

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

October 6, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Albany High School

PRESENT: Edward H. Brown, Jr., President
Susan Kushner, Vice President
Teneka Frost, Secretary
William Barnette
Patricia Fahy
Barbara Gaffuri

Dr. Eva Joseph
Jeffrey Honeywell
Terrance White
Joseph Dragone
Kathleen Wetmore
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Minsoo Lee

Absent: None

Call to Order:

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Brown welcomed the members of the audience and thanked them for taking the time to attend the meeting.

Mr. Brown advised there is an addendum to the agenda to include Board Member Vacancy under Discussion.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Joseph advised she had the opportunity to make presentations to two community groups relative to the many positive opportunities occurring within the schools. Dr. Joseph advised she would bring the presentation forward to the Board at a later date.

Dr. Joseph advised the kick-off event for the Educational Alliance, the strengthened partnership with SUNY Albany, will take place tomorrow. President Kermit Hall, along with approximately fifteen professors will be at Albany High School to each teach a class as an endeavor in terms of insuring that students know that we take focusing with them in terms of commitment to college very seriously. Dr. Joseph advised she would be teaching a 12th grade English class herself, which she is looking forward to very much. The morning will begin with a reception for the teachers that are participating in the event.

Dr. Joseph advised the Board would be provided a presentation this evening on the Adolescent Literacy Program, which is a component of the middle school restructuring.

Dr. Joseph advised that under the leadership of Mr. Dragone, the District has established a middle level task force, a committee of administrators and parents that are coming together to insure that the District has a quality review and quality implementation of the restructuring plan. Dr. Joseph advised their work would involve reviewing assessment reports, recognizing successful practices, reviewing the implementation of the middle school programs to insure that the District is staying focused and it is a productive effort.

Dr. Joseph advised as the community well knows and the Board is very aware, next year Hackett Middle School will be renovated as part of the building. As part of that process, as with any of the schools that are being renovated, students will need to be housed in another school. The original plan entails School 16 and Hackett Middle School cohabitating in the Philip Schuyler Elementary School. For a number of reasons the District has been reflecting on that plan. Dr. Joseph advised in discussion consideration of a number of alternate plans have been reviewed. Dr. Joseph advised the District is anticipating completing that work during the month of November, prior to the winter so that parents have a chance to provide feedback. Dr. Joseph advised the District would be coming back to the Board relative to this issue at a future date. Dr. Joseph noted information relative to this matter would be posted on the website as well.

Dr. Joseph advised the evaluation of the School Safety Program by the New York State Center for School Safety would take place in the District in the near future. Dr. Joseph advised this is an excellent endeavor undertaken by the District. It is a very comprehensive review of the entire School Safety Program and the elements contained in that plan to verify that the District is doing everything possible to insure the safety of our schools. Dr. Joseph also reviewed the process of the evaluation. A plan of action will be developed for the District following the conclusion of the evaluation. This information will be shared with the Board when it is completed. Dr. Joseph advised the process is expected to take approximately four months.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Minsoo Lee noted his remarks this evening are related to the Random Search Policy, which is on the agenda for discussion. Mr. Lee asked the Board to take into consideration the fact that he spoke with many of the students at Albany High School regarding this issue. Mr. Lee advised his conversations with students indicate that students are not fearful of attending Albany High School and do not feel the need for metal detectors to make them feel safe, and that they would only heighten the tension between students and teachers.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

1. Carolyn Keefe addressed the Board relative to swing space next year during the renovation of Hackett Middle School.
2. Nolene Smith addressed the Board relative to the Random Search Policy and the relationships between teachers and students.
3. Bill Washburn addressed the Board regarding the facilities plan, restructure of the high school and the Random Search Policy.
4. Barbara Smith addressed the Board regarding the Random Search Policy.
5. Gulcan Yalniz addressed the Board relative to swing space at Philip Schuyler for next year.
6. Melanie Trimble addressed the Board relative to the Random Search Policy.
7. Larry Frank addressed the Board relative to the President's, Principals and PTS Representatives Dinner on October 27th at Myers Middle School and the CDPHP Invitational scheduled for Thanksgiving Day Weekend at the Pepsi Arena. Mr. Frank also spoke about the Random Search Policy.
8. Mike O'Brien addressed the Board regarding cooperation between the District and the City of Albany related to the renovation of Blecker Stadium.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Mr. Brown presented Routine Consent Items including Proceedings of Meetings for September 6, 2005 and September 22, 2005, Resignations, Positions Vacated, Leave of Absence, Transfers, Appointments (Probationary Teachers, Regular Substitutes, Miscellaneous, Part-time Teachers, Coaching, Civil Service), Attendance at Conferences, Treasurer's Report, Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund, Award of Bid, 2005-06 Budget Transfers under \$10,000, 2005-06 Budget Transfers over \$10,000, Budget Status Report 7/1/05 – 6/30/06, Real Property Tax Adjustments and Increase in Mileage Reimbursement Rate, Contracts for Grants and Special Projects (Hudson Valley Community College) (Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area/Greenway Conservatory) and a grant resolution to support grant opportunities to advance and promote the civic mission of schools and the civic learning of students; Recommendations of the Committee on Special Education, the Subcommittee on Special Education and the Committee on Pre-School Education and Appointments to Special Education Committees and Emergency Conditional Appointments. Mr. Barnette made a motion to approve Routine Consent Items. Ms. Frost seconded the motion.

