



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
October 16, 2008
7:00 p.m.

Sheridan Preparatory Academy

PRESENT: William Barnette, President
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary
Dr. Mark Barth
Judy Doesschate
Melissa Mackey
Wayne Morris
Dr. Eva Joseph
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan

ABSENT: Linda Jackson-Chalmers

Call to Order:

- In the absence of Mr. Barnette, Mrs. Gaffuri convened the meeting at 7:10 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Mission Statement was read.
- Members of the audience were welcomed and thanked for taking the time to attend the meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- Mr. Barnette would be joining the meeting later this evening. Mr. Barnette and Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers are attending the Whitney Young Legacy Dinner this evening. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers and her husband are the Chairs for that event.
- Another upcoming event is the Albany Fund for Education Gala, which will take on Thursday evening, October 23rd from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Linda Norris Auditorium. The public is encouraged to attend.
- This coming weekend is homecoming. The parade begins at noon on Saturday at Albany High School and the football game is at Bleeker Stadium at 1:30 p.m.
- Members of the Strategic Planning Team and members of the Action Teams are present. Co-leaders will be presenting a review of their action plans to the board for review and discussion. Special thanks to all team members for their hard work over these past months to complete the Strategic Plan.
- Acknowledgement that next week is School Board Member Recognition Week. Board members received pins as a token of appreciation and were publicly recognized for their commitment and hard work on a daily basis in order to continue to move the district forward. Dr. Joseph read a proclamation from Governor Paterson acknowledging school board members throughout the State.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Marie Taber addressed the board relative to the renovation of Albany High School.
2. Leah Golby addressed the board relative to the Strategic Plan.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Action Item Related to the Facilities Project

Bid Award Resolution for the Arbor Hill Elementary School Renovation Project.

Mrs. Gaffuri presented the following resolution for action.

**APPROVAL TO BID
ARBOR HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SED PROJECT #047-006**

WHEREAS, the City School District of Albany approved by resolution the Construction Documents Design and submission to SED for the Arbor Hill Elementary School (SED #047-006) renovation project at their regularly scheduled Board meeting on April 24, 2008.

WHEREAS, the Director of Facilities and the Architect recommend to advance the project to bid;

THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the City School District of Albany hereby approves the project to be bid on the recommendation of the Director of Facilities and the Architect

Mr. Morris made a motion to approve the resolution. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Dr. Joseph advised this item is giving permission to bid the project. Mr. Gifford and Mr. McMordie advised it is timely to seek bids prior to the end of the year. Building permits are expected from the State Education Department shortly. Mr. Gifford noted alternates have been established for the project. Alternatives are usually bought from bid savings. Mr. McMordie advised this is the last part of the SED approval process, which will conclude with the building permits and the District will then be able to go to bid. This is anticipated to take place in November with bid results to the board in December and the construction begins in January and finishes for occupancy in September 2010. This is the last scheduled project in the facilities plan.

- When will the discussion relative to alternates take place with the board?

In this project there are add alternates. The process is to start with the baseline bid. If there are savings following the bid process, add alternatives are added. There are seven add alternates in this project. The board can chose them in any order within 45 days of the opening of the bids. The base bid can be approved separately to get the base contract moving and then decided on the alternates within that 45-day window.

- Do board members receive information related to these add alternates?

This information has previously been provided during the design phase of this project. The facility subcommittee has had an opportunity to review this in greater detail.

- Some of these alternates have to do with upgrading the ventilation system. Do we have bids on this? When will the board start to hear about that?

We have estimates that go along with each phase of the project. The design is not brought before the board for approval unless it meets the budget criteria. Historically, the facilities team has been very accurate with estimates.

- These alternates are lighting, heating and ventilation, which are essential. If these add alternates are not included in the project, how much is this school going to be like every other school in terms of the remodeling?

The building is heated and has air conditioning. The add alternates would upgrade the systems towards energy efficiency.

- Also, how much cabinetry is included in the classroom based on the alternate for an additional nine feet? The cabinet alternates are in the common areas, not classroom areas. Is this school going to be equivalent to other schools if these alternates are left out of the project?
Yes.

- My ongoing concern is that we are now at the point that the enrollment for this school only justifies a two-deep school. What is the possibility of being able to close off more of the school and operating it in a much more efficient way and having that other space being used for other purposes? What is the possibility of not doing as many classes at this point and proceeding with this and coming up with a more efficient design for a two-deep school so that the rest of the space can be used?

Discussion followed relative to the uncertainty of the enrollment and the instability of charter schools.

- What is the potential increase if this project is delayed to going to a two-deep school at Arbor Hill?

Construction increases are estimated at 8% per year, .66% per month. On a \$10 million dollar, on a monthly basis is \$66,000 per month. A delay at this time would result in a year's delay requiring new drawing and submission to SED for approval.

