, of Boston:** "Health leads to happiness. I have seen that money does not."



**Seth Goldenberg, of Boston:** "Healthy. You don't need to be rich to enjoy life."



**Bianca Pullen of Boston:** "Healthy all the way. You can't buy good health or buy your genetics."



**Russ Drechsel, of Carrabassett Valley:** "Healthy and today warmth. You just can't buy health and with good health you can enjoy the rest of your life."

**Legislative Report: Meet the candidates**

By Rep. Tom Saviello  
 District 90

Want to get to know some of the gubernatorial candidates? Well here is your chance! The University of Maine at Farmington will host a number of the 2010 Maine gubernatorial candidates. These sessions are part of my political science class. Each session, featuring a candidate, is free and open-to-the-public. They will be held from 6:15 to 7:15 p.m., on Thursdays when school is in session, from Feb. 4 thru April 29, in room C23, in the lower level of the UMF Roberts Learning Center.

I developed this session as part of the political science class I teach at UMF. The class is GEO 277: Maine Politics and Environmental Policy. Candidates will join the students for dinner in the UMF dining hall. At 6 p.m. the students and I will escort the candidate to 23 Roberts Hall. I will welcome everyone and the students will introduce the candidate. The next hour (6:15 to 7:15) the class will be open to campus, public and press. During the public sessions, candidates will have an hour to share his/her vision for Maine's future and answer questions from the audience. The public can then leave or stay, however the candidate's attention will be on the students, answering their predetermined questions. Class members will prepare a summary of the total session and answers to the class questions for publication in the local papers. At the end of the semester the classroom students

will debate about the candidates and hold a mock election for the next governor.

Candidates scheduled for the public sessions include:

- Feb. 4 — Les Otten
- Feb. 11 — Peter Mills
- Feb. 25 — Matt Jacobson
- March 4 — Pat McGowan
- March 11 — Steve Rowe
- March 18 — Bruce Poliquin
- March 25 — Paul Lepage
- April 1 — Alex Hammer
- April 8 — Rosa Scarcelli
- April 15 — John Richardson
- April 29 — Steve Abbot

Other candidates may be added at a later date. These events are co-sponsored by the UMF Political Science Club, UMF College Republicans, UMF College Democrats and the UMF Student Education Association of Maine.

If you have any questions contact me, Tom Saviello, lecturer at UMF and state representative for Maine House District 90, at 645-3420, or drtom16@hotmail.com.

*Tom Saviello of Wilton represents House District 90: the towns of Avon, New Vineyard, Phillips, Strong, Temple and Wilton, plus the unorganized territories of East Central Franklin and Perkins and Washington townships.*