



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

March 3, 2009

7:00 p.m.

Albany High School

PRESENT: Barbara Gaffuri, President
Melissa Mackey, Vice President
Judy Doeschate, Secretary
Dr. Mark Barth
Rose Brandon
Daniel Egan
Wayne Morris (left at 9:30 p.m.)

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

ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:15 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

- A pre-registration blast for Pre-K and Kindergarten, sponsored by APSTA and NYSUT in collaboration with the School District will be hosted at Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy on Saturday, March 28, 2009. Promotion of this event will be through TV, newspapers, advertisement on CDTA buses, direct mailing, flyers home and personal connections with families in the District.
- March is also Music in Our Schools Month. Flyers have been distributed to board members listing the schedule of activities throughout the District.
- There has been considerable discussion related to Giffen Memorial Elementary School. The School is in the midst of a renovation project and the District recognizes that with these renovations are taking place while students are in the School, there is considerable hardship for students and staff. The District has been focused on preventing and addressing any problems related to that situation. The safety and well being of students is paramount and remain a priority throughout the construction project. Weekly facilities meetings are held with the facility team members and administrator to review matters regarding all facilities projects and most especially focused on Giffen. Bi-weekly meetings are held at Giffen with facilities team members and the school principal to follow up on the progress of the project and the issues.

The faculty and staff receive regular updates of the progress of the project so they know what to expect in terms of how renovations are being phased in. Mrs. Collins, Interim Principal, has worked with the facilities manager to develop a daily process for identifying and resolving problems. There is a posting where teachers can indicate concerns. A health inspection was conducted earlier this week by the Albany County Department of Health. The School passed the inspection. There were a few small things noted that were remedial and they were addressed. An air quality analysis was also conducted, which has yielded no issue at all with the air quality. Terry Nord, the District's Health Coordinator is following up with the nurses at the School regarding the medical issues and her report is as consistent relative to no outstanding occurrence of health issues at the School in relation to anything that might have been a concern. Pest control inspections are conducted weekly, which was commended by the Department of Health. The District has made a strong commitment to the School to insure that they are being supported through this process.

- What kind of air quality testing was conducted?
Samples were collected and analyzed for total and reparable nuisance dust.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Maryann Almindo & Britta Lovegrove addressed the board to thank board members and administration for allocating resources to provide vision services for students whose families are unable to provide for these services.
2. Lisa Feaster thanked the board for providing vision services to her daughter.
3. Brenda Brooks addressed the board regarding conditions at Giffen Memorial Elementary School urging the District to work toward improving the working relationship between the administration and parents to improve conditions at the School.
4. Joe Cunniff addressed the board relative to the requirement of insurance coverage for neighborhood organization requesting use of the District facilities. A request was made for exemption of this requirement for neighborhood associations.
5. Lavonna Harris requested an investigation of food issues at Giffen Elementary School in addition to other concerns recently expressed by Giffen parents.
6. Stephen Rudnick, Director of Toyland Daycare, addressed the board regarding the decision to terminate funding for the daycare as a private provider for Universal Pre-K and the impact this decision would have on the parents and children in the program.
6. Robert Malerba urged the board to commence the formation of a Think Tank to review the TOPS Program.
7. Marlin Anderson addressed the board, indicating his opposition of the feeder enrollment system. Mr. Anderson urged the board to support a moratorium on charter schools in the City of Albany.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Ocasio Willson spoke about the reaction of his peers regarding the Fred Phelps protest scheduled for Friday, March 6, 2009. Mr. Willson noted he is impressed that despite the fact that school start time on Friday has been delayed two hours. Many students are planning to be at the school early to participate in a counter-protest with the Lesbian Gay Straight Alliance. Fred Phelps is with the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas has been described as a hate group. In reality it is a distorted religion. These are professional, intelligent people who believe those they consider unholy, to be hated by God.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Routine Consent Items were presented as follows: Proceedings of Meetings, February 3, 2009 and February 12, 2009; Appointments (Probationary Appointment, Civil Service, Miscellaneous 208-2009, Itinerant Substitute Teachers 2008-2009, Coaching Spring 2008-2009, Resignations, Terminations, Transfers, Permanent Civil Service Appointments, and Emergency Conditional Appointments, Other Appointments (External Auditor – The Bonadio Group, Internal Auditor – Questar III BOCES); Attendance at Conferences; Membership Dues; Vote Resolutions (Budget Vote Date and Location, Voter Registration, Public Hearing and Budget Notice, Appointment of Inspectors, School Vote Canvass; Treasurer’s Report, Budget Transfers under \$10,000, Budget Transfers over \$10,000, Revenue Status Report – 1/31/09, Appropriation Status report 1/31/09, Real Property Tax Adjustments, Central Treasurer’s Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Disposal of Assets; Appointments to Special Education Committees; Schedule of Contractual Items for Board Authorization (Routine Items, Routine Items with Documents). Mr. Morris made a motion to approve Routine Consent Items as presented. Dr. Barth seconded the motion. Ms. Cutting noted changes to proceedings of February 3, 2009 as follow: Page 6-Paragraph 6 Delete “Note was made that the recommendation of the Enrollment Committee was that there be no neighborhood preference with either enrollment option to be fair.” Insert “It was noted that the Enrollment Committee was not in favor of a neighborhood preference with either enrollment option.” Page 7-Line 7 Delete “Mr. Egan abstained.” Insert “Mrs. Brandon Abstained”. Voting Resolutions Budget Vote Date and Locations Election District “D” should indicate Capital Woods Apartments – not Capital Hill Apartments.”

