

## 2021-2022 MCSBA Officers Elected

During the 2021 MCSBA Annual Meeting which was held on May 26, members elected officers for the 2021-2022 year: Gary Bracken (Spe) as President, Amy West (HFL) as Vice President; and John Abbott (B2) as Treasurer. Amy Jo Thomas (Pit) will serve as Past President.

Gary Bracken was first elected to the Spencerport School Board in 2010 and served a term as its president. He has served MCSBA as co-chair of the Information Exchange Committee for two years and the Labor Relations Committee for two years.



ABOVE: 2021-2022 MCSBA Officers – Vice President Amy West (HFL), Treasurer John Abbott (B2), President Gary Bracken (Spe), and Past President Amy Thomas (Pit).

BELOW LEFT: Outgoing President Amy Thomas with plaque recognizing her service.



Amy West has been a member of the Honeoye Falls-Lima Board of Education since 2011. She has served as that group's president and vice president. She has been a member of MCSBA's Information Exchange Committee and has just completed a term as co-chair of the Labor Relations Committee.

During their terms as school board presidents, both Gary Bracken and Amy West were members of the MCSBA Executive Committee, and during their terms as Association committee co-chairs they were members of the MCSBA Steering Committee.

John Abbott was a member of the Hilton Board from 1984 -1993, and has served on the Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES Board since 1994. He has been the MCSBA Treasurer since 2002; before that he served a term as co-chair of the Labor Relations Committee.

*See pages 4 – 5 for coverage of the Annual Meeting.*



**Congratulations to ALL MCSBA districts  
on the passage of their 2021 budgets.**



# News Scope

MONROE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION  
220 Idlewood Road, Rochester, NY 14618  
(585) 328-1972 www.mcsba.org



President – Gary Bracken, Spencerport CSD  
Vice President – Amy West, Honeoye Falls – Lima CSD  
Past President – Amy Jo Thomas, Pittsford CSD  
Treasurer – John Abbott, Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES  
Executive Director - Sherry Johnson, Sherry\_Johnson@boces.monroe.edu  
Program Director – Beckie Schultz, Beckie\_Schultz@boces.monroe.edu

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## From our incoming president: Moving forward



**Gary Bracken**

Dear Members,

As we prepare to put the 2020-21 school year in the rearview mirror, we also prepare our Association to begin anew, with hopes for some normalcy in what remains a fluid situation. But before I get to that, I'd like to recognize a few folks.

Last year, incoming president Amy Thomas bestowed the title of “presidential pandemic leader” to outgoing president Kathy Dillon, noting that Kathy was the only one to ever have that title. Now Amy is the second! It has been my pleasure to serve as her vice president and observe her leading with grace, dignity, and calm through a very tumultuous year. In gratitude for all she did and the work she will undoubtedly continue, she is the recipient of the first-ever – the Semper Gumby Award!

Sherry continues to amaze us with the energy and fervor she brings to the work of the Association and the support she provides to our member districts. Her unwavering support of public education is second to none and is done not only as our Executive Director, but through many other initiatives. We all appreciate her leadership and guidance. Thanks are due also to Beckie Schultz and Mary Talbot for successfully coping with all the tasks that make our Association work, and to Judy Wadsworth for editing News Scope.

For a little background, I am a retired, career military officer and currently work for a defense contractor located in Reston, Va. I have five children, one of whom is an adult living in Florida. Those living here include triplets who have just graduated from Spencerport and their older brother who graduated in 2019. Because of our children, we moved here from down south for the public education system and that decision turned out very well for them.

And while I thought I'd get involved within our local school district, I did not see myself engaging at this level. But I soon learned that our community needs people working to keep our schools great. I have had the pleasure of working with the Association for the past 11 years and can say it has been an amazing learning experience that continues to this day. That learning continued last year as I watched Amy and the team set forth goals that were really on target.

And while we'll be meeting soon to outline goals for the coming year – I am not sure they will be much different from those of the past year. This year's goals will have to consider:

- That we still have a pandemic to deal with as we support our administrators and learning communities while returning to schools fulltime;
- That advocacy work remains key to continue moving our entire system forward and perhaps moving it in new directions post-pandemic;
- That our Association is the linchpin that brings all of that together.

