



September 30, 2014

Scarsdale Union Free School District Board of Education  
2 Brewster Rd.  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

Dear Members of the Board of Education:

The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale (the “League”) appreciates the additional time the Board has provided to the community for consideration of and comment on the proposed revisions to Policy 1800 currently in effect, Gifts to the District or a School (the “Existing Gift Policy”), made available to the public on September 19 (the “Revisions”).

We have the following comments on the Revisions. In the interest of time, we have limited our suggestions to policy considerations and provided language adapted from policies adopted by neighboring school districts for your information.

1. A. Preliminary Statement. We believe it would be useful to identify the types and sources of gifts that may be made to the District. You may consider using the following language In lieu of the first sentence:

The Board shall have sole discretion to accept gifts to the District. Gifts, donations, grants and/or bequests of money, real or personal property, to the District may come from individuals, a collection of individuals, Parent Teacher Associations, booster organizations, foundations or other lawful groups.<sup>1</sup>

2. C. Acceptance of Proposed Gifts. To address the issue we raised regarding the Board monitoring the aggregate gifts given to ensure parity among the schools, we suggest adding to the end of the first paragraph the following:

The Superintendent shall monitor the cumulative impact of gift giving, and at the conclusion of each school year, provide the Board with a summary of the gift contributions and the use of those contributions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Gift Acceptance Policy #1025, Chappaqua Central School District, and Policy 5230 Acceptance of Gifts, Grants and Bequests to the School District (Revised), Ardsley Union Free School District.

<sup>2</sup> See Policy #1800 Gifts from the Public, Bedford Central School District.

3. We ask the Board to modify the Revisions to include in its entirety item 7 from the Existing Gift Policy regarding avoiding a proliferation of fundraising.<sup>3</sup> The League is concerned that without the Board regulating fundraising efforts in the community, the potential pressure on individuals and businesses may be too burdensome.<sup>4</sup>
4. We suggest adding an additional test in item 5 of the Revisions in determining whether a gift is to be accepted:
  - e. it will place encumbrances on future Boards, or result in unreasonable additional or hidden costs to the District. The Board may, if it deems it necessary, request that gifts of equipment, facilities or any item that requires upkeep and maintenance include funds to carry out such maintenance for the foreseeable life of the donation.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, we urge that the Board adopt a separate policy regarding its relationship with the Scarsdale Schools Education Foundation (“SSEF”), just as the Board has done with respect to booster organizations and Parent Teacher Associations.<sup>6</sup> In light of the unique relationship between the Board and SSEF and the size and nature of past and contemplated gifts from SSEF to the District, we have suggested components that we hope the Board will consider including in such a separate policy, as outlined in Attachment A to this letter.

Finally, the League suggests that the Board develop a policy regarding the recognition of gifts initiated by donors, including naming rights.

Please note that our suggestions regarding modifications to the Revisions, together with our recommendation that the Board adopt a separate policy regarding its relationship with the SSEF as outlined, should be considered as a whole. Without incorporating our comments on the Revisions and expeditiously developing and adopting a separate policy for SSEF, the Revisions as a statement of the Board’s gift policy going forward will seem to us incomplete. We encourage the Board to finalize revising the Existing Gift Policy in a careful and comprehensive manner, thereby providing the Board the opportunity to be fully transparent in its process for accepting gifts.

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<sup>3</sup> Item 7 from Policy 1800 Gifts to the District or a School of the Scarsdale School District reads:

The Board wishes to avoid a proliferation of fund-raising drives in the community. The Board must approve any fund-raising for the purpose of offering a gift. Fund raising should be undertaken by groups with a broad base of support in the community, should be of a scale appropriate to the program to be benefited, and should not make unreasonable demands upon the generosity of the community.

<sup>4</sup> Please see the League’s Statement Concerning the Establishment of an Education Foundation in Scarsdale, dated December 6, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> See Policy 5230 Acceptance of Gifts, Grants and Bequests to the School District, Blind Brook-Rye Union Free School District, and Policy 5230 Acceptance of Gifts, Grants and Bequests to the School District (Revised), Ardsley Union Free School District.

<sup>6</sup> See Policy 1222 Relations with Booster Organizations and Policy 1800-E Gifts to the District – Practice and 1800-E-2 Resolution Adopted by Scarsdale Board of Education on May 23, 2011.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SCARSDALE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Susie Rush, President

## ATTACHMENT A

Suggested components of a separate policy of the Board of Education setting forth the Board's relationship with the Scarsdale Schools Education Foundation (the "Foundation"):

General

Provide broad principles/philosophy:

- The Board of Education recognizes the value of the Scarsdale Schools Education Foundation and its efforts to support the District by enhancing the resources available to our schools and students.<sup>7</sup>
- The Directors of the Foundation are invited to meet with the Superintendent and a Board representative on an annual basis to discuss any topic(s) relevant to the Foundation's relationship with the Board. The Board shall designate a Board member or members as liaison(s) to the Foundation.<sup>8</sup> The Board liaison(s) shall report periodically to the Board regarding the Foundation's planned giving. The Board shall invite representatives of the Foundation at least annually to a meeting of the Board to make a presentation to the Board regarding its activities as they relate to the District.
- Foundation activities, if they involve the use of District facilities or resources, must be planned in accordance with Policy 1500 Public Use of School Facilities and 1500-R Public Use of School Facilities Regulations. Donations offered by the Foundation will be considered in accordance with Policy 1800 Gifts to the District or a School<sup>9</sup> and 1800- \_\_ Relations with the Scarsdale Schools Education Foundation.
- The Board recognizes the Foundation as a separate legal entity from the District.

Define the role of the Superintendent with respect to the Foundation.

Identify factors to consider in determining whether to accept a gift or grant from the Foundation:

- Can the proposed use of the gift be funded in the annual school budget or a bond issue then being contemplated?

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<sup>7</sup> See Policy 1225 Relationship with Local Education Foundation, Mamaroneck Union Free School District.

<sup>8</sup> See note 7 above.

<sup>9</sup> See note 7 above.

- Is the proposed gift dependent on the approval of the annual budget or a contemplated bond issue or on the approval of third parties?
- What are the current and future priorities for the District articulated by the Board, and how does the proposed gift fit within those priorities?

Other

Provide for an assessment of the program/project funded by the Foundation's gift following implementation and a report on the assessment to the Board.

Set forth the terms and conditions of the Foundation's gift in a memorandum of understanding, which will identify sequencing, if any, of projects to be funded by the Foundation.