

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 10, 2006

Albany High School

7:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Edward Brown, President
Teneka Frost, Vice President
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary
William Barnette
Judy Doeschate
Susan Kushner
Jackie Jenkins-Cox

Dr. Eva Joseph
Terrance White
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Joseph Dragone
Kathleen Wetmore
Kathleen Wolverton, Esq.

ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

Mr. Brown the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Brown asked that those present remain standing for a moment of silence in memory of Amber Yow, a student at Harriett Gibbons who past away last week.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Ruby Hughes addressed the board relative to the budget.
2. Anne Pope addressed the board relative to the budget.
3. Beverly Padgett addressed the board relative to the budget.
4. Annette DeLavallade addressed the board relative to the budget.
5. Marlin Anderson addressed the board relative to Philip Livingston Magnet Academy.
6. Teresa Westin addressed the board relative to Philip Livingston Magnet Academy.
7. Gail Perry addressed the board relative to Philip Livingston Magnet Academy.
8. Linda Miller addressed the board relative to Philip Livingston Magnet Academy.
9. Talon McLoughlin addressed the board relative to Philip Livingston Magnet Academy.
10. Debra Brown Grant addressed the board relative to Philip Livingston Magnet Academy.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Joseph noted board members would be provided additional information so that board members can make the best decision as possible regarding the budget.

Dr. Joseph provided a recommendation relative to the reassignment of Philip Livingston Magnet Academy (PLMA). Dr. Joseph advised that based on the fact that the community is not fully aware of middle school reduction due to the charter schools, with middle school adjustments yet to be planned, the lack of stability in enrollment due to charter school and the abbreviated timeframe for building parent and community awareness, plan development, she is recommending that the reassignment of students at PLMA not take place at this time.

Dr. Joseph noted the board would be provided additional information on the Alternative Education Program based on questions presented by board members.

INFORMATION ITEM

Alternative Education Presentation

Dr. Joseph advised the district has continued to look at the Alternative Education offerings. Presently, Harriett Gibbons is structured in a way that it is to some extent catching students after they have not had success at Albany High. Dr. Joseph advised consideration is being given to using a valuable resource, which has been under utilized and not as successful as anticipated, as a preventive tool for students transitioning into the high school so that their experiences at the high school can be more supported and ultimately more successful. This would be a realignment of program to better meet student needs and yield greater success.

Mr. Dragone reviewed the program concept. Mr. Dragone noted the goal of the program is to insure that 9th grade students experience academic success before they experience academic failure and to be successful so they can continue on a track to graduation in four years. The capacity of the program is 250 students with two teams. This is an enriched academic track. There is embedded time daily in the program for group, career and academic counseling for teachers to establish relationships with the students and time for guidance counselors to talk about academic opportunities and time to create career pathways and set goals. This is an interdisciplinary approach to program planning. Students will have the opportunity to receive 6.5 credits and the opportunity to transition to become sophomores. Required Regents exams will be taken. Mr. Dragone noted there has been tremendous outreach from partners in the community such as UAlbany and Parsons, along with others.

Mr. Dragone reviewed a proposed schedule with a strong focus on science. Mr. Dragone noted one period a day would be set aside with a teacher, counselor, social worker or administrator to talk about skills, career pathways and issues related to impeding success. There is also an advisory period that focuses on social aspects, discussions about how the students' day is going, how they view school, what can be provided to help them be successful.

Mr. Clement, Principal at Harriett Gibbons noted this has been a great collaboration with administration and faculty in looking at revamping the school. Mr. Clement advised that while the traditional model has been successful for a number of students, it has not been successful for the greater population. This program is geared to providing students with success before they fail one or two years of high school. Mr. Clement spoke about a program with opportunity built into the schedule that addresses the specific social needs of each student. Mr. Clement advised the professional training of teachers to teacher better is also important to the success of the program. Mr. Clement noted the ACCESS program at Albany High is not working and will be eliminated.

Mr. Dragone also noted there will be a summer program for students, which will include an interdisciplinary approach to help students with Regents, identify strengths and provide transition services for what the student will experience in September.

Mr. Barnette made a motion to act on the district administration's recommendation to redefine Harriett Gibbons High School 9th to 12th grade program to a 9th grade only school setting. Ms. Jenkins-Cox seconded the motion. Following a lengthy discussion Ms. Kushner called the question.

The board voted 5 ayes and 2 opposed. Mr. Barnette and Ms. Jenkins-Cox were opposed.
Motion passed.

Philip Livingston Magnet Academy Reassignment

Mr. Barnette made a motion to accept the superintendent's recommendation not to reassign students from the Philip Livingston Magnet Academy during the upcoming school year. Ms. Jenkins-Cox seconded the motion.

The board voted 6 ayes and 1 opposed. Ms. Kushner was opposed.

ACTION ITEM

Budget

Dr. Joseph advised there was a request at the last meeting for reconsideration of the Elementary Summer Program, the Foreign Language Program and the addition of a teacher for the Dual Language Program included in the budget recommendations that were previously made. Dr. Joseph advised those considerations have been added to the budget and budget figures have been adjusted accordingly. Dr. Joseph advised additional information regarding the impact of state aid as a basis for providing the board with information about the total budget.