I look forward to getting back to more normal operations and safely meeting regularly in person so we can reestablish and strengthen the relationships we have across all of our districts. While I would have liked to declare victory over the difficulties of the pandemic, the past year has shown that this is not going to fade away quickly – or easily. Even as more than half of Americans have received their COVID-19 vaccinations, we will still be dealing with many challenges related to the pandemic.

But this Association, with the strength of all of you, will once again help lead the way in getting things back on a track and take on the challenge of setting a new course for public education in New York.

So, thank you for the opportunity to serve this Association for the 2021-22 school year. I look forward to working with our officers as we all prepare for the exciting, and hopefully normal, year ahead!

*Gary Bracken*

# From our outgoing president: **THANK YOU !!**



Amy Thomas

Recently, we were able to celebrate the most historic year in education together at the MCSBA Annual Meeting. A chance to recap this past year, reflect on the goals achieved in 2020/21, honor our Executive Officers, Committee Co-Chairs, and bid well wishes to some of our most talented members retiring this year. As I stated at the Annual Meeting, working side-by-side with our membership and Superintendents during this extraordinary year has been my personal silver lining amidst a year of more questions than answers in education.

When I assumed the role of President for Monroe County School Boards, one of my first responsibilities was to set 2020/21 goals for the Association. Establishing goals on paper has proven to be the easiest task of my position: Covid's impact on our schools, Advocacy, and Building Relationships. I realized we would have our work cut out for us, but I believed in the combined strength of MCSBA and the overarching desire of our collective membership to work together in this unparalleled year. In the end, if successfully achieved, I suspected these goals had the potential to leave a lasting impact on our local boards for years to come.

A key component to ensuring we met the needs of our membership throughout COVID was remaining nimble and flexible in providing guidance and professional development to our members on pertinent topics and information relevant to navigating the pandemic this school year. Our Information Committee Meetings addressed pressing issues facing our districts, arming board members with current and accurate information to share at their board tables. Sherry and Beckie are to be commended for their unyielding support, resilience and tenacity to serving our membership regardless of the ever-changing shift from in-person to remote meetings.

As an Association, we should be proud of our advocacy efforts and accomplishments of this year. Although we did not travel to Albany, nor were we able to have our annual legislative meeting in person, we visited virtually with legislators throughout the year, we met in-person and virtually with the Board of Regents and we met with Dr. Michael Mendoza, the Commissioner of Monroe County Department of Health. Additionally, Sherry's continued work with the Systems Integration Team has been instrumental in maintaining and further developing key relationships with decision makers at the local and state level.

As part of our county advocacy efforts, our Community Outreach Advisory Committee was busier than ever creating position papers and talking points for the membership to utilize at their discretion, often times assisting with pressing issues. While public schools deftly maneuvered this tenuous year, it was clear that MCSBA made every effort to advocate for our future. At the forefront of all advocacy discussions was the adamant request that the state and county provide our Superintendent's and BOE's a defined structure of **who is in command** and **who truly has the authority** to make decisions on behalf of our schools in a public health crisis.

The final and most impactful goal of 2020/21 has been relationships. The phrase, "we're in this together" came to light through the pandemic. I believe we would all agree, crisis requires leadership and camaraderie. We truly *leaned into* further developing our relationships and network during this atypical 14 months. MCSBA has consistently provided professional support and an opportunity for our membership to share best practices in a collegial environment.

But we also found ourselves in unfamiliar environments where relationships of all types had been strained by the many challenges and divisions we faced. Our MCSBA goal of building relationships is certainly applicable in our society today, as we work on building bridges and establishing healthy relationships beyond our Association. Along those lines, our recent budget votes spoke volumes about the majority of community support of our schools despite living through the most demanding school year in recent history. **Why?** Because of each of you. **You** make the difference and **you** work laboriously for the well-being of our schools, our students and our communities.

