



## Don't forget to vote

The election of the school board members and voting on the proposed 2022-23 school budgets will be held Tuesday, May 17. Scarsdale voting takes place at Scarsdale Middle School, from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Polls in Edgemont Jr./Sr. High School on White Oak Lane will be open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

## '22 graduation issue

The Scarsdale Inquirer's annual graduation special section will be published with the July 1 print edition and posted online at scarsdalenews.com. We need your input to make this an inclusive and memorable grad edition. Send info to vabrahams@scarsdalenews.com — subject line "Graduation" — by June 6.

**High school:** SHS and EHS Class of '22 grads, and local residents graduating from private high schools, send your college destinations.

**College grads:** Submit student name, name of institution, type of degree, major and honors or academic prizes, and headshot (JPEG in hi-res).

## Water main flushing

The periodic water main flushing program of Scarsdale's water department to prevent discoloration of water during the heavy demand periods of the summer continues the week of May 16 in West Quaker Ridge, Scarsdale Meadows, Quaker Ridge and Colonial Acres neighborhoods. Slight discoloration may occur during the flushing period but will settle out in a short time. Though the water is safe for consumption it may stain clothes if washed in it.

Weekly program activities will be available in the water department section of the village website at www.scarsdale.com, as well as broadcast on cable television channels 42 (Verizon) and 76 (Cablevision).

## Inside



## Teen seeks to ease

private school loneliness.....3

Police .....5

Opinions/Letters .....6

Schools.....8-9

Lifestyles .....11

Crossword .....13

Sports.....14-18

Real Estate .....18-20

# Hagerman resigns early amid IRS 'distraction'

Previously selected interim superintendent Drew Patrick stepped up to lead schools May 7

By TODD SLISS

SCARSDALE SCHOOLS — Following a half-hour executive session, Scarsdale Board of Education vice president Amber Yusuf announced that Superintendent Dr. Thomas Hagerman resigned as of Friday, May 6, due to the distraction caused by the IRS issue the administration appeared to have covered up for 10 months prior to re-

vealing it to the board of education on March 25.

Hagerman had previously announced in January he was leaving to take a position as head of school of the Latin School in Chicago effective July 1. In doing so he broke the 12-month notice clause in his employment contract.

In board president Karen Ceske's absence, Yusuf read a statement from Hagerman at the May 6 meeting: "From the onset of the this school year, the District has prioritized a return to normalcy for both our students and staff. While many gains have been made towards this end, the IRS issue has become a major distraction to that work. Although I have already resigned my position as superintendent



Dr. Thomas Hagerman



Dr. Drew Patrick

of schools, effective June 30, I now feel it is best to do so more immediately in order for the District to keep its focus on students and a successful ending to the school year. It has been a privilege to work on behalf of Scarsdale's children and youth and along-

side so many outstanding administrators, faculty and staff."

In the full separation agreement between the board of education and Hagerman, which was posted online, both parties agreed to allow Hagerman to resign May 6 in order to "avoid the costs and uncertainties of litigation." It is unclear if the board of education or Hagerman initiated his departure.

Despite signing a one-year contract extension to give him more time to focus on his five-year Strategic Plan, which was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Hagerman resigned in January effective June 30 to take the head of school position at Latin School in Chicago. His current contract with Scarsdale was set to expire June 30, 2025.

Hagerman, who has been superintendent since 2014, came under fire in March for knowingly keeping the district's IRS woes — errors in payroll tax filings that led to \$1.7 million in penalties and liens — under wraps for 10 months. The board of education immediately called for an investigation and audit and began that process in April.

Unless the IRS complications were hidden from Hagerman at the time, he knowingly pursued employment elsewhere while district administration was secretly trying to manage the IRS issues.

Hagerman will not receive his base salary of \$356,543 past May 6, but the district agreed to pay Hagerman "less  
*Continued on page 10*



ALAN ZALE PHOTOS

## Running for a cause

Scarsdale Police Officer Anthony Mery carried the torch for the Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run, as it passed through Scarsdale on Friday, May 6. Officer Mery was joined by seven members of the Scarsdale Police Department and a Scarsdale fire chief. This was the Westchester West leg of the Special Olympics of the New York State torch run that began at the 3rd Precinct in Yonkers and finished at the New York State Police barracks in Tarrytown. There were two previous legs of the torch run. See more photos on page 4.

# Surges, spikes and questions about the future

By TODD SLISS

REGION — Despite the more contagious and less severe COVID-19 Omicron BA.2 variant causing a wave of positive cases locally, the upside is that hospitalizations and deaths are nowhere near where they were during the most lethal points of the pandemic in 2020.

Crowded hospitals, school shutdowns, business closures, essential workers, limited testing, quarantining, mask-wearing, social distancing, the race for a vaccine, contact tracing, the slow vaccine rollout, eligibility requirements, trouble getting appointments, long lines at mass vaccination centers, waiting for a pediatric vaccine, the development of therapeutics — it's hard to believe that these things consumed our lives for more than two years now.

Back when the pandemic started there weren't enough tests, so infection numbers were always considered low. Now that people are testing on their own and not reporting the results, the numbers are likely again low. And with the White House announcing the United States passed the benchmark of

## Combating COVID



### A continuing series

tions I think there's a lot of [uncounting] and there's no question the worldwide death total is highly undercounted."

