Russ Harris, President of the Newark Central School District Board of Education, was the recipient November 14th of the 2019 Alex Eligh Service Award at the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce’s 49th Annual Awards Dinner at the Newark Elks Club.

The award is given annually in memory of Alex Eligh who was executive director of the Newark Community Center for 27 years. AECC Director Mike Muscolino recalled the Community Center was re-named in Eligh’s memory in the mid-80s. He also said it is befitting that the Chamber Service Award each year is now given in Eligh’s memory because of his outstanding service to the community.

In presenting the award to Harris, Newark School Superintendent Matt Cook said “service, leadership and laughter” best describe Harris.

“It is who Russ is and we are all better off for his commitment and dedication to Newark,” he said.

Harris served on the Board of Education from 1993 until 2003 and was re-elected to a fourth-three-year term on the BOE in May 2014 after he retired from his job in the IT Department of the Wayne Central School District where he worked from 1999 until 2014. He was re-elected to a fifth, three-year term on the BOE in May of 2017 and is currently serving as BOE president for the fourth consecutive year. Harris served as BOE vice-president in 2015-16.

He is vice president of the Four-County School Boards Association.

A 1967 Hamburg High School graduate, Harris holds an associates degree in liberal arts from MCC. He served in the New York State National Guard from 1970 until 1976.

He was employed as a research technician at Eastman Kodak Co. from 1969 until 1974 and from there worked from 1974 until 1978 as manager of the W.L. Coughtry Co., an Albany reprographic and printing company, while his wife, Marianne Arseneau attended Albany Medical School.

The day they moved to Webster in 1979 he was re-hired at Eastman Kodak as a senior research technician, but left in 1986 to handle billing for his wife’s medical practice.

Harris started Newark Medical Management in 1989, selling the business in 1996 to Ide Radiology. Russ, Marianne and son, Daniel, moved to Newark in 1991. Daniel is senior software engineer at L3Harris in Rochester. He and wife, Emily have two children, Christopher, 2, and Lily, 4 months.

Among Harris’ many other current activities, he is a past committee chair of Pack and Troop 122 in Newark. He is a past president of the Kelley School PTA and joined Newark Rotary in the early 1990s, having been sponsored by Ron Colacino.

For the last five years he has served as Newark Rotary’s Youth Exchange officer and also is Rotary’s District 7120 Denmark Youth Exchange Officer.

Harris is serving his second term on the Newark Public Library Board.

He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Drumlins Radio Club and is the lead volunteer examiner for Amateur Radio FCC testing group in Ontario and Wayne counties. He is an American Radio Relay League Volunteer Instructor and a member of Wayne and Ontario County RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services) affiliated with county and state divisions of Homeland Security. He is a member of MARS (Military Auxiliary Radio System), a volunteer radio communications service for the Department of Defense and is a member SHARES, SHAred RESources, part of the Department of Homeland Security.

SHARES, MARS and RACES are high frequency radio programs that provide an additional means for users with a national security preparedness mission to communicate when landline and cellular communications are unavailable.

Asked about how he felt about receiving the Chamber’s Alex Eligh Service Award, he said: “I was very honored and it made me remember and appreciate even more all the people who have held these service positions before me.”