

## Planned Parenthood escort follows God-given duty as picketers follow theirs

By Saranac Hale Spencer

Twice a month, Joe Levinger stands opposite a small picket line and greets people as he opens the door for them to enter an office building in Troy.

Some days there are no picketers. He still greets and opens the door.

Levinger, a retired physics professor and good-humored wisp of a man, is a volunteer escort for Planned Parenthood.

He started in the post about

passage, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good."

Levinger, who lives near Altamont, noted the first anniversary of the killing of Dr. George Tiller, a doctor who performed abortions in Kansas. "There is every reason to be concerned," he said, regarding the purpose of escorts.

The service began in the mid-1980s, according to Planned Parenthood, when protesting outside of clinics intensified. "Barricades set up by anti-

---

**"Abstinence only is a good slogan, but I don't think it's effective."**

---

10 years ago, he guessed, but became a supporter of Planned Parenthood 67 years ago, in 1943. Living in Chicago, he and his first wife, Gloria, went to one of the organization's offices to get a diaphragm.

"Abstinence only is a good slogan, but I don't think it's effective," he said, advising that the best way to prevent abortion is to offer contraception.

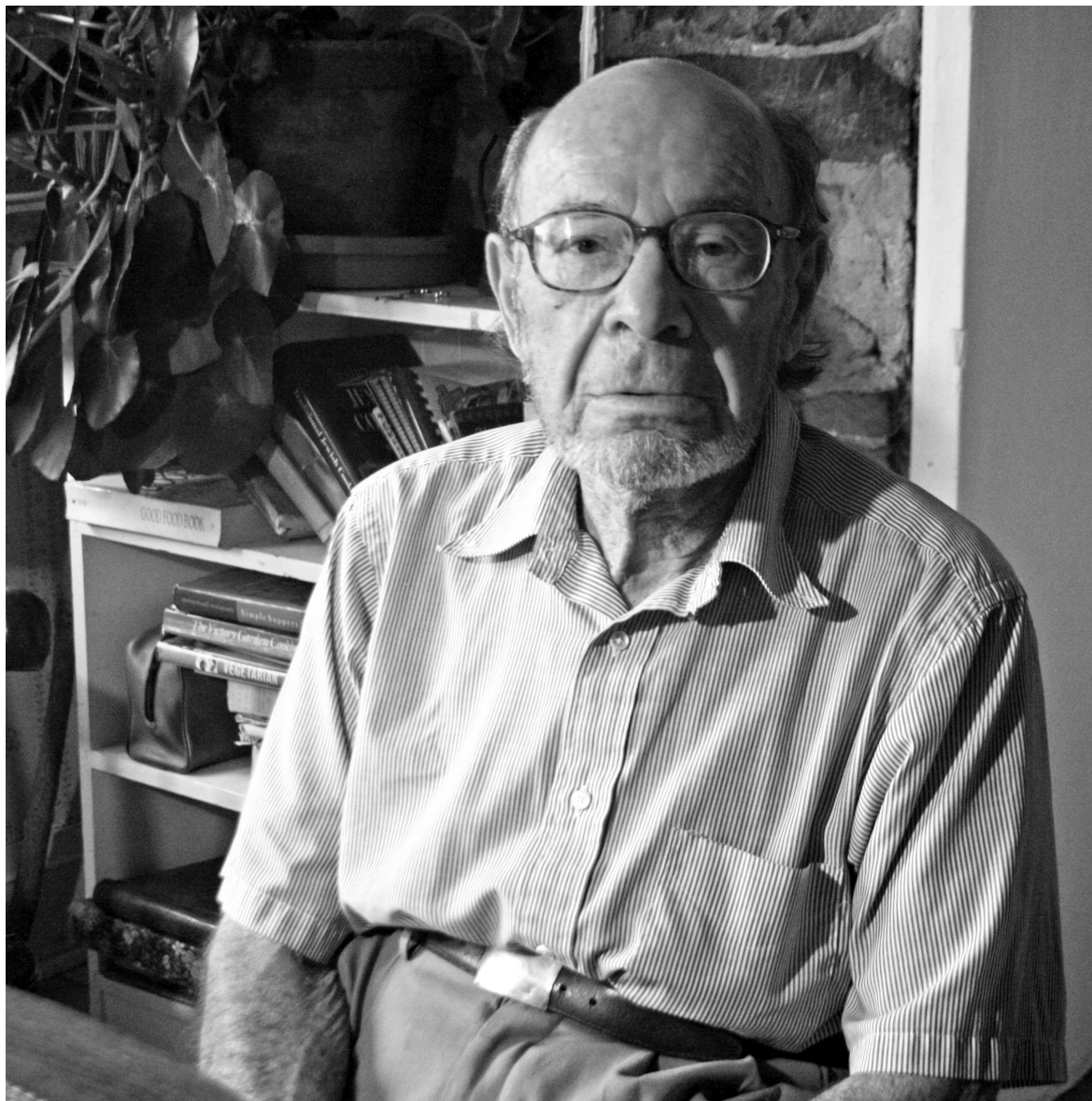
"On average," he said of the half-dozen picketers, they are "old men not quite as old as me." They hold signs that say, "Abortion is murder" and refer to the biblical passage, John 3:17. Curious, Levinger looked it up but couldn't find the relevance.

