



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION
March 19, 2009
7:00 p.m.**

New Scotland Elementary School

PRESENT: Barbara Gaffuri, President
Melissa Mackey, Vice President
Judy Doesschate, Secretary
Dr. Mark Barth
Rose Brandon
Daniel Egan
Wayne Morris

Dr. Eva Joseph
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Linda Rudnick

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.
- The Mission Statement was read.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- The recent newspaper article regarding test results reflects information that was provided to the Board on January 15, 2009. There have been areas of progress at both North Albany Academy and Giffen Memorial Elementary School. The district is focusing primarily on Special Education for students with disabilities.
- Scholar Athletes grades for the second quarter were submitted to the State Athletic Association and of the 129 varsity athletes 127 passed the second quarter and 6 of our 8 varsity winter teams earned scholar athletic recognition from the State.
- Board members received a detailed report on the high school scheduling. There was a question about when schedules would be mailed to students. The scheduled are targeted to be mailed July 22, 2009. Dr. Diggs has been vigilant in terms of working with the team in terms of providing advisement, moving forward as planned.
- The process for the principal search for Albany High School has begun. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers has been working with a focus group, starting to develop criteria for the position with parent, faculty and students.
- The neighborhood association use of school buildings was brought up at the last meeting. This matter will be discussed with Mr. Hogan and Mr. Honeywell with information forthcoming at the next meeting.

- A meeting with TOAST parents took place last week. This issue is on tonight's agenda. In addition to the situation with the floor tiles, parents have expressed a number of concerns relative to the conditions in the swing space itself. The District will be looking at the facilities to determine things that can be done to improve the space, as well as playground equipment. In response to an inquiry relative to computer rooms, Dr. Joseph advised she would follow-up with Mr. Fowler on this issue.

Mrs. Gaffuri noted that Dr. Joseph received an award at the Albany Institute of History and Art, amongst other "Ambassadors" in the community who have been instrumental in bringing people to the City of Albany during last year. Dr. Joseph's efforts in collaboration with the National Urban Alliance for Education (NUA) resulted in over 800 hotel rooms and 1,850 visitors to the region from 5 other countries and 38 other states. The NUA Conference was one of the largest events here in Albany. Dr. Joseph accepted the award on behalf of the District.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Vincent Riguso addressed the board regarding the proposed budget. It is impossible for to meet some of the tax requirements the District places on residents, particularly seniors who are on a fixed income.
2. Susan Pedo addressed the board regarding the conditions at the swing space for TOAST relative to the crowded classrooms, lack of playground equipment, the lack of computer equipment in the swing space and the delay in moving back to the facility due to additional asbestos abatement needs. Ms. Pedo expressed her gratitude to Dr. Joseph and Mrs. Brandon for the work they have been doing to achieve a legislative solution on the oversaturation of Charter Schools in the District.
3. Andrew O'Toole addressed the board regarding the TOAST and the need for a September start rather than the delay till January. Mr. O'Toole also inquired about materials that were purchased from a grant from Lowe's for a playground for the Pre-K and kindergarten program.
4. Robert Reilly addressed the board regarding the replacement of floor tiles at TOAST. Parents want the tiles replaced and they want them done on time so that students can return to the building in September. Mr. Reilly voiced his frustration and weakening confidence, along with other parents relative to the leadership in the facilities project.
5. Kelly Reilly Streznewski addressed the board, speaking for the 4th graders at TOAST, asking that students be returned to the TOAST building for their last year at TOAST.
6. Alex Streznewski addressed the board regarding TOAST, urging the board to take action to alleviate the overcrowding and sub-standard conditions in the facility where TOAST is currently housed in the event that students are not moved back to TOAST until January. Status-quo is not acceptable.
7. Fiona Reilly Streznewski addressed the board regarding the delay in moving TOAST students back to the TOAST building in September.

8. Marlon Anderson addressed the board regarding the budget. Strategy is imperative at this time. The City of Albany is unable and unwilling to accept a budget increase. The board should entertain a zero growth budget to give people confidence in the district.

9. Bill Ritchie addressed the board regarding the magnitude of cuts being proposed in the first draft budget. Mr. Ritchie advised stimulus money is coming to the district in some form from Washington. Mr. Ritchie also noted polling data are supporting fair share tax reform. Mr. Ritchie urged the district to support the fair share tax reform.

10. Jen Pratico addressed the board regarding the renovations at TOAST. The conditions in the swing space need to be corrected. Students need to have their computers and sufficient space in their learning environment.

