

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We come here today to express our sincere belief that joining the North Colonie and Maplewood school districts is an advantageous decision for our students, staff and taxpayers.

In addition to both districts being wholly within the same township, we have developed a positive relationship between our students, our districts and our communities. Over many years, nearly all of Maplewood students continue on with their secondary education in the North Colonie school system. At our graduation last year, I was proud to announce that 97 percent of our students who walked across the stage had earned Regents diplomas. But these are not just North Colonie students; they are already a combination of Maplewood and North Colonie students who have worked hard to achieve this wonderful academic result that our district has come to be known for year after year. These students have forged meaningful relationships with one another during their four years together at Shaker High School.

Throughout the course of this annexation endeavor, our students' needs, staff and community concerns have been at the forefront of this discussion. We have strived to provide our communities with an open and transparent annexation process. Both districts intentionally wanted to move slowly and methodically with the feasibility study so that community members could voice their concerns, ask questions and give feedback at every stage. Mutual respect has marked the work at all times. A major outcome of this process has been that the North Colonie Board of Education agreed to assure that the Maplewood school building would remain open for a number of years, something which was critically important to the Maplewood community.

The financial benefits to North Colonie are very appealing. The Annexation Incentive Aid that North Colonie would receive is approximately \$30 million over the next fourteen years. This aid will help the district to stabilize the tax rate, while adding and improving upon our academic and extra curricular programs. In addition, there would be a quite sizeable increase in State Aid for approved building projects. This aid will enable us to address infrastructure needs in our buildings, at very little cost to taxpayers.

Apart from the financial benefits, North Colonie always strives to do "the right thing." The right thing in this case is to care about our students who have been a part of our community — this includes students from both sides of district lines that were drawn arbitrarily many years ago. We are proud of the Maplewood students who already play a significant role in the life of our school district. With this annexation, we look forward to enhancing the educational lives of the students in both school communities.

Thank you for giving North Colonie the opportunity to discuss our perspective on the annexation process.

Randy A. Ehrenberg
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