Two weeks ago, I attended my eldest daughter's graduation ceremony from Providence College. Dr. Laurie Santos, a Professor of Psychology at Yale University and host of *The Happiness Lab Podcast*, delivered the commencement address. Dr. Santos stressed the importance of recognizing those who have had a positive impact in your life, your career, or in your everyday life. That said, I would like to extend my thanks to a handful of people:

**Sherry Johnson** – Your ardent, steadfast, and dedicated leadership has been the pillar of strength at a time when local school boards needed it most. Thank you for your tireless efforts and accomplishments of this year!

**Beckie Schultz** – The MCSBA professional development programming has been nothing short of incredible and I appreciate your commitment to remain flexible and nimble throughout this unwieldy year.

**Mary Talbot** – Thank you for keeping the business office in order while working a hybrid schedule. Your seamless operations of the office were greatly appreciated!

**Judy Wadsworth** – Where would we be without our monthly News Scope filling us in on the months' activities?

My predecessor, **Kathy Dillon** – your expertise, wisdom and insight has been tremendously valuable to me and to our entire Executive Team. Thank you for paving the way through the onset of the pandemic, you helped to set the tone and eased my transition stepping into rather large shoes to fill.

**Gary Bracken** -- I cannot thank you enough for being my vice president "wingman" this year. I have respected your input, creativity and allegiance (even when you made suggestions to coordinate ad hoc committees) throughout the year. Lastly, I am indebted to you for your editing eye with my monthly News Scope columns.

**John Abbott** - your keen eye and commitment to serve in the role of "life-long treasurer" of MCSBA is greatly appreciated.

And, last but not least, my heartfelt gratitude to each one of you for your perseverance, adaptability and fortitude to serve in your roles as leaders during this historic year. It has been my pleasure to serve as your President.

*Amy Jo Thomas*

# Annual Meeting Album: During the meeting...

During MCSBA's 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting, Outgoing President Amy Thomas reviewed the year's highlights as the Association and member districts coped with issues raised by the COVID pandemic. In addition, those at the right made presentations:

**Jay Worona, Esq.**, Assistant Executive Director, NYSSBA, who brought greetings from that group; **Sherry Johnson**, Executive Director, MCSBA, who reviewed the past year's activities and thanked members; **Jo Anne Antonacci**, District Superintendent, Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES, who reviewed 2020-2021 activities of ACT for Education, which she chairs; and Incoming President **Gary Bracken** (Spe), who thanked members and sought support for the coming year.



2020-2021 Committee Chairs were recognized by President Amy Thomas for their service –

TOP LEFT: Legislative Co-Chairs Valerie Baum (Pit) and Matt Metras (WI);

TOP RIGHT: Labor Relations Co-Chairs Frank Muscato (GC) and Bob Dickson (B1);

BOTTOM LEFT: Information Exchange Co-Chairs Tammy Gurowski (Web) and Kerri Keyes (GC) – not pictured;

BOTTOM CENTER: COAC Co-Chairs Amy West (HFL) and Kim McCluski (B1);

BOTTOM RIGHT: Council of Government Representatives Kathy Graupman (Gre) and Kathleen Dillon (CC, B2).

RIGHT: Recognized for their service were retiring board of education members Suzanne Casey (Web), Michael Suffoletto (Web), Valerie Baum (Pit), Mark Kokanovich (Bri), Sora Sachs (B1), Irene Narotsky (Pit), and David Long (WI). Other retirees who did not attend the annual meeting will receive their plaques from their districts.



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# Annual Meeting Album: Some of those attending

RIGHT -

TOP ROW: Brian O'Connor and Dr. Casey Kosiorek of Hilton.  
 SECOND ROW: Kathleen Dillon (CC, B2) and Mark Elledge (Pen); retiring board member Sora Sachs (B1) and recently retired board member Marv Sachs (Bri).  
 THIRD ROW: David Long and Matthew Metras, both of West Irondequoit; Erica Belois-Pacer and Joyce Kostyk of Fairport.  
 BOTTOM ROW: Tom Nespeca (B1), Jay Worona, Eq. (NYSSBA), and Maureen Nupp (B1); Sherry Johnson (MCSBA) and Mark Kokanovich (Bri).