Confrontations are rare, he said. Once, the wind knocked over a poster that protesters had propped up, Levinger said, recalling to him Shakespeare's

abortion extremists force women seeking reproductive services to walk through a gauntlet of jeering protesters," says a history of the organization. "To bolster limited help from law enforcement officials, volunteers from around the country establish patient escort services."

Although he was raised Jewish, Levinger now practices as a Quaker. He has picketed himself, he said, most recently against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. A group of Quakers regularly holds a vigil in front of the state capitol, he said, adding, "I don't know whether it does any good or not."

Of the picketers in front of Planned Parenthood, Levinger said, "They're doing what they think is their God-given duty and I'm doing what I think is mine. That's where we are."



The Enterprise — Michael Koff

*Joe Levinger was recently honored for his long-time service to Planned Parenthood. Here, he is at home in the kitchen of his house on Leesome Lane in Altamont, which he shares with his wife, Hedi McKinley, a clinical social worker who has written an Enterprise column on mental health.*

## Weisz and Barber at helm again as Guilderland School Board seeks new member

By Melissa Hale-Spencer

**GUILDERLAND** — Those who would like to serve on the Guilderland School Board have until Monday to submit a résumé and letter of interest to the district office.

As of yesterday, according to Michael Marcelle, the interim superintendent, a handful of people had made inquiries about the unpaid post, but he said it remained to be seen how many would follow through.

Julie Cuneo resigned last month after serving one year of a three-year term because her family is moving to Saratoga.

All six of the board members present at a July 6 meeting agreed to follow the process the board used in the fall of 2009 to select Emilio Genzano to fill a seat left vacant by the death of John Dornbush. Eight men applied then and were interviewed in a televised session.

Genzano ran in May — on a slate with board members Colleen O'Connell and Gloria Towle-Hilt — and came in fifth in a six-way race for four seats.

At a meeting last month, O'Connell had pushed to re-appoint Genzano directly while the board's vice president, Catherine Barber, advocated using the same selection process the board had used to initially fill Dornbush's vacant seat.

Genzano told The Enterprise last month that he would appreciate the appointment. "I don't feel a process is necessary. I contributed and have experience," he said. (For the full story, go online to [www.altamontenterprise.com](http://www.altamontenterprise.com) and look under Guilderland archives for July 1, 2010.)

At the July 6 meeting, two-thirds of the nine-member board — that is, all six members present — had to approve the process. After O'Connell argued again for ap-

pointing Genzano, she ultimately voted with the others.

"We're creating more work than we need to," she said.

Towle-Hilt said that, although she supports Genzano, a legitimate process should be followed, not one tweaked for a personal agenda.

O'Connell argued that candidates for the post could be out of town on long-planned vacations and not available to be interviewed.

"That's a fact of life," said Towle-Hilt.

"I don't even like the process you're setting up," said O'Connell.

"If we go the other way, we're cutting everybody out," said Towle-Hilt.

O'Connell answered that she was comfortable with that.

Finally, the board settled on Thursday, July 22, as the date for the televised interviews of candidates. The only requirements for candidates is that they be at least 18 years old, a United States citizen, and have lived in the school district for at least a year before being appointed.

The board expects to appoint the successful candidate at the conclusion of the July 22 meeting. The new board member will serve until the next election on May 17, 2011.