- If the district move forward in the direction of not having an elementary in this area, with the closing of Philip Livingston, what public schools are going to continue to exist in that part of the City?

The district has made a commitment to that community. The district needs to move forward with the renovation of Arbor Hill Elementary School.

- Further consideration should be given to the fact that part of that building, approximately 16,000 feet, is not being renovated. The space has been secured relative to waterproofing, windows and the roof. It will have the potential in the future if additional space is necessary.

Dr. Joseph advised in terms of the two-deep concept, in the two-deep schools that have been built, the district has scaled them to be exact and what the district is finding is that if there is even a little bit of overage there is difficulty with space due to the lack of space. The district would be limited if there is future growth in enrollment.

The board voted 4 ayes, 0 nays and 1 abstention. Ms. Doesschate abstained.
Motion passed.

Mr. Barnette joined the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Strategic Plan

Mrs. Gaffuri noted co-leaders of the seven action teams would be presenting their individual strategies and action plans to the board. Following those presentations, board members would have an opportunity for comments and questions. Public comment relative to the strategic plan will also take place following the presentations.

Dr. Joseph extended great thanks and appreciation to all who are able to join this meeting as well as those who were not able to be here. This was a very comprehensive, full-fledged effort, a real commitment on the part of so many. Seventy-five community members, students, faculty and staff participated in this process, including the governance. It was truly a collective spirit that began last November – December, when the twenty-five members of the planning team forged the Strategic Direction for the district. Since that time, over the last nine months, action teams have come together on the seven strategies and have completed deep thinking and deep investigating about setting direction and real action for the district. When the group met last November, the group reaffirmed the District Mission Statement, which is read at every meeting.

The action plans being presented this evening have been developed under the strict guidance and excellent tutelage and expertise of the facilitator, Marilyn Gounaris and Rocco Rainone of SoarPoint Associates. Ms. Gounaris and Mr. Rainone are present this evening. These plans have been developed to assist the district to achieve that mission. That has been the singular focus of a tremendous amount of work.

Mr. Barnette expressed his appreciation to everyone involved in this process, those who have spent dozens and dozens of hours preparing the action plans. The board has had an opportunity to review the plan and to go through it in detail.

Ms. Gounaris reviewed the process in developing the action plans. As indicated, a large number of people were involved in the process that represented both district staff and community partners. In February action team members participated in rather rigorous training to prepare them to write the action plans. That was a four-step process.

Action team members met so they could clearly understand and deliberate and reach an agreement on the intent of each of the agreed upon strategies in the strategic direction. Thereafter, they were asked to come together once again and agree upon a set of results that would need to be accomplished in order to meet the intent of every strategy in the strategic plan, to honor the mission, work within the protocol set out by the strategic parameters. The teams met together collectively once again to review those results in order to identify any redundancies, to identify if teams were working across purposes and to get a better understanding of what the collective set of results would be for the strategic plan.

The teams were then set off on an information gathering and analysis period of time. During that process they were asked not only to look at what was happening outside of the district, but also to rely on some of the good things that had been done in the past and some of the expertise that was resident within the district. In each step of the process each team would meet with the consultants one-on-one, probing and asking the difficult questions, and deliberate exercises to help them clarify their thinking.

The third step in the process was to identify very specific steps for accomplishing each particular result. Finally, they worked on the cost benefit analysis, which is an estimation of what it would take both in terms of tangible and intangible costs and benefits.

The strategic planning team met again on August 6th and September 26th. During those sessions, the teams presented their action plans and the strategic planning team was allowed to offer recommendations and ask clarifying questions. Members of the strategic planning team were divided into small groups to review individual plans. Following this process recommendations and suggestions were brought forward to the full team for conversation, deliberation and possible revision. In some cases deliberation focused on phrases and concepts. The day concluded with full consensus of those who were present regarding the disposition of the action plans. Those are the plans that will be presented this evening.

Ms. Gounaris advised this was a process that generated a quality plan. Equally important, it was a process by which community partners and district staff came together to deliberate and reach agreement on some very difficult issues. These were not teams that shied away from things that were controversial or challenging or did a pro forma act of planning. They put their hearts and their souls into this work and it is evidenced by the quality of work that has resulted from it. It is important to recognize that as an accomplishment. Through this process the district has built significant community support for the success of all students in the district. Every person associated with the development of this plan should be very proud of their accomplishment. Ms. Gounaris urged the board to continue the work to implement the strategic plan toward the goal of accomplishing the strategic direction.