LEFT -

TOP ROW: John Abbott (B2), Lynda Quick (WC), Dan White (B1), and Bob Dickson (B1).  
 SECOND ROW: Dr. Christine Richards, Jeffrey Pettenski, Andrea Hinchey Unson, and Frank Muscato, all of Gates Chili.  
 THIRD ROW: Kathleen Graupman (Gre), Terry Melore (Gre), and Gene Mancuso (HFL).  
 FOURTH ROW: Valerie Baum (Pit), Irene Narotsky (Pit), Kim McCluski (B1), and Michael Pero (Pit).  
 BOTTOM ROW: Webster's Mike Alt, Brian Neenan, Tammy Gurowski, David Swinson, Janice Richardson, Suzanne Casey, and Mike Suffoletto.



RIGHT: Some of the 70+ MCSBA members who attended the Association's 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting on May 26 at the Oak Hill Country Club. President Amy Thomas can be seen standing in the left background as she chairs the meeting.

# Farewells & Welcomes

## FAREWELL AND THANK YOU TO RETIRING FORMER MCSBA PRESIDENTS



LEFT:

**Suzanne Casey** (Web): 2012 – 2013  
**Mark Kokanovich** (Bri): 2013-2016  
**Mike Suffoletto** (Web): 2017-2019

Mark Kokanovich is retiring from the Brighton Board of Education but will begin service on the Monroe One BOCES Board.

## FAREWELL AND THANK YOU - TO RETIRING FORMER COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

RIGHT:

**Tom Abbott** (Hil): Labor Relations (4 terms)

**Valerie Baum** (Pit):

Information Exchange (1 term)

**Irene Narotsky** (Pit): Information Exchange

(1 term), Labor Relations (2 terms)

**Sora Sachs** (B1): Information Exchange (1 term)



## AND TO OTHER RETIREES

### BOARD MEMBERS

Joe Alati (HFL)  
 Andre Bailey (GC)  
 Russell Byer (Hil)  
 David Ghidu (HFL)  
 Tim Henry (ER)  
 Melissa Ierian (Hol)  
 Nichole LaPlaca (RH)  
 David Long (WI)  
 Ryan McDonald (Gre)  
 Michael Miceli (Spe)  
 James O'Brien (RH)  
 Charles Patt (Ken)  
 Mark Porter (Hol)  
 Constance Rockow (B2)  
 Arlette Miller Smith (Fpt)  
 Idris Smith (EI)  
 Margaret Steckley (WI)  
 Leon Tucker (CC)  
 Lisa VenVertloh (B2)  
 Michael Vetter (Vic)  
 William Yaeger (Pen)

### SUPERINTENDENTS

Carmen Gumina (Web)  
 Daniel Milgate (Spe)

## Welcome New Board Members

Scott Adair (RH)  
 Stacey Beaumont (EI)  
 Jennifer Birdsong-Ng (Web)  
 Leah Brown (Spe)  
 Jeffrey Casey (Pit)  
 Justin Connor (WI)  
 Salvatore De Luca (Hol)  
 Kelli Eberle (HFL)  
 Tammy Flores (Gre)  
 Christin Harley (Pen)  
 Jenalee Herb (ER)  
 Shanna LaDelfa (Web)  
 Nicole Littlewood (GC)  
 Ed Mascadri (Hil)

Elizabeth Mitchell (Vic)  
 Brian McKeon (Hol)  
 Alycia Nagle (CC)  
 Christopher Neff (HFL)  
 Sarah Pelusio (Pit)  
 Mark Porter (B2)  
 Heather Pyke (B2)  
 Rachel Sherman (RH)  
 Stephanie Sloan (Hil)  
 Tracy Van Ameron (Hol)  
 Rosa Vargas-Cronin (WI)  
 David Warren (Ken)  
 Mary Caitlin Wight (Fpt)  
 Esther Winter (Bri)

## Welcome New Superintendents

Brian Neenan, Interim (Web)

Kristin Swann (Spe)

# Meetings with federal officials

On May 12, MCSBA members met with three officials representing our federal senators (pictured in the top row below): Jarred Jones, Deputy State Director, Office of US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand; Chris Zeltmann, Regional Director, Office of Senator Chuck Schumer; and Andrew Cook, Deputy Director, Office of Senator Chuck Schumer.



