



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**November 20, 2008**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**Stephen & Harriet Myers Middle School**

**PRESENT:** William Barnette, President  
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary  
Dr. Mark Barth  
Judy Doesschate  
Daniel Egan  
Melissa Mackey  
Wayne Morris  
Dr. Eva Joseph  
Linda Jackson-Chalmers  
Bill Hogan  
Dr. Tresa Diggs  
Rose Brandon

**ABSENT:** None

**Call to Order:**

- Meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Members of the audience were welcomed and thanked for taking the time to attend the meeting.
- Board member elect, Rose Brandon has been invited to sit on the dais to observe the proceedings as an opportunity for prospective as she prepares to serve her term.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

- The Bender Scientific Foundation Presentation scheduled for this meeting has been postponed to the December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. They were not able to be present this evening.
- Albany High sophomore, Hamlin McDonald will compete in the State Swimming Championships in two events this weekend in Buffalo, the 50 and 100 meter freestyle. Hamlin is the Section Two Championship. We wish her all good luck.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual CDPHP Invitational Basketball Tournament will take place over the Thanksgiving Weekend. The district is grateful for the support CDPHP provides the district for this event that benefits the Albany Booster Club, which supports many of the districts sports events. The Tournament will begin on Friday evening, November 28<sup>th</sup>. The players will include the Albany High School Falcons, the High School of Art & Design from New York City, Bishop Gibbons of Schenectady will play Frederick Douglas Academy from New York City. Between the games the Booster Club recognizes alumni of distinction that includes four members of the 1984 & 1985 boys basketball teams that were among the top teams in New York for those seasons.
- Albany High School Senior Justine Dobbs helped make Nano history for the second year in a row. Justine participated this past Sunday in a Nano Tech exhibit at Colonie Center, which is believed to be the first Nano exhibit in an American mall. The exhibit is the work of the University of Albany's College of NanoScale Science & Engineering. Last year Justine was one of the first students in the groundbreaking Nano High Program at Albany High School. Those were the first Nano Science courses offered in American public school.

- Two very important appointments are scheduled for this evening. Dr. Diggs, who was originally appointed as the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education will have a title change. Dr. Diggs will be re-designated as the Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education. Following Dr. Dragone's departure, Dr. Diggs was repeatedly called upon to fill the void at the secondary level. Her expertise has been invaluable. The opening for the position provided the opportunity to place Dr. Diggs in this position. Thank you, Dr. Diggs.

The second appointment is the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education. Mrs. Linda Rudnick will be appointed to that position this evening. Since 2006, Mrs. Rudnick has served as the Director of Instruction. She is credited with a number of very progressive improvements in our schools that have very positively effected teacher development and student achievement. Mrs. Rudnick has worked very hard on having a very sound, meaningful curriculum for the District's full-day kindergarten program, assisted in planning the expanded pre-kindergarten program. Mrs. Rudnick has served as an Instructional Supervisor for English, Language, Arts for the district. She knows well the rigor and fast-pace of our work and her commitment to that. It has been more than a year since there has been a full complement of supervisors in the cabinet for the district's educational programs. We are tremendously excited about this strength of added leadership in helping the district reach its goals and very appreciative of that consideration. Congratulations to Mrs. Rudnick.

Mr. Barnette noted there is an addendum to the agenda reflecting the two appointments. Those will be added as an action item following the routine consent item on tonight's agenda.

#### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Cathy Corbo, President of APSTA addressed the Board relative to an opportunity for a meeting with Superintendent Joseph and Assistant Superintendent Hogan to discuss a possible process for APSTA members to provide the district some practical suggestions for some cost-cutting measures that might be taken from the members of APSTA. Members are across the district and they have the ability to provide ideas that may be useful in the upcoming budget development process. We look forward to future discussions. Mr. Barnette noted this offer is unprecedented. Members of the board agreed that this offer would be taken into consideration. Dr. Joseph noted the district is taking the present day financial challenges very seriously and all suggestions and collaborative efforts to that end will be greatly appreciated.
2. Marlin Anderson addressed the board relative to the leadership of the Mayor in getting involved in education through more effective partnerships between the City and the School District. Mr. Anderson also urged the district to consider future use for the Philip Livingston School building.
3. Leah Golby, Co-Vice President of the City Council PTA addressed the board relative to middle school enrollment and concern about transportation issues for families on the north side of Albany.

