

Board names principal for PS 31

School vacancy stirred affirmative action charges after controversy over unlicensed former candidate

By LAURA D'ANGELO
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Following claims that the Staten Island Community School Board had ignored affirmative action hiring practices, a black assistant principal was named the board's choice for principal of a New Brighton elementary school.

At its monthly meeting last night at PS 55, Eltingville, the board voted 6-0 to appoint Arnold Obey principal of PS 31. Three board members were absent.

The announcement comes in the wake of the controversial appointment of Thomas J. Kelly to the same post in March. Board member Denise Pedro had cast the sole opposing vote, saying the appointment of a white man flew in the face of the board's affirmative action goals.

Two days later, the city Board of Education rescinded Kelly's appointment when it discovered he did not have a license for the job. Kelly had not fulfilled course requirements in spe-

cial education.

When the school board met behind closed doors to discuss waiving the course requirements, which are no longer in place, Mrs. Pedro stormed out of the session in protest. She would not comment on last night's appointment.

Kelly, currently the assistant principal of the New Brighton school, welcomed Obey to the "PS 31 educational family" last night.

"I, on a personal level, will give my full and 100 percent cooperation as long as I'm in the building. Good luck to you, Arnold," he said.

Obey has been the assistant principal of PS 16 in Tompkinsville for the past six years.

More than two decades ago, Obey starred in basketball at DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. He went on to become one of the most notable guards in the history of Wagner College.

The board also passed an emergency resolution protesting layoffs of half the city's school crossing guards. Mayor David N. Dinkins an-

nounced last week that approximately 950 crossing guards will be eliminated citywide.

Board member Jerry Cammarata said the guards are a proven deterrent against fatal accidents involving children.

"Their removal is no less than outrageous and an affront to the importance of the well-being and safety of the children of our community," he said. "Community School Board 31 sees no profit in balancing the budget at the expense of these young and innocent lives."

In other business, the board passed a resolution supporting the schoolwide spending of Chapter 1 federal funds in eligible Island schools.

Designed by Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez, schoolwide projects allow schools to use Chapter 1 funds — which are aimed at remedial students from low-income families — for the entire school population. Schools with a high percentage of low-income students who sign up for the schoolwide project receive between \$8,900 and \$20,000 in planning monies.

Six schools on Staten Island are eligible for participation; however, none have opted to join. Citywide, 126 schools have joined the project.