Despite all of the medical advances and all that has been learned in the 2.5 years of the global pandemic — just over two years in the U.S. — the big unknown remains: What will the future bring?

Though Palumbo doesn't have a crystal ball to see what's ahead, he can take clues from the past to inform his outlook.

1 million deaths this week, that number is also questionable.

"Historically that is incredibly significant," said Dr. Michael Palumbo, executive vice president and chief medical officer at White Plains Hospital. "Is it really 1.5 million in the U.S.? We're really never going to know, especially in the less developed na-

tions I think there's a lot of [uncounting] and there's no question the worldwide death total is highly undercounted."

Despite all of the medical advances and all that has been learned in the 2.5 years of the global pandemic — just over two years in the U.S. — the big unknown remains: What will the future bring?

Though Palumbo doesn't have a crystal ball to see what's ahead, he can take clues from the past to inform his outlook.

"This virus is not going away," Palumbo said. "It is now endemic. Hopefully we will be endemic and not pandemic in the near future ... we're certainly close to that at least in the developed world. Therefore just like we expect the flu every year we are going to need to expect that COVID outbreaks will happen. Whether they will be seasonal like the flu is not clear; probably not because we certainly see spikes in the warmer months."

"We may need annual vaccines like for the flu, and maybe more than that. Based on what we've learned with the boosters and [given that] approximately six months after being boosted there is a waning of the antibodies, ... we may need vaccines twice a year. I'm hoping the vaccine manufacturers will be able to craft a vaccine for the circulating variants like we do with influenza, which may be more effective."

More variants are going to be the concern going forward, but none so far has proven as lethal as the originals. Historically speaking that hasn't happened before.

*Continued on page 13*

# School board using audits to search for IRS answers

By TODD SLISS

SCARSDALE SCHOOLS — Given the choice between quickly hiring the district's current internal auditor to conduct an audit of the business department and the processes that led to improper filing of payroll taxes — and subsequently \$1.7 million in IRS fines and a lien against the district — or waiting to get an auditing firm without prior dealings with the district, the Scarsdale Board of Education at a May 9 meeting voted 5-2 in favor of "best practices" vs. a speedy result.

The board instructed assistant superintendent for business Stuart Matthey to put out a request for proposals (RFP) with a May 20 deadline for firms to respond, with hopes that the board will have a firm in place by June 15 to potentially have a report done as early in the summer as possible.

At the board's request, the district's internal auditor, Cullen & Danowski, had submitted a proposal in April and would have been ready to begin May 10 with a proposed wrap-up date of June 30, if the board had voted that way. Though Cullen & Danowski had not audited the payroll department in several years, the board, after appearing to be leaning toward working with them, had a change of heart and/or took community feedback and reversed its course.

Board member Carl Finger called the audit an "important step" and "the first step into a deeper inquiry" and said he believed using the current auditor "the most expeditious way to get some immediate feedback and efficient because they're familiar with the district."

Board member Jim Dugan said he is not concerned that Cullen & Danowski, which has worked with the district for close to a decade, missed something since they had not looked into payroll, but he was the first to use the "best practices" argument, noting that when someone works with a client for a long time they can get too familiar and relaxed and although he was "not suggesting anything nefarious," he was "more comfortable" with an outside firm.

Board member Ron Schulhof said he appreciated both arguments, but leaned toward going with a new auditor despite the trade-off of taking more time.

*Continued on page 10*

# Teachers' union president lashes out at school district leaders

By TODD SLISS

EDGEMONT — Edgemont Teachers Association President Jonathan Hansonbrook delivered an unexpected and inflammatory speech at the board of education meeting Tuesday, May 10. Hansonbrook made claims of unfair treatment of high school teachers, including gender-based discrimination, an "atmosphere" and "climate" that is driving down morale and driving away educators. As of Thursday morning, May 12, the meeting replay had been viewed online nearly 1,500 times. Typical meetings have well below 200 views.

After opening by congratulating those from Greenville Elementary School who received tenure that night — and talking about many of the challenges they have gone through to attain that status — Hansonbrook talked about how

*"Our teachers are held to an unrealistic and ever-changing standard, while major structural problems within EHS ... are ignored and brushed under the table."*

— ETA PRESIDENT JONATHAN HANSONBROOK

tenure is not job security, but that it instead "protects teachers from unfair or capricious dismissal and guarantees them the right to representation and due process during disciplinary and performance reviews." He then said that based on the treatment of teachers at the junior/senior high school this year, he understands the need for tenure "more than at any time" in his career.

"Although the tenure process for teachers worked properly at the elementary school level, it has been an utter failure at EHS," Hansonbrook said. "I would not be doing my job as union president if I did not also comment about the absence of my EHS colleagues on tonight's tenure agenda."

Hansonbrook quoted Superintendent Dr. Vic-

toria Kniewel as having said "on more than one occasion" that "the tenure process is broken." Hansonbrook said he disagrees and that the process seems to work at the elementary level.

"However, the implementation of that same process at EHS has not met the standards that we expect at Edgemont from its administration and my EHS colleagues are the ones who bear the burden of that administrative failure," Hansonbrook said. "Our teachers are held to an unrealistic and ever-changing standard, while major structural problems within EHS, such as the chronic inability to meet negotiated timelines on teacher negotiations and the appearance that EHS faculty members are treated differently based on their gender and child-bearing decisions are ignored and brushed under the table."

Hansonbrook said that one of his top daily  
*Continued on page 10*