### INFORMATION ITEM

#### 2008-2009 Staffing Report

Board members heard a presentation on the current district staffing. Mrs. Linda Jackson-Chalmers noted the purpose of the report is to provide the board with statistical data on the various employee types that comprise the district. Included in the report is the actual EEOC report that indicates the trends in the staffing figures. The report shows that some positions have remained steady with some fluctuation. However, the district has seen significant reduction in elementary classroom teachers and less in the secondary area. There are also significant reductions in the teacher aide area. There are increases in Other Professional Staff, which includes the Pupil Personnel Staff, School Nurse Teachers, RN's, Speech, Social Workers, Project Coordinators and Home School Coordinators. The presentation included a breakdown of staff by ethnicity.

Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers talked about recruitment measures the district utilizes in attracting applicants to increase the diversity in the district. A breakdown of administrators and faculty was also presented. The presentation ended with teacher recruitment strategies both internally and externally. Staff reductions have impacted the district's ability to hire minority teachers. The district continues to make gains in other areas. The overall percentage of minority employees (14%) is approaching the percentage of minority residents in the City of Albany. The district continues to exhaust all strategies to increase the applicant pool in general as well as the special focus on diversity. Of the 63 minority applicants, 15 were for elementary education positions. Unfortunately, the district did not hire any elementary education teachers this year. The needs are in the Math and Science fields.

- In response to an inquiry, Ms. Jackson-Chalmers clarified that the district is required to provide art, music, special education teachers, speech and nursing services to Charter Schools and parochial schools within the district.
- In looking at the overall staff by ethnic code, there appears to be a gap that 14% of the teachers are, but the district has a larger percentage of minorities at the administrators and support staff level but not the teacher level. What contributes to that? The focus to hire minority staff is present in many areas throughout the state. The district is competing with other areas throughout the state. People who become teachers have a desire to return and give back to their own communities. The district is presently focusing internally because those are the people that are truly committed to living in the City.
- What do we do to reach out to Albany High School graduate alumni to help in the district's recruiting efforts? This is limited based on the students we know who have gone on to higher education. Students who are in Black colleges are encouraged to promote the district. The district will consider expanding that effort.
- What appears to be additions often is the fact that at the time the reports are done not all positions have been filled. The TOPS program was also added, which required the position of Assistant House Principal and through the Contract for Excellence the district expanded the supervision for the Abrookin extended day program.
- Encourage the district to contact the NAACP to share this information and dialogue about this information.

- Retention of teachers is as important as hiring teachers. Are we losing minority teachers that we hire at a different rate than non-minority teachers? One hypothesis is administrative opportunities for minority teachers that become an incentive to leave the classroom. The district does have an exit survey that can provide that kind of information.
- The use of the word “minority”. The racial groups classified as minority in this are really the majority in the district. Different terms were used in the report. Keep in mind the message that is sent to the students. In this school district, people of color are not the minority.
- How does the Touhey Talent program work? Ms. Jackson-Chalmers reviewed the requirements of the district tuition reimbursement program. The Touhey Scholar requires an application. The focus of this program is those people who are close to completing course work and receiving certification but are not able to afford the upfront costs. If they are given this opportunity, they are going to be in the classrooms within a year’s time. This program is tied to reimbursement. The fund will not be deleted.
- Ms. Nolene Smith advised she is a member of the NAACP Education Committee and she appreciates the suggestion that this information be shared with the NAACP, but in looking at the report, since 06-07 there has not been any significant increase in black faculty members. Ms. Smith suggested that the district set an aggressive goal and redefine who the district is hiring so that the goals are met. The NAACP will continue to assist the district in this effort.

### **ROUTINE CONSENT**

#### **Contracts**

The following contracts were presented for approval: Pearson – Master Schedule Building Workshop; Pearson – Power-School Training. Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. This training is being done in response to the scheduling problem at the high school. This is not the full response to the scheduling situation.

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

Motion passed.

### **ACTION ITEM**

#### **Change of Title**

Mr. Barnette presented the following resolution:

#### **AMEND PRIOR RESOLUTION FOR CHANGE IN TITLE**

**Dr. Tresa Diggs**

**IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the title for Dr. Tresa Diggs is amended from Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education to Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education effective December 1, 2008.

Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Dr. Barth seconded the motion. A question was raised relative to counsel approving this change. Counsel has approved the resolution and action.

The board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

**Administrative Appointment**

Mr. Barnette presented the following resolution:

**APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR  
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**

**IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, Linda Rudnick is appointed to the position of Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education for the period of December 1, 2008 through June 30, 2011 and the President of the Board of Education is authorized to execute the appropriate employment agreement with Mrs. Rudnick.

Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. A question was raised relative to position presently held by Mrs. Rudnick. That position of Director of Instruction will remain vacant through the end of this school in order to ascertain the job function responsibilities with both Assistant Superintendent's.

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

Motion passed.

**DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEM**

**2007-2008 Financial Statements**

Dr. Joseph noted Mr. John Criscone of Cusack & Company is present in place of Mr. Cusack who is ill this evening. Mr. Hogan advised generally speaking the district had a good year. The district ended the year with a surplus, which gives the district some flexibility in developing the upcoming budget. Mr. Criscone advised Cusack & Company conducted the audit and has issued unqualified opinions on basic financial statements as well as the single audit. There were clean opinions overall. The audit including testing of internal controls, interviewing staff, and tested special areas of the district based on recommendations of the State Controller's Office, which included several items, credit cards, travel and conference reimbursements. Mr. Barnette advised board members have met in executive session with Mr. Criscone and Mr. Cusick for confidential matters related to the audit.

- How is the district doing in terms of anticipated tax refunds for property tax assessments? The district has a tax certiorari reserve based upon best estimate for potential exposure of these refunds. The liability is not booked until there is an actual judgement. Mr. Criscone advised the tax certiorari reserve is realistic.
- What is the concern about timely receipt of funds from the City related to the PILOT Program. The concern is that the district is recording these funds on a cash basis. The preference would be to set up a 60-day availability, which is consistent with other taxes. This would allow the district to record these funds in the year in which they are collected. The suggestion is for increased communication between the City and the district to resolve the timing issue.
- Explain the use of credit cards. The district has two credit cards, one is primarily used by the Purchasing Agent. The second card is assigned to the Superintendent. However, this card is kept in the Purchasing Office. There were a few housekeeping items related to the procedures used by the purchasing agent that have been resolved.
- It was noted that last year the board approved a policy to address the use of credit cards.

- When a taxpayer challenges their assessment is it based on the last time it was surveyed? When you challenge your own assessment, you have to show comparative properties that have recently been sold to determine the market. There can be challenges prior to the tax warrant. This is a consideration in developing the budget in light of the present economy.

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to accept the 2007-2008 Financial Statements. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The board voted 6 ayes, 0 nays and 1 abstention.  
Mr. Egan abstained.

### **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The Audit Committee met with Cusick & Company to review the audit presented for approval this evening. The next meeting of this group is Monday, November 24, 2008.

The Policy Committee met last week to for additional review of Policy #2410 Policy Development, Adoption, Implementation and Review, the Volunteer Policy and the Board Committee Policy. Additional review of the Volunteer Policy is necessary to customize procedures district-wide. These policies will be forthcoming to the board for discussion and action in the future.

### **BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

Ms. Mackey noted the board agreed to a tally of board member items that are used in developing future agenda be made available to board members. There has been a request to have that listing available to the public. Members of the public come to board meetings to speak about items that come forward as agenda items. It is difficult for the public to track when that particular item may be coming up on an agenda. Is there a possibility that this list could be made available to the public? Dr. Joseph noted not every item is brought forward on an agenda. Dr. Joseph will share the format with board members to determine if this would be helpful to the public.

Robert Malerba addressed the board relative to issues presented to the board during public comment and the follow-up procedure for addressing these issues. There seems to be no collaboration or continuity with the public.

Mr. Egan advised there is a gap between public comment and the responses. Mr. Egan suggested the possibility of televising the meetings or use of You Tube combined with blogs to inform those people who are unable to attend board meetings. Mr. Morris suggested discussing this with counsel. Board members agreed that this possibility should be investigated.

Following discussion of the process there was a suggestion that the board review the process of checking to determine if there is a majority of board members interested in pursuing board member items.

Dr. Barth advised there was a presentation at Albany High School PTSA on the School of Engineering. Will this eventually come to the board? How do other people get to know about it? Dr. Joseph advised the board talked about the Academy of Engineering when the district first received the award. Dr. Joseph noted there are information items and discussions. The discussion items are clearly because there usually is some kind of action. Information items have been presented in a number of ways to inform the board and the public about certain items. In the past there has been a request to board members for topics they would like to see on board agendas, i.e. guidance plan. As we begin the new calendar year board members will have the opportunity to bring forward agenda items that would like to see on future agendas. Board officers will then prioritize and determine how these items will be handled.

Ms. Doesschate noted the previous conversation has been about communication and recommended that in January the board look at the Strategic Plan on communication. Dr. Joseph noted in terms of implementation of the Strategic Plan, the day following the approval of the Strategic Plan, the administration met with the consultants to discuss implementation. The discussion involved scaffolding recommendation of the Plan over 3 to 5 years. The discussion also included how to prioritize the recommendations. The December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting agenda will include an agenda item for this item.

Dr. Barth suggested documents be sent to board members electronically to facilitate the search process for board members, i.e. updates, board proceedings, etc.

Mr. Barnette advised the next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 2, 2008 at Albany High School at 7:00 p.m. The reorganization meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 5, 2009 at Albany High School at 7:00 p.m.

**Adjournment**

Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.