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

Motion passed.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Action Items Related to the Facilities Project

Approval of Change Orders

Change orders for Hackett Middle School and New Scotland Elementary School were presented for approval. Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Arbor Hill Elementary School Contract Awards

The Board of Education will act on a resolution for approval of the construction contracts for the Arbor Hill Elementary School Renovation Project. Mr. McMordie advised bids were accepted for the Arbor Hill renovation project. The bids came under budget for the base bid amount. Dr. Barth made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM

Strategic Plan Implementation Schedule

Mrs. Gaffuri presented the Strategic Plan Implementation Schedule for approval. Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve the motion. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion. Dr. Joseph advised the plan presented this evening has a change to move the Alternative Education Program evaluation into this school year and continue it through the next school year. There were a number of other considerations that remain the same.

Following discussion related to concerns around the cost of implementing parts of the plan, it was noted that many of the comments are pertinent to the adoption of the Strategic Plan itself, which has already been approved by the Board. As the board moves forward, making decisions, fine-tuning of these issues is expected to take place, paying respect to the guidance provided in the overall document. The discussion this evening is prioritizing in order to move forward.

Dr. Joseph noted that cost considerations have been discussed and there are resources earmarked for the 2008-2009 budget so that work can be started prior to the upcoming budget. Not every piece of the work that is done equates to a financial cost. As part of the start up phase on implementing the plan, the District is identifying people and teams together to begin the work. As projects and programs are developed, the cost consideration will be part of the discussion. There are pieces that have already been started and will be accomplished before the end of the school year. Those items targeted for completion in 2008-2009 will be completed by June 2009.

Mrs. Gaffuri called the vote.

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

Motion passed.

School 2009-2010 School Calendar

Mrs. Gaffuri presented the draft 2009-2010 School Calendar for approval. Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Relative to a suggestion that additional parent conferences be scheduled on the two days following the Superintendent's Conference Day in September, it was noted that staff members are not in session those two days. Those days are not workdays. The possibility of having the half-day Superintendent Conference Day in March was reviewed, with principals, administrative staff, members of the Calendar Committee and parents. It was agreed that providing the elementary parents the opportunity with teachers to review progress to that point would be beneficial to parents and the school community. A recommendation was also made to indicate the first day of classes and other important dates in bold print on the final calendar.