Ms. Wetmore advised the last proposed budget presented was \$169,350,932, which resulted in a tax levy of \$102,274,576. Ultimately, the tax levy increase was 13.34%. After much discussion a request was made to include the following items in the budget: Elementary Summer School \$150,000; Foreign Language \$415,000 and the teacher for the Dual Language Program \$60,000, which totals \$625,000. The revised budget figure reflects a grand total of \$169,975,932 with a tax levy increase of 14.04%. The estimated tax rate is 14.15%. Ms. Wetmore reviewed the summary breakdown with revised figures indicating the percentage of the total budget for each category. Ms. Wetmore continued with a review of budget additions and reductions and a comparison of the 2005 and 2006 budget, which indicates an increase in the budget of 8.24% or \$12,938,300. Ms. Wetmore also reviewed figures for a contingency budget, which totals \$168,373,960, \$704,666 less than the proposed budget of \$169,975,932 with required reductions of Student Supplies \$638,426; Equipment \$208,880 and Ineligible Raises estimated at \$50,000 (\$169,078,626).

Ms. Wetmore then reviewed a proposed budget that reflects state aid scenarios of both the executive proposal with a tax rate increase of 14.15% and the legislative proposal with an estimated tax rate increase of 8.87%. Ms. Wetmore advised there is also the possibility that the district will receive Magnet aid in the amount of \$1.5 million, which could offset general fund figures and result in a 7.20% estimated tax rate increase. Ms. Wetmore advised the district has learned that there is legislation pending to change the TRS advance payback to a five-year payback.

Dr. Joseph added that none of these aid figures include any charter school relief aid. Dr. Joseph noted there has been no indication in terms of what might be forthcoming. In terms of the contingency budget, Dr. Joseph noted that she has indicated that the district rarely continues to come back to the contingency budget as a basis for comparison for the board in this process. The reason that the district continues to come back to the contingency figure this year is that this is the closest, even with the tax levy increase that the district has right now, this is the closest the district has been to contingency level going forth with the budget.

Dr. Joseph noted that the cost of education expenses has been reduced in this budget and the cost for programs in the district continue to be reduced, while the other non-negotiable costs, including those for charter schools continue to increase.

Discussion followed relative to how any additional aid would be designated. Dr. Joseph advised the Governor's proposal included an increase over last year's state aid of 2.77%. For the last three to five years the district has had on average a state aid increase of approximately 9.5%. The legislative proposal takes the district up to about that level. Dr. Joseph clarified that there is no specific charter school relief aid and the district still needs charter school relief aid.

Ms. Kushner made a motion to approve the 2006-2007 budget as proposed. Ms. Frost seconded the motion.

Mrs. Gaffuri then made a motion to add in the 10% reduction in supplies, equipment and conferences \$126,000. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion. Following discussion, Dr. Joseph noted that conversations related to additional state aid or charter school relief monies would be separate from the discussion this evening. Dr. Joseph noted that if the district were to receive a separate amount at some time in the future, post budget, post state budget adoption that is considered charter school relief aid the district would be permitted to use those funds for educational programs, teachers and ordinary contingent expenses. Ms. Wolverton confirmed this information based on the language in the legislation. Ms. Frost called the question.

The board voted unanimously to oppose the motion.

Ms. Gaffuri made a motion to amend the motion on the table to include secondary teaching reductions (3.0 FTE) for \$181,200. There was no second to the motion.

Ms. Gaffuri made a motion to amend the motion to add staff reductions due to charter schools, 20 teachers \$1,105,799; 11 Teaching Assistants \$338,778; and 1 administrator \$135,692 (\$1,580,269). There was no second to the motion.

Mr. Barnette clarified that the motion on the floor is to approve the budget as recommended by the superintendent in the amount of \$169,975,932, which has an estimated tax rate increase of 14.15%. Mr. Brown confirmed that this is the motion.

Following discussion related to anticipated state aid Dr. Joseph recommended that the board adopt the budget as presented with an additional resolution that applies the maximum state aid received through the state budget adoption indicated in the amount of \$55,346,592 be used to reduce the tax levy.

Ms. Doesschate offered a friendly amendment that the anticipated state aid and magnet be directly applied to reduce the tax levy. Following discussion, At the request of Ms. Doesschate Dr. Joseph recommended that the board adopt the budget as has been presented and the additional resolution that applies the maximum state aid received through this state budget adoption, as indicated, in the amount of \$4,763,652 to reducing the tax levy. Ms. Doesschate restated the amendment as follows, that anticipated state aid up to \$4,763,652 be directly applied to reduce the tax levy. Ms. Kushner accepted the friendly amendment.

Mr. Barnette offered an additional friendly amendment to include the statement that if the district received Magnet aid in the amount of \$1.5 million, that amount would be used to offset general fund expenditures with the intent to use any additional funds to further reduce the tax levy. Ms. Kushner accepted the friendly amendment.

Discussion continued relative to the fund balance amount. Ms. Wetmore advised the district is currently at 2% of last year's budget. Ms. Wetmore advised that figure would change based on next year's budget. Following discussion relative to increasing the amount in the fund balance to reflect 2% of the 2006-2007 budget amount, Ms. Gaffuri offered a third friendly amendment to increase the fund balance amount to reflect 2% of the 2006-2007 budget amount. Following additional discussion, Ms. Wetmore indicated the risk in the fund balance is that if the district experiences unforeseen expenses, the district would rely on the fund balance to re-appropriate fund to fund unexpected expenditures. Dr. Joseph recommended that the district use any additional funds to restore the fund balance to the 2006-2007 cap. Ms. Kushner did not accept the amendment.

Mr. Barnette clarified the motion that the board is adopting a budget in the amount of \$169,975,932 and should the district receive additional state aid \$6,263,652 (\$4,763,652 state aid and \$1.5 million Magnet aid), that amount would be applied to reduce the tax levy, resulting in an estimated 7.09% tax rate increase. Ms. Kushner called the question.

The board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Frost made a motion to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Catherine L. Cutting
Clerk of the Board