

COMMENTARY

The ADVOCATE

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EDITORIAL

Thumbs up — Thumbs down

Thumbs up to Julia Wade.

The Board of Education member has stood fast against making cuts to next year's school budget request, which she rightly called "very conservative."

Superintendent Joshua Starr has requested a \$223.7 million operating budget for Stamford schools in 2010-11. That represents a less-than-2-percent increase from the current year. Even considering that teachers' salaries won't go up due to an arbitration decision, that is a small increase for a school system the size of Stamford's, where other large fixed costs are on the rise.

The Board of Education nonetheless reduced the superintendent's budget last week by \$324,000 before sending it on for passage to the Board of Finance and the Board of Representatives. A couple of members tried to reduce it even further.

Ms. Wade opposed all cuts, which showed courage in this economic climate.

School Board members have a

THE ISSUE

The good, the bad and the baffling in recent local news

responsibility to taxpayers to be fiscally responsible. But we agree with Ms. Wade that their primary responsibility is to advocate for the schools.

This is going to be a terribly difficult budget year. The fact that the mayor's office has asked the school board to slash its budget by nearly \$10 million foreshadows the battles that could lie ahead.

But even with money as scarce as it is, the budget process must be a give and take. And that means school board members have to fight for the schools.

Thumbs up to Jason Shaplen, the next chief executive officer of St. Luke's LifeWorks, and best of luck as begins leading this essential agency through continued tough times for nonprofit organi-

zations everywhere.

Mr. Shaplen's appointment signals a new era for St. Luke's, whose original guiding light — the Rev. Richard L. Schuster — died last fall after leading the organization for 22 years.

But while challenges have grown, the mission of the agency remains unchanged. It is the primary provider of transitional and permanent housing to homeless families and individuals in Stamford and Greenwich, and works extensively with those living with mental illness and HIV/AIDS.

Of course, a few words of explanation don't even scratch the surface of what a place like St. Luke's LifeWorks does. But regardless of individual circumstances, the essence of the work it performs remains the same in each case: People come to St. Luke's broken, and there they begin to rediscover their self worth and self reliance.

May St. Luke's and its new leader continue to serve that vital calling well.