Presentations were provided as follow:

- Strategy 1 – Linda Rudnick
- Strategy 2 – Dan Gentile & Commander Brendan Cox
- Strategy 3 – Dr. Diggs & Maxine Fantroy-Ford & Tony Armlin
- Strategy 4 – Cathy Corbo & Michele Bridgewater
- Strategy 5 – Ron Lesko & Shawn Morris
- Strategy 6 – Melissa Mackey
- Strategy 7 – Gregory Jones

Public Comment

Mark Mishler, Co-President of the City Council PTA, addressed the board, noting he is extremely impressed with this document. Personally and on behalf of parents and families throughout the district he stated that this was a monumental piece of work by a lot of people. The results are wonderful, thought provoking and critical. Imbedded in the presentations this evening are some deep and very fundamental concerns expressed about the current status of schools in the district, the current status of parental involvement, communication, decision making and of addressing issues such as the achievement gap. These criticisms about these fundamental issues and problems that the district faces were stated in a positive way with very concrete plans and projection on how to move forward as a community and as a district. It is wonderful work. What happens next?

Dr. Joseph noted Ms. Gounaris and Mr. Rainone of SoarPoint Associates have done an excellent job in terms of guidance the district through this process and providing support to the action teams. Dr. Joseph asked that they share some thoughts about the implementation piece.

Mr. Rainone advised the planning process that has been conducted is complete. The document presented this evening will be presented for action at the November 5th board meeting. What the consultants are still required to provide for the district is a session that is typically conducted with the cabinet that addresses how the plan will be played out in a three to five year period. There is a lot of work that has been done and a lot of thinking about how the district is going to evolve in order to meet the mission statement. Mr. Rainone advised this is an enormous process and SoarPoint will be providing initial direction and possibly additional direction at the request of the district related to how the district would look at it in six months and one-year intervals, how to think about the funding, the development of funds for it and how to take it a step at a time, how to look at early measures of success, when is there a need to modify, when is it necessary to accelerate or decelerate the movement. The work in the next month will be helping the district to come to a conclusion as a board to define how the district is going to role out the plan initially.

- Something that stands out in this document is communication. Parents need to know from the time they come into school until the time their child graduates what they will be able to do to assist their child.

- Support staff members were mentioned in a number of strategies, but there wasn't anyone from the support staff participating in the process.

There were support staff members on some of the teams. Team membership was chosen by the co-leaders, based on who indicated interest in participating.

- We have a strategy and one of the result statements is create public engagement models including meeting and hearing to insure that public input on major decisions is heard and processed. If the district is talking about the board adopting a Strategic Plan and we have had community input on this through the selection of the core group of people, I'm wondering if somebody reading that would then say where was my opportunity for input into this particular document.

Going through the process of involving the public in every detail of the plan becomes more cumbersome. Implementation of the bulk of the plan will require considerable public engagement. It's a plan, you adopt it and as you implement it you go out to the public with those points that need input. This was a public engagement process, in putting together the planning team, which brought together approximately 75 people to work together to develop this document.

- There was mention in the communication piece about a television spot, but there was no talk about the cable access that broadcast board meetings. Was that a consideration?

There was an understanding that once the public access program was established, government groups would automatically be televised through this program. The television show mentioned in the plan requires a number of steps to determine content, etc.

- How do you integrate those items, still keeping the integrity of the action plans? Also, how do we go about sequencing?

There are a number of factors that need to be considered when the decision is made to implement the plan. By design this plan was made to be an integrated plan, which explains the similar themes. One of the discussion topics of the implementation meeting is where resources can be shared. Many of the plans have implementation teams, task forces or work plans that are mentioned as an initial step.

- What does the board do next?

There are seven strategies and forty very specific results that have been garnered through broad public input. The next step is determining the resources available to achieve these results. This should not become a district employee function. The district needs to budget resources and continue to engage non-district people in this process as it moves forward.

- My concern is the funding necessary to implement the plan. In the same way the district makes decisions at budget time, it will look at programs that have focus, and the district will be reorganizing, working toward increased effectiveness and efficiency and more performance oriented.

- Strategies and Result Statements are solid. I think there could be some melding of result statements. I hope there will be a conversation about priorities, schedules and timeline.

Discussion followed relative to changes in wording of the plan. In the spirit of moving the plan forward and maintaining the momentum of the plan, board members agreed to move the plan forward for action at the next meeting. Mr. Barnette advised the board agreed on this process and board members were part of the process. The teams went through each of these strategies and actions in detail and they left with everyone having the opportunity to hear the presentations. The plan presents the opportunity to do things differently. To re-prioritize and re-shape how things have been done and new initiatives throughout the district based on this plan. Imbedded in that is the reallocation of funds to accommodate doing business differently. The strategies and result statements are solid and the district is committing to developing an implementation plan for these strategies

The plan will be brought forward on the agenda for November 5th for action. Additional questions or comments should be forwarded to the superintendent.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

None

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.