The board on July 6 did not mention holding a special election to fill the seat. That route had been dismissed earlier as too expensive. It would cost about \$7,800, Assistant Superintendent for Business Neil Sanders told The Enterprise earlier.

### **Leadership uncontested, lunch prices to increase**

The July 6 session started with the annual re-organizational meeting, during which the board chooses its officers, makes appointments, and sets its schedule

for the year ahead.

Both the board's president, Richard Weisz, and its vice president, Barber, were uncontested in their roles. Barber is serving a second one-year term, and Weisz a fifth term as president. Weisz works as a lawyer, and Barber, who is a lawyer, too, is also a musician.

"Thank you to the board for your vote of confidence," Weisz said on being re-elected.

He noted the absence of board members Barbara Fraterrigo and Denise Eisele. Eisele, a nurse, was offering her services to a summer

---

**"If we go the other way, we're cutting everybody out."**

---

camp, he said, and Fraterrigo was mourning the death of her father-in-law.

While most of the re-organizational items engendered little, if any, comment or discussion, the board paused on the matter of lunch prices. The prices are increasing again for the upcoming school year, by 15 cents. Elementary students will pay \$2.25 and middle and high school students will pay \$2.50 for lunch.

"Do any of the parents know this is coming?" asked Weisz.

Sanders responded that the increases were typical and were to "make sure this is a self-supporting program." He added, "We haven't been in the black."

"People will not be upset about this," said O'Connell. "It's easier to give a kid \$2.50 instead of \$2.35."

Board member Judy Slack said it is good to serve healthy food,

which is more expensive.

While Weisz did not oppose the increase, he said he just wanted the reasons aired publicly, noting that the 7-percent hike would amount to "30 bucks a year" for a child who eats school lunches regularly.

All six board members present voted for these appointments or designations for 2010-11:

— Linda Livingston as district clerk for \$5,805, and as deputy treasurer for no added pay;

— John Rizzo as treasurer for no added pay and as Medicaid compliance officer for no added pay;

— Norma Henness as tax collector for Knox and New Scotland for \$1,040;

— Donna Jurczynski to audit claims for \$17.15 per hour;

— Joy Pierle as part-time bank reconciliator for \$14.45 per hour;

— Girvin and Ferlazzo as legal counsel for a retainer fee of \$35,000;

— John Bevilacqua as consulting school physician for \$3,000;

— Bonadio & Co., LLP to perform the district's required annual audit, budgeted for \$20,000;

— Questar III BOCES for an internal audit for \$11,500;

— The Altamont Enterprise and The Daily Gazette as official newspapers; and

— First Niagara Commercial Bank as official bank depository.

### **Other business**

In other business at its regular July meeting, the board:

— Welcomed Suzanne Lamendola as coordinator for elementary programs and staff development, a new post. She will be paid \$77,500 annually.

"Thank you very much," Lamendola said to the board. "I'm excited to be here."

"It's a different way of doing business for us," said Weisz;

— Heard an annual report from Sanders on the district's cell phones. Forty-two cell phones are used by district employees, mostly decision-makers or maintenance workers, Sanders said, and the cost averages \$962 per month;

— Awarded a bid, the lowest of five, to Leland Paper Company for toilet tissue at a cost of \$14,795;

— Awarded Waste Management of New York, the lowest by far of three bidders, a \$40,708.14 contract for garbage, rubbish, and recyclable pickup.

Weisz complimented the district's new waste management system, which Sanders said cut the costs from two years ago about in half;

— Heard praise from O'Connell, whose oldest child graduated last month, for the new graduation venue — the athletic arena at the University at Albany.

"Everyone in my family thought it was wonderful," she said.

Guilderland commencement ceremonies in recent years had been held at the Empire State Plaza.

O'Connell added, "It could be tweaked," noting more microphones for the chorus and orchestra would make them better heard, and the exit strategy could be improved;

— Heard praise from Weisz on how the new district office space, part of the \$27 million building project, is shaping up. The district offices will be moving from their present location on the middle-school campus — once a golfing club — to renovated space at the high school.

"We have professional people; now, we're going to have professional space," said Weisz, suggesting an open house for the public; and

— Met in executive session to discuss the search for a new superintendent and a contract.