11. Anne Marie Lippitt addressed the board regarding the CDTA bus route in front of Hackett. Students are crossing Western Avenue to catch a bus to Hackett where cars are constantly jumping the lights. Students also need to cross Delaware Avenue in order to catch the Western Avenue bus to return home. There is concern for the safety of the students crossing these two busy streets.

12. Jane Margaret Gottlieb addressed the board regarding the situation at the TOAST swing space. Conditions are inexcusable. Ms. Gottlieb demanded decent outdoor space at the swing space location, regardless of the amount of time students will be in that building.

INFORMATION ITEM

Strategic Planning Implementation for Strategy # 3 and Strategy #4

Dr. Joseph advised as the district moves into implementation, the board will begin to think about two major components of the Strategic Plan, Strategy #3 and Strategy #4. Because there are so many years of work and history involved in the high school restructuring as well as the middle schools, the thought was that we develop a common understanding. Dr. Joseph gave a very comprehensive presentation geared to Strategy #3, result statement 3.1: To create smaller learning communities for all Albany High students and 3.2: Re-design the High School facilities to support the creation of smaller learning communities for all students. The presentation also included Strategy #4, result statement 4.5: To address declining enrollment and ensure academic success, transition the middle school programs to two (2) 6-8 middle schools and one (1) K-8, and evaluate other options in collaboration with parents and community members to address any excess enrollment. A history of the high school planning and middle school planning was reviewed.

- Enrollment numbers is one of the pieces of information you start out with when you're looking at where we go from here, particularly on the middle school side.

The action plan that was developed as part of the high school strategic planning effort last year does specifically call out for a process and a procedure as part of the document approved in November. It includes a two tier focus. One on the implementation of a new educational plan and construct for the high school and simultaneous with that the development of a high school facilities restructuring that works in conjunction together in a process that would proceed over a about a twelve month planning period. It would start with getting a coordination team together,

and then two separate committees being formed and working hand in hand walking down the path of planning educational programs with facilities and looking at options. On the facilities side it would be a steering committee that would look at facilities and the implementation of the program being developed by the educational planning group and then finally come up with a recommendation to the board and the board would then consider what actions needed to be taken with the holding of a capital referendum which might be likely if serious restructuring of the physical building for the high school is required.

- The next conversation is how the district moves forward with implementation of the three result statements indicated.

The superintendent will bring to the board a well-defined process in collaboration with Mr. Armlin for discussion.

- Is it possible to provide this presentation on the district website? Also in terms of input from board members, what types of information and what direction the district should be taking as we move forward?

A lot has changed since the original facilities plan was developed. This provides an opportunity to identify other uses and needs of the district. Implementation in the spring is basically what can be done in the high school now that can be addressed now, without addressing the building.

- It is important that the high school issue does not get tangled in the budget issue. If the work is not started on the strategies there is the issue of trust.

These are just beginning of a discussion. The focus of all of the high school restructuring planning has to start with educational programs. It has to start with operations and issues and getting greater success in educational performance. Then facilities follow as necessary. It is not a facility driven process, it is an educational planning process.

- Circumstances change and plans do not allow change as quickly as we would like in order to fit the new circumstances.

Moving into this process the expectation is that all options will be given similar consideration.

- Part of the process will be to look at demographics and enrollment figures.
- Hopefully, this process will be an opportunity to regain the trust of the community. It is very important to have community education and involvement every step of the way.

ROUTINE CONSENT

The board was presented with a routine consent item for appointment of Mark Place to the position of Technology Coordinator. Mr. Place was introduced. Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Action Items Related to the Facilities Project

Contract for Monitoring Services for Arbor Hill Elementary School

Mrs. Gaffuri presented the following resolution for approval.

PROPOSED CONTRACT AWARD RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City School District of Albany solicited proposals for Project Monitoring of Asbestos/Lead Abatement for the Arbor Hill Elementary School Renovation and Window Replacement Project (Project No. 01-01-00-01-0-047-006); and

WHEREAS, the responsible proposer on the Project Monitor contract is Professional Services Industry (PSI);

WHEREAS, the Director of Facilities and the Architect have recommended approval of the above design professional.

THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the City School District of Albany hereby awards the above contract and authorizes Mrs. Barbara Gaffuri, Board President, to execute contracts between the District and the above Project Monitor for the Arbor Hill Elementary School renovation and Window Replacement Project (Project No. 01-01-00-01-0-047-006); on the recommendation of the Facilities Project Office and the Superintendent. Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Floor Tile Repair at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST)

Members of the Facilities Team gave a comprehensive report on the factors contributing to the need for additional asbestos abatement during the TOAST project renovations, including a project summary, an asbestos abatement status report, the issue with the vinyl asbestos floor tiles, the spaces affected by this issue. The presentation also included a number of options for consideration in moving the project forward. The Facilities Team members have met with the TOAST PTA and the Building Advisory Committee to discuss the situation and the response to Option #1 has been the most favorable one. Option #1 is being presented to the Board for approval. Cost for the additional abatement removal is expected to range from \$125,000 - \$650,000 based on public bid.

- What are the opportunities to compress the schedule? Is there any way to do Option #1 and move students back to TOAST in September?

The team did look at trying to compress the schedule. Based on experience in the building, looking at double shifts and calculations, there is no room to compress the schedule and guarantee that the move could be made in September. While this work is going on in any section of the building, no other trade can work in that section. That section is completely shut down. Also, if the district delays completion of the work being done by other trade, there is the risk of potential claims based on delays. When there is substantial completion each section, the abatement project will move in to do the removal. This is reflected in the timeline.

- What will the use of additional water do the final finished product? Is there any potential for Stimulus money for this project?

Stimulus money is geared toward new projects. The process of removing floor tiles is different that removing ceilings. VAT is removed by scraping. There is a minimal amount of water involved. Stimulus money does not apply to projects under way.

- What is the cost comparison between the monies spent on this renovation vs. building a new school?

A number of factors come into play relative to this question, including the fact that state aid is very difficult to obtain on new buildings. The aid the District is getting in this renovation is more than state aid for a new building. Each situation is different. Giffen and TOAST remain as two of the most solid buildings in the District. Both these structures have substantial life.

Mrs. Gaffuri presented the following resolution for approval.

**RESOLUTION TO SELECT AN OPTION TO
REMOVE VINYL ASBESTOS TILE (VAT)**

THOMAS O'BRIEN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the City School District of Albany approves to proceed with Option #1 of the TOAST Vinyl Asbestos Tile Abatement Options Matrix dated March 12, 2009. The adoption of Option #1 will modify the start of school from September 8, 2009 to January 4, 2010.

THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the City School District of Albany hereby authorizes the Facilities Project Team to proceed with design and public bid for the scope of Option #1.

Public comment included a request that if the Board is voting for Option #1, with the delay in moving students back to the TOAST building, the District has to make improvements necessary in the swing space. Dr. Joseph indicated these concerns are being addressed.

Dr. Barth made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Information Item Related to the Facilities Project

MWBE Report

Dr. Joseph noted this is the last presentation by Mr. Windell Gray of Landon & Rian Enterprises, Inc. related to the District's MBE/MWBE Contract Compliance. Mr. Gray presented the report for March 2007. The latest figures indicate that the District has achieved a combined total of 18.84% participation of all facilities projects to date, compared to a goal of 20%. Minority Business Enterprises/Women Business Enterprises have achieved 19.55% combined participation compared to a goal of 20%. Final figures are expected to indicate participation past the anticipated goal. Mr. Gray advised these figures are the highest in the area.

Mr. Gray also advised there are a few firms that were not in business when this endeavor was started. The district helped them get started and now one of the firms has won a contract for \$300,000, another firm received a contract for \$500,000.

- This is a good example of what gets measured, gets done. This is something we can all be very proud of.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Budget Discussion

Dr. Joseph advised the board they would be receiving budget information first followed by a presentation presentation on the Alternative Education Program and programs located at the Adult Learning Center.

Mr. Hogan reviewed a schedule of upcoming budget items to be presented to the Board at the next few meetings. Budget development is an evolving process. Numbers and assumptions may changes as new information becomes available. Numbers are under constant review throughout the process and are adjusted accordingly. Stimulus money was not included in the 1st draft budget because it had not yet been signed into law. It has now been signed into law and as of today the Governor was meeting with the legislature to discuss how to distribute these funds.

The budget being presented this evening the district has assumed Federal Stimulus money in the amount of \$3,774,535. This figure reduces the tax levy by 3.75%. Also, adjustments have been made to the revenue. Throughout the budget process the district is continuously looking at numbers, re-evaluating them based on additional information. On the revenue side major changes have been made, totaling \$1,466,644, reducing the tax levy by 1.46%. Expenditures have been reduced \$6,435,450, reducing the tax levy by 6.40%. The budget being presented this evening is \$820,000 away from a zero growth budget, \$7.1 million below a contingency budget, which results in a 7.58% tax levy. The presentation continued with a review of recent cost saving measures and program changes. Two options were presented to the board (1) maintain existing programs and assume a 7.58% increase in the tax levy (2) identify further reductions to a targeted tax levy. Other reductions to consider were also presented.