- Among the topics discussed during this session were the following:
- \* Thank you for stimulus funding;
  - \* Barriers to fully reopening schools;
  - \* Work force shortages and availability (including bus drivers);
  - \* CDL license modification for school bus drivers;
  - \* Status of loan forgiveness discussion;
  - \* IDEA reauthorization and potential for litigation regarding services during pandemic;
  - Charter and community Schools.

On May 24, Association members met with Congressman Joseph Morelle and three of his staff members (seen in the top row at the right): Congressman Morelle; Sean Hart, Chief of Staff (Rochester); Owen Riley, Lead Aide on Education and Labor Committees (Washington, D.C.); and Kaleigh Benedict, Deputy District Director & Community Outreach (Rochester).

- Topics discussed included -
- \* Thank you for stimulus funding;
  - \* Infrastructure bill-related education funding;
  - \* Expanded child care credit;
  - \* Barriers to fully reopening schools;
  - \* CDL Licensing for school bus drivers (shortages and the ability to expand preK programs);
  - \* Staff shortages/ Loan reduction plans;
  - \* Need for Title II funding;
  - \* Community/ Charter school funding.



# Meeting with Regents

On June 9, the Legislative Committee met with NYS Board of Regents Members Wade Norwood and Ruth Turner. Since she is new to the Board of Regents, Ruth Turner was given time to share information about her background and hopes for her term as a board member.

Following that, the following topics were discussed with our two Regents:

- **Full reopening of school**

Regent Norwood encouraged members to increase communication with legislators and request clarity for planning purposes. He urged districts to continue to collaborate with one another and the local health community.

- **Remote Learning Options moving Forward**

Regent Turner noted that remote learning options during the pandemic were complex, but that the Board of Regents has not discussed options moving forward.

She recommended that school board members let legislators know the pressures districts have been under. She noted that students and staff have experienced high levels of anxiety and depression during the pandemic that will need to be addressed. Regent Norwood added that the pandemic created social divides and a dipolar system for educating students. He noted that the Regents goal is to return students to in-person learning 5-days per week but recognizes an alternative option may be needed for some students. Members encouraged the Regents to add a digital security piece to the digital equity summit.

- **Diversity /Equity Initiatives**

Members present stressed that the community at large does not understand the DEI initiative and questions the local superintendents' work with the University of Rochester on curriculum. Regent Turner indicated that the Board of Regents had also received emails that were alarming, but were indicative of current race issues in the country. She and Regent Norwood stressed the need for courageous leadership on this issue, as a diverse education is good for everyone and needed in order for students to navigate the global society. Regent Norwood indicated that SED could better clarify the initiative but that the documents that SED generated were very mindfully prepared. He noted that SED would need to provide cover for districts as they engage in this work, being vocal and visible in the community. He acknowledged there would be people resistant to the initiative. He encouraged districts to provide feedback on what SED can do to help. He noted that Boards of Education are critical to making changes and the visceral component of the community cannot be allowed to have the last statement on this issue.



ABOVE: Members of the NYS Board of Regents Wade Norwood (left) and Ruth Turner (right) with Legislative Committee Co-Chair Valerie Baum (Pit).

BELOW: Some of the 24 people attending the June 9 meeting..



# Evaluating Staff in a Virtual Environment



ABOVE: Some of the participants in the April 28 Labor Relations meeting.

RIGHT: Labor Relations Committee co-chairs Frank Muscato (GC) and Bob Dickson (B1) with presenters Dominic Piacentini (RH) Dr. Patrick McCue (RH).



The challenges of evaluating staff in a virtual environment was the topic discussed during the April 28 meeting of the Labor Relations Committee. Sharing evaluation practices developed by the Rush-Henrietta CSD were Patrick McCue, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources & School Accountability, and Dominic Piacentini, Director of Professional Learning & Program Evaluation.

Among their comments were the following:

- The observation/evaluation process should be about professional growth and reflection to create improvements in instruction, student learning and achievement. Clear expectations and rubrics are key to the process.

- Two key APPR components—student performance and classroom observations—remain in effect.

