

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 17, 2007  
7:00 p.m.

## Pine Hills Elementary School

### PRESENT:

Teneka Frost, President	Dr. Eva Joseph
William Barnette, Vice President	Terry White
Wayne Morris, Secretary	Dr. Joseph Dragone
Mark Barth	Kathleen
Wetmore	
Jackie Jenkins-Cox	Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Judy Doeschate	
Barbara Gaffuri	

### Absent/Excused:

None

### Call to Order:

Ms. Frost called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Frost called for a motion to amend the agenda to move Item #7 2007-2008 School Budget to Item #2, following the Superintendent's Report. Motion was made by Mr. Barnette and seconded by Ms. Jenkins-Cox.

The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

### SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Joseph advised the District share its disappointment in not having the proposed 2007-2008 school budget approved this past Tuesday. Dr. Joseph noted Albany is not the first District to have a defeated budget, nor will it be the last. Albany taxpayers should not forget that the School District is being forced to pay the added burden of charter schools. That's not whining. It's a fact. No other district in the state faces such a burden. Also, the vote came at a time when the reassessment was new and people were confused about the impact on their taxes. The District put out a great deal of information so that residents were not asked to vote in the dark and we hoped for the best. Neither the administration nor the school board had control over when the reassessment took place, and we feel that it did have an impact. As for what residents can expect in the way of results from the Albany Schools, this budget is focused squarely on student achievement. Graduation rates are improving and the recent statement of goals by the administration and the school board make it eminently clear that achievement is top priority. Dr. Joseph advised the District would work toward continuing to improve education in the Albany Schools. Dr. Joseph advised Mr. Chuck Szuberla from the State Education Department, who is the Director of

Operations and Management Services, would provide additional information related to budget discussions this evening.

Dr. Joseph also announced that the State Education Department has recognized five of the District's elementary schools as either high performing or rapidly improving and gap closing. Dr. Joseph noted a formal announcement is expected, but there has been some buzz about it and the records should be set straight, because it's too important not to make note of. The school that is designated as high performing is the Albany School of Humanities. The schools that are designated as rapidly improving and gap closing are Delaware Community School, Pine Hills Elementary School, Montessori Magnet School and Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology. Dr. Joseph extended congratulations to the principals, faculty and staff of these schools.

Dr. Joseph advised the board would be appointing Ms. Wilberly Range as the Principal of Giffen Memorial Elementary School. Ms. Range's leadership as the Interim Principal has been very beneficial to the students in that school, and the school will continue to benefit from her skillful leadership and talent.

Dr. Joseph also welcomed Mrs. Marilyn Zaretsky, Project Director for the District's National Urban Alliance partnership, who would be providing a presentation to the board later this evening.

### **2007-2008 School Budget**

Dr. Joseph advised as the District thinks about a defeated budget, there are next steps and they follow a logic progression. However, we learned yesterday from the State Education Department there was a very important piece of information in terms of ongoing discussion about the budget. Dr. Joseph advised this information is so important that The State Education Department has dispatched Mr. Szuberla, to this meeting, to provide information, pertaining to the contingency budget.

Mr. Szuberla advised with the defeat of the budget, the District has two options. The Board can immediately adopt a contingent budget or put the budget out again for a second vote. In the past, there were items that were contingent, and other that were not contingent. Mr. Szuberla advised the law has changed a while ago to set a cap on how large an increase districts are permitted on a contingency budget, which is basically the CPI times 120%, a little under 4% this year. There are certain exclusions that can be subtracted in determining the contingent budget cap. Mr. Szuberla noted one significant change this year allowed the districts to pull out the increases for charter school payments. Unfortunately, this was something that was not caught until early this week, which obviously is much later than when districts have to notify the public in their property tax report cards, later than when they are notifying the public as to what the contingent budget numbers are. Mr. Szuberla advised this would have a significant impact on Albany. The contingent budget figure is much higher than what was originally shown. Ms. Szuberla noted his disappointment that this matter was not identified prior to the budget vote. Mr. Szuberla advised he was present at this meeting to answer questions related to this matter

Dr. Joseph advised initially the District prepared budget information regarding where the District fell with respect to contingency. However, this information specifically changes the landscape. Essentially, the contingency cap for the School District Budget is higher than originally projected based on this new information from SED. Ms. Wetmore advised that based on the new calculations, the new contingent budget figure is \$192,989,391. The proposed budget that was defeated (\$189,535,737) is \$3.4 million less than the contingent figure.

Dr. Joseph advised this information significantly impacts how the District would proceed in finalizing a budget for the 2007-2008 school year. Dr. Joseph recommended that discussion related to the budget be postponed until the date of a special board meeting so that the District is able to provide detailed information for consideration in the discussion.