Mr. Barnette requested that the Emergency Conditional Appointments be set aside. Ms. Kushner asked that the Award of Bid, the HVCC contract and the Hudson River Valley contract be set aside.

The Board voted unanimously to approve Routine Consent Items absent those items set aside.

Following clarification of the use of uncertified Itinerant Teachers, Mr. Barnette made a motion to approve the Emergency Conditional Appointments. Ms. Fahy seconded the motion.

The Board voted 5 ayes and 1 abstention. Mrs. Gaffuri abstained. Motion carried.

Following clarification of the price fluctuation regarding gas pricing, Ms. Kushner made a motion to approve the Award of Bid. Ms. Fahy seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Following discussion related to the contract with Hudson Valley Community College, Ms. Kushner made a motion to approve the contract. Ms. Fahy seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Following discussion of the Hudson River Valley National Area/Greenway Conservatory contract, Ms. Kushner made a motion to approve the contract. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Action Item Related to the Facilities Project

Approval of Change Orders

Dr. Joseph presented change orders as presented. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion for approval. Mr. Fahy seconded the motion.

The Board voted 5 ayes and 0 nays to approve the motion. Mr. Brown was absent for the vote.

Educational Specifications for the High School Restructuring

Dr. Joseph noted this item is another piece of the facilities plan for the high school restructuring that is being presented for approval this evening. Mr. Gifford advised the Educational Specifications, as discussed at the last meeting, is a packet of information that has been developed by Sue Robertson, the Education Planner, in conjunction with Mr. Gifford and Sandra Bapte, the architect. Mr. Gifford advised this is a space-by-space specification of the exact scope of the high school plan. Mr. Gifford advised what would be included in those spaces in terms of what will be taught in the classrooms, equipment, square footage requirements, number of occupants, etc. Mr. Gifford advised the accumulation of those spaces have been put together to form the program for the high school. It addresses several substantial issues in terms of cost and feasibility of the project, in terms of utilization rate, which is approximately 85% and the amount of footage per student, which is project at 167 sq. ft. per person. Mr. Gifford advised this is the lowest figure per student of any high school built in the Capital Region in the last ten years. Mr. Gifford also noted the plan accommodates an enrollment projection growth of 550 students from current enrollment, total projected student body of 2,750, up 200 students, from the figure projected in 1998. The plan also accommodates the current enrollment of the career academy that will be reincorporated within the high school complex.

Mr. Gifford the plan deals with the ability for theming to occur in the future, creates four separate smaller high schools ranging between 600-700 students per school with a 5th area of common area, shared space for both votech space, career space and specialized learning areas, including large group instruction. Mr. Gifford advised this is the blueprint in which the District has been developing the physical plan for the high school.

Following discussion related to communicating with the public about the plan, Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion for approval by the Board of the educational specification as the conceptual plan for restructuring of the new high school. Ms. Frost seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

ACTION ITEM

Random Search Policy

Mr. Brown presented the Random Search Policy #5200 for approval. Mr. Barnette made a motion to approve the policy. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Dr. Joseph assured the Board and the community that the policy is a proactive response in terms of addressing school safety. Dr. Joseph noted the District has conducted six random searches since last spring, each following incidents in the community and the District's concern in terms of securing the safety of schools. Dr. Joseph noted this policy does not dictate nor require that random search take place in the same way each time. What it does provide is a measure that serves as a deterrent for students because if it is truly random, it sustains the mind set that the zero tolerance with respect to weapons and that weapon like objects in the schools are not permitted. Mr. Honeywell advised the Board is being asked to approve the policy. Mr. Honeywell noted the motion does not include the administrative regulations. The intent of this structure is that the Board would adopt the policy with the administrative regulations to be the Superintendent's methodology for implementation of the policy. Mr. Honeywell noted it is his recommendation that the Board approve this policy if it wishes to conduct random searches in the future.