In 2020, spring 3-8 tests were cancelled and 2019-2020 evaluations were waived. Without guidance from SED for 2020-2021, districts continued to focus on instructional supervision, remote teaching and school/district improvement goals. Districts are trying to balance pressure and support to account for the social/ emotional needs of students and staff. They also want to give staff time to experiment and develop their remote instruction skills.

- Rush-Henrietta staff worked during the fall to create a list of common “look-fors” that indicate high levels of student engagement, critical thinking, and emotional safety in the online environment. The results were vetted with teachers and an agreement was made on priorities.

- Building Administrators needed time to define the ground rules for on-line observations and adapt rubrics on-line learning. They also needed training to observe and generate reliable and equitable ratings. Videos were created of teachers delivering online lessons so that leaders could practice gathering evidence and calibrating their ratings.

- Rush-Henrietta plans to work to deepen teachers’ understanding and use of best practices in the online environment. They also planned to strengthen leaders’ quality of observation feedback. The district also plans to expand student opportunities for online classes.

## Lori Orologio honored at April Executive Committee meeting

The Executive Committee on April 28 celebrated Lori Orologio, who recently earned her Ph.D., with a commemorative cake. Seen are Kathleen Dillon (B2, CC) and Dr. Cheryl Repass (CC) with Dr. Lori Orologio at the meeting.



# SED-approved MCSBA Governance Training Seminar



ABOVE: Board Member Panelists Matt Metras (WI), Amy West (HFL), Gary Bracken (Spe), Amy Thomas (Pit), and Kathleen Dillon (B2, CC).



RIGHT: Jo Anne Antonacci (B2) and Kathleen Graupman (Gre) speaking on the role of superintendents..

On June 12, newly elected school board members from 14 area school districts met for six hours of state-mandated school district governance training conducted by MCSBA. Among the topics discussed were:

**POWERS, FUNCTIONS, AND DUTIES OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION** – led by **Gary Bracken** (Spe), Incoming MCSBA President; **Kathleen Dillon** (B2, CC), former MCSBA President; **Matthew Metras** (WI); **Amy Thomas** (Pit), MCSBA President; and **Amy West** (HFL), MCSBA Vice president- elect.

**ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT** - led by **Jo Anne Antonacci** (B2), District Superintendent; and **Kathleen Graupman** (Gre), Superintendent.

**POWERS & DUTIES OF OTHER GOVERNING AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES** – led by **Sherry Johnson**, Executive Director, MCSBA

**SCHOOL BOARD FINANCE & BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITIES** – led by **Rick Wood** (Spe), Assistant Superintendent for Business

**SCHOOL BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES AS ELECTED OFFICERS FOR COMMUNICATIONS** - led by **Beckie Schultz**, Program Director, MCSBA

**SCHOOL BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES FOR EMPLOYEE RELATIONS** – led by **Joseph Shields, Esq.**, Ferrara Fiorenza PC.

BELOW – Newly elected board member participants -

BACK ROW: Doug Rivers (RH), Kelli Eberle (HFL) Rosa Vargas-Cronin (WI), Sarah Pelusio (Pit), Justin Connor (WI), Jeff Casey (Pit), David Warren (Ken), Karen Ballard (Vic), Nicole Littlewood (GC), Shanna LaDelfa (Web), Brian McKeon (Hol), Jennifer Birdsong-Ng (Web), Christopher Neff (HFL), and Tracy VanAmeron (Hol).

FRONT ROW: Tammy Flores (Gre), Chrisitn Harley (Pen), Scott Adair (RH), Leah Brown (Spe), Elizabeth Mitchell (Vic), Alycia Nagle (CC), Beth Bulkley (Romulus), and Heather Pyke (B2). Not pictured – Esther Winter (Bri).



BELOW LEFT: Sherry Johnson (MCSBA) describing roles of other governmental authorities.

BELOW: Joseph Shields, Esq. reviewing board responsibilities for labor relations.



ABOVE: Rick Wood (Spe) listing board responsibilities for finance and business.

LEFT: Beckie Schultz (MCSBA) outlining board responsibilities for communications.