Dr. Barth made a motion to table Item #7 2007-2008 School Budget until the board sets another time for this discussion. Ms. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Discussion followed relative to the date of the legal notice, should the Board decide to put forth another budget for approval by the public. Ms. Wolverton advised the legal notice has to be published by June 5. That budget would also need to be made available to the public two weeks prior to the vote on June 19, 2007. A contingency budget needs to be in place by June 30 in order to be in place July 1 for the start of the fiscal year. Dr. Joseph recommended the board set the date of May 29, 2007 for this discussion to take place. Ms. Frost advised the next discussion of the budget would occur on May 29, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. at Albany High School.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Anton Konev addressed the board regarding the budget.
2. Bernice Grima addressed the board regarding the quality of education and school vouchers.
3. Marlon Anderson addressed the board regarding the budget and the political climate in Albany.
4. James Lembo addressed the board regarding the situation with the budget.
5. Mark Mishler addressed the board regarding the lack of timely and accurate information from the State Education Department.

#### **ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS**

Ms. Frost presented the routine consent items as follow: Appointments (Interim Assistant Principal at Albany High School and Principal at Giffen Memorial Elementary School) and a four-month lease extension for the former Montessori School Building. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to accept the routine consent items as presented. Mrs. Jenkins-Cox seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

#### **FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT**

##### **Action Item Related to the Facilities Project**

### **Project Management Contracts**

Ms. Frost presented a resolution to approve the project management contract with Kenneth A. Gifford as Project and Management for Arbor Hill Elementary School, Giffen Memorial Elementary School and Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology. Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve the resolution. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

### **INFORMATION ITEM**

#### **National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA)**

Dr. Joseph introduced Marilyn Zaretsky, the NUA Project Director for the Albany School District. Ms. Zaretsky gave a very comprehensive presentation on the Instructional Assessments conducted by the NUA for each school in the District. Ms. Zaretsky presented the process is obtaining information to assist NUA and District in planning and implementing a program of professional strengths for teachers and administrators while encouraging them to extend their practice in ways that have a positive effect on the achievement of students, especially those who are currently underachieving. Ms. Zaretsky reviewed the components of the Instructional Assessment reports: the background of the school; summary of the principal interview; achievement data; discussion of the achievement data; responses to the NUA staff survey and student perspectives. These components together with information gathered by NUA through classroom visits are then reviewed to determine a course of action for each school. Ms. Zaretsky outlined expectations for the year, the accomplishments to date and the next steps in the process of addressing the achievement gap in the District. Ms. Zaretsky also reviewed the status of the NUA contract approved by the board last year.

Following discussion, Ms. Frost thanked Ms. Zaretsky for the presentation and advised that on Monday, June 4, 2007 the information on the instructional assessments will be presented to the community. Dr. Joseph noted notice of this meeting has already been released to the public.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **Elementary Literacy Program**

Ms. Frost presented the textbook resources that will support the district wide elementary literacy program for action by the board. Mrs. Jenkins-Cox made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. Dr. Joseph advised the board was presented a very comprehensive report at the last meeting related to the program, recommending the Harcourt Storytown textbook series PK-5. Information will be presented to teachers before the end of the school year to begin orientation into this new series in preparation on initiating the program in September 2007.

The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

#### **Final Vote Canvass**

Ms. Frost presented the certified results of the May 15, 2007 school district vote indicating 2,345 yes votes and 2,699 no votes for the budget. Budget was defeated. The top four candidates for the Library Board Trustees were Dennis Gaffney, Mary Ellen O'Connor, Leonard Ricchiuti and James M. Gallagher. Mrs. Jenkins-Cox made a motion

for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the vote.

The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

**BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

**BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

Mrs. Gaffuri advised the concert at Albany High School last evening was excellent. Mrs. Gaffuri encouraged those present to attend school performances and sporting events to witness the wonderful things students in the District are doing.

Ms. Frost advised she attended the Urban Scholars Program at Siena College over this past weekend Ms. Frost advised this is a program involving middle school students, providing enrichment opportunities throughout the school year. Ms. Frost noted last year she donated a 35mm camera to the program. This year the students showed a number of photographs taken with the camera that were used as a comparison of photos using the 35mm camera vs. a digital camera. Ms. Frost advised this is a great partnership with the District, the community through the Macedonia Baptist Church and Siena College. Students are really enjoying the experience.

Mr. Barnette requested that the Board consider investigating the possibility of establishing a mechanism, possibly TV or the internet, to publicize the positive things that are going on in the District to improve the public perception of the District. Other board members indicated their support in placing this item on a future agenda.

Mr. Morris suggested that board members have an opportunity to shadow teachers and administrator for a day to improve board member's understanding of the schools and students in the District. Board members indicated their support in scheduling future discussions related to this matter.

Ms. Doesschate suggested a notebook, put together by the District in collaboration with other organizations for every parent, possibly when their child is born or when the child is per-school age that is a parent resource manual. The notebook would contain information about immunizations, a place for school newsletters, school calendars and child assessments, etc. for each student. The notebook could also contain information for parents about resources in the community such as day care centers, etc.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Morris made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Jenkins-Cox seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Catherine L. Cutting  
Clerk of the Board