Following discussion Ms. Kushner made a motion to table the item for the opportunity to look at the policy further, specifically in terms of training and possibly waiting until the New York State Center for School Safety conducts its review.

Board voted 2 ayes and 4 nays to approve the motion.

Mrs. Gaffuri, Ms. Fahy, Mr. Barnette and Mr. Brown were opposed.

Motion failed.

Mr. Brown called the question on the motion to approve the policy.

The Board voted 4 ayes and 2 nays.

Ms. Kushner and Ms. Frost were opposed.

Motion passed.

INFORMATION ITEM

Adolescent Literacy Program

Dr. Joseph introduced Mr. Joseph Dragone, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education and Mr. White, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education. Mr. Dragone advised part of the charge and the goals of the District is part of the implementation of the middle school educational restructuring program submitted last May. A large part of that plan is a new approach to the adolescent literacy program. Mr. Dragone introduced Margaret DiGiulio and Linda Rudnick, who have done extensive work to insure that the program has been adopted in implemented in concert with other supervisors and staff. Mr. Dragone advised the focus is a balanced approach and out of that is a new series, which is a balanced literacy series and expansion of work into the middle schools, i.e. Teachers College. Ms. DiGiulio and Ms. Rudnick spoke about staff training, curriculum pacing maps, performance indicators, resources, skills and assessments, along with Holt's Elements of Literature Program and the Middle School Humanities Programs.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Board Vacancy

Board members discussed the board vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr. Wexler from the Board of Education. Various options were discussed. Mr. Honeywell advised the Board's obligation is to seek to appoint someone to fill the remaining part of Mr. Wexler's term to December 31, 2005. Mr. Honeywell advised previously the Board chose to appoint the non-incumbent who obtained the highest votes to fill the vacancy immediately following the certification of the election through December 2005. Following additional discussion Mr. Barnette made a motion that the Board of Education would appoint the top vote getter who is a non-incumbent, following the certification of the election results, to a term that ends December 31, 2005. Ms. Frost seconded the motion.

The Board voted 4 ayes, 0 nays and 2 abstained.

Mrs. Gaffuri and Mr. Brown abstained.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Fahy advised the Facilities Committee has met with Board Members this past week to review the educational specifications.

Ms. Fahy advised the Intergovernmental Committee is meeting next week. The primary item on the agenda is the Charter Schools.

Mrs. Gaffuri advised the Policy Committee met last week to discuss a policy on Title I Parent Notification and Compact for Learning, to align a pre-existing policy with NCLB, which will be brought forward to the Board in the future.

Mrs. Gaffuri advised the members of the Audit Committee met with Ms. Wetmore relative to the five-point plan for safe auditing, passed by the legislature this past summer. Information will be brought forward to the Board in the future.

Mr. Brown advised the Academic Committee would be meeting later this month.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Ms. Fahy requested that voluntary school uniforms be placed on the next agenda for discussion.

Mr. Brown advised this item would be left to the Board Officers to determine if it gets on the agenda.

Mr. Barnette requested that the Board consider scheduling a discussion/presentation regarding the things that public schools are not permitted to do as opposed to Charter Schools, i.e. additional school days, longer school days, administrators teaching classes, and increased flexibility under the Charter Legislation. Included in the discussion would be the barriers the District faces in competing with these issues, under the Commissioner's regulations. Mr. Brown advised he is requesting, through the Academic Committee, the cost of funding additional days, extended days, etc. for discussion during the budget process. Ms. Fahy also suggested identifying the cost involved in the District extending school days, etc. to present as a piece of legislative relief. Also, developing a list of reasons why parents are choosing the public school system for their children's education. Ms. Fahy suggested a forum for this type of discussion.

Mr. Barnette also requested that a special session be scheduled to explain the lottery process, including an educational demonstration of how the lottery works. Mr. Barnette noted that parents do not know how the lottery is conducted for the District.

Ms. Kushner requested that the Board consider a policy that addressed idling of school buses to conserve fuel, save money and preserve air quality for children. Ms. Kushner advised she has obtained a template from another District that she would like to share. Ms. Fahy suggested extending such a policy to parents.

Ms. Frost requested information relative to the Truancy Program be presented to the Board.

Adjournment

Ms. Kushner a motion to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 10:50 p.m.

Catherine L. Cutting
Clerk of the Board