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

Motion passed.

Philip Livingston Magnet School Resolution

The following resolution was presented for approval.

**CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ALBANY
RESOLUTION**

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM AT PHILIP LIVINGSTON MAGNET ACADEMY

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the discontinuance of a middle school program at the Philip Livingston Magnet Academy effective at the conclusion of the 2008-2009 school year.
March 3, 2009

Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Ms. Doeschate seconded the motion.

The board voted 6 ayes, 0 nays and 1 abstention. Ms. Mackey abstained.

DISCUSSION ITEM

2009-2010 Budget Development

Dr. Joseph and Mr. Hogan gave a comprehensive presentation on budget development starting with a listing of program assumptions, data on the preliminary budget, a contingent budget and a zero increase budget. An explanation was provided of the decrease in revenue that is driving the tax levy increase. Additional data was provided comparing the contingent budget to the figures based on the first draft budget and a zero increase budget. The first draft budget is \$1.5 million under the contingency budget, an increase of 3.51% from last year's budget. The budget would only increase 2.11% if not for increases in charter schools. A review of budget factors indicates the funding commitment for the Contract for Excellence and charter schools. A reduction of \$6.5 million from the preliminary budget incorporated into the first draft budget would result in staff reductions, program reductions and various other reductions. Information relative to the Federal Stimulus Program was reviewed. The first draft budget does not include any adjustments for the Federal Stimulus Program, pending more definitive information on the program. The next steps in the process include continued refinement of the first draft budget, consideration of additional budget reductions and review of opportunities for additional revenue. A listing of other reductions that are being considered was also presented. Program presentations include the Alternative Education Programs and the ALC Programs, Summer Programs, NUA Program, and After-School Programs. Budget forums are scheduled for Wednesday, March 11, 2009 and Tuesday, March 24, 2009.

Several issues were discussed including consideration to have a non-binding resolution presented to voters relative to the effect of Charter Schools on the school budget. It was noted that Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan the Chair of the Education Committee joined Jack McEneny and Ron Canestrari in submitting a letter to Karl Hayden the Chair of the SUNY Board of Trustees asking that it be considered the closing of New Covenant. Timing is essential. On March 27th, the District could still provide very well for any of the student who would come back to the District and realize a significant saving that would contribute to the District budget. Senator Breslin indicated he would be lending his support to that as well.

Special Education staff reductions indicated in the budget presentations are based on a more efficient model being implemented. The District is changing the concept of how services are delivered to be more effective for special education students. Another portion is strictly related to the scheduling and the efficiencies we hope to realize associated with doing a better job with the scheduling where the District may have eliminated conflicts. The third piece is associated with the overage of staff by combining the middle schools. Class size averages would be maintained.

Board Member Items

Mrs. Gaffuri presented the Board Member Item listing for review by the Board. Board Officers have reviewed the list. Some of the items were referred and some have already been addressed and others have been scheduled for future agendas.

Board members reviewed the listing, indicating priorities and suggestions for standing items. Board members will receive an updated version of the listing, which will be ongoing. Board members were in agreement with that plan.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit Committee met to interview candidates for External and Internal Auditor. Recommendations were made to the board and have been approved this evening.

Facilities Subcommittee met to review bid awards for Arbor Hill Elementary School. Contracts were recommended to the Board and were approved this evening.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

- Mr. Egan asked that Food Service problem at Giffen be included as a Board Member Item and a possible agenda item for the future.

In response to a question made by a board member, Dr. Joseph confirmed that administration has decided to delay the start of school at Albany High School by two hours on Friday, March 6th based on the anticipated demonstration schedule in front of the school in the morning. Police will be closing off Washington Avenue for the duration of the demonstrations between Partridge and North Main, which impedes getting students into school. A letter will be sent home to parents regarding this change.

Adjournment

Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 p.m.