Following an extensive discussion relative to reductions, enrollment contracts, programs, grant funding, additional revenue opportunities, and possible program additions, board members indicated that they would prefer the tax levy increase under the 7.58% presented this evening.

Dr. Diggs gave a overview presentation on the District's Alternative Education Program, including program opportunities, referral/placement processes, a review of the TLC class at the primary and intermediate level, the MsAP and TOPS Programs, the Albany High School Transition Program, the Abrookin Extended Day Program, the Teenage Mothers Program, the GED Program, the Harriet Gibbons High School Preparatory Program and the After School Tutoring Programs and Suspension Programs. The presentation included staffing figures for these programs as well as costs associated and funding sources.

Dr. Diggs concluded the presentation with an outline of conclusions, recommendations and considerations for the Alternative Education Programs. A comprehensive review of the Alt Ed Program is needed as recommended in the Strategic Plan. Result Statement 2.3 calls for a Think Tank to be formulated to evaluate the existing Alt Ed Program and research new innovative ideas. This report is the basic beginning.

Board members discussed the number of alternative programs and the impact these programs have on students. Enrollment, attendance and scores of students in these programs are below expectations. This information speaks to a deep need that some students need a comprehensive alternative program from kindergarten to graduation. Discussion of a think tank with involvement of community professionals is necessary to assist the district in developing a program that offers the needed support for these students to insure that they graduate on time with viable options once they graduate.

Hall of Fame Program

Ms. Ryan gave the history of the development of the Hall of Fame Program. With the help of several staff members and others, a draft was developed. The proposal has been reviewed by the Policy Committee. The proposed Hall of Fame would include people from all facets of the Albany District, not just those involved in athletics. The program does not require funds from the District. Funding will come from donations and fund raising. The yearly induction ceremony would take place at a banquet, possibly in conjunction with a homecoming weekend. The inductees would have a plaque on a yet to be identified wall in the high school, visible to all visitors. The Hall of Fame is a way to recognize the people who have made significant contributions to our schools and community by way of their accomplishments. The program will be presented on the April 7th agenda as an action item. First presentation is targeted for this fall, based on the response to the call for nominations.

Policy #4352 School Volunteers

Policy #4352 was presented for discussion. The policy has been reviewed and modified by the Policy Committee. This is a new policy for the district, which will provide parameters and rules that standardize the use of volunteers in our schools. The policy presented to the board this evening includes a goal statement that encourages volunteerism. It includes the extent to which volunteers are to be used in the schools. There are measures to insure the protection and welfare of our students with volunteers. It provides for the establishment of a volunteer coordinator within the district and outlines the responsibility of school staff in the use of volunteers and there are provisions for written guidelines and a code of conduct, which in turn can become a volunteer handbook once a coordinator has been selected and operates with a team of stakeholders. There is also a list of guidelines that the Policy Committee, with input from counsel to insure that the district follows standard procedures for volunteers in our schools. The policy includes a provision for exemption of the application process for parents/guardian who might volunteer in the school for a one-time event, based on input from the principal. Attached to the policy is an application.

Discussion followed relative to the requirement that every volunteer complete an application along with the person authorized to request that the volunteer leave school grounds for violating district policies. Board members agreed to keep the policy as written. A suggestion was made to end the volunteer application home with students at the beginning of the school year. This information could also be used as a data bank for future volunteer recognition.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Committee met. Information related to committees has been forwarded to board members to read.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

- Information relative to developing a process to connect with parents at Philip Livingston to determine what school their child would be attending in September.
- Information on Summer School Program at the next board meeting.
- Possibility of taping school events to be shown at voting locations.
- Consultant contract with NYSSBA on the board agenda under routine consent.
- Development of a think tank for alternative education with related costs.
- Point of order item relative to amending motions needs to be addressed. This item will be discussed with counsel.
- High School Scheduling Report with dates and milestones referenced.
- Guidelines regarding furniture and items at Philip Livingston Magnet Academy.
- The District is organizing a 5K back to school run as a district fund raiser in September 2009.

Adjournment

Dr. Barth made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.