



SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING

March 31, 2009

7:00 p.m.

Albany High 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 Rudnick

ABSENT: Linda Jackson-Chalmers

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance. A moment of silence was observed in memory of Edward O'Neal former Administrator for the District.
- Members of the audience were welcomed and thanked for taking the time to attend the meeting.
- The Mission Statement was read.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Leslie McLaughlin addressed the board relative to the possible reduction in nursing personnel in the district. To reduce the level of nursing services would force nurses to prioritize the services provided, resulting in higher absences and possible litigious situations.
2. Marlin Anderson addressed the board regarding the search for the Superintendent position, asking that the board defer the decision until after the Mayoral election is held.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent Items were presented to the board for approval as follows: Vote Resolutions (Resolution for Library Propositions, Legal Notice). Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEM

2009-2010 Budget Development Discussion

The Board of Education heard presentation on the following:

a. Program Information

Summer Programs

Ms. Rudnick gave a presentation on the summer program for elementary education. The presentation including information on the purpose, content, construct, students served and new directions such as a full-day program with a recreational component, a centralized location, transportation services, and enhanced college/university partnerships.

Dr. Diggs gave a similar presentation on the middle summer school program that included purpose, content, construct, student enrollment, student performance and new directions such as a centralized location and limiting the course offerings to failing students. The pros are reduced staff. Transportation remains a concern. Information related to the high school summer program included student enrollment and student performance. Future goals are increased achievement in courses, increased success on Regents Exams, evaluation of classroom curriculum, improved student test taking skills and to ensure fiscal responsibility when assigning staff and students.

National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA)

Dr. Joseph made note of the very successful professional development day that took place last week, Albany Teaching for Intelligence Superintendent's Conference Day, acknowledging NUA mentors and two senior staff members, Alexis Leitgeb, Dr. Askia Davis and also Dr. Eric Cooper, the founder of NUA.

The board heard a presentation that included the NUA goals for 2008-2009, an update on progress, a summary of the work done with Albany High School and a program proposal for 2009-2010. Information presented to the board contained sample responses from principal surveys related to the impact of NUA in the schools and also a teacher survey related to the classroom.

Currently funding for the NUA initiative appears in the general fund budget. It can be funded through three different funding streams, Contract for Excellence, Title I Stimulus monies and the IDEA Stimulus monies.

- One of the goals indicated on the original contract talked about increasing the graduation rate. My question is how much have you increased the graduation rate? How would you isolate the effect of the NUA on the district's graduation rate?

It is too early to determine those figures. The intent is that the district would be affecting the climate and instruction and move to build capacity so there is a broader impact. Given the small scale implementation that was taking place at the high school last year, there weren't enough teachers involved or enough work completed at the high school level specifically regarding graduation. The focus last year was primarily on the elementary and middle schools. This was designed to be a multi-year process of teacher training. It is too early to answer that question. However, across the country, NUA has experienced increased graduation rates after 3-8 years of NUA involvement in a district. Test scores here in Albany have improved and can be attributed to teacher quality.

- How much has the district spent on this contract?

The first year, 2005-06 was an exploration year. NUA provided a significant number of awareness sessions with various groups so that the district could make a decision to engage. In 2006-07 the program was supported through grant funding. Costs were approximately \$500,000 to \$600,000 and a supplemental piece mid-year of \$135,000. In 2007-08 the district had a reduction in Title I and this is one of those programs that moved into the general budget. There was approximately \$600,000 in the general fund and \$200,000 in Title I fund. 2007-08 was really the full-scale implementation, targeting elementary and middle school. Instructional assessments and school programs were developed on site with leadership teams. Implementation was broader and more in depth. This year the district is continuing the capacity building according to that plan. The district has cohort one and this year the district has expanded to cohort two, maintaining the same level of

commitment. The district lost an additional amount of Title I money and the entire amount for NUA, \$800,000 came from the general budget. This coming year the district will be looking at a reduced figure to accommodate reduced fiscal resources, and at the same time strengthening the program.

- The district has spent \$2.2 million on this contract since 2006 and we are measuring activities, but not any achievements to know whether this effort is getting us anything.

The last two years the district has seen significant gains beyond what we have seen before and while the district has been reluctant to say it is totally because of the NUA training, we know there has been some great fidelity by some teachers in some classrooms and the NUA evaluator has been working with the district to target the level of fidelity with some of our stronger teachers who have been involved since the beginning. The kinds of gains they are seeing in their classrooms, such as the 6th grade mathematics at Livingston and those gains can be attributable to the changes in teaching style and the methodologies that that teacher now incorporates that are different than what was done three years ago without the NUA. Those variables help to make some determination about the impact of NUA.

- What is the percentage of teacher leaders at Albany High School this year?

That data is gathered at the end of the year, and that composite is given at a year-end report in June.

In thinking about overall costs, this is a program that is done at scale within the district. When we cluster that cost it can seem like a significant amount of money. Any comprehensive school reform effort that the district has undertaken approved by the State is approximately \$150,000 - \$250,000 per school, per year. One of the strengths of the NUA is that it is at scale across the district and the approach is consistent at every school and there is a level of shared professional engagement and dialogue that is embedding these skills within the school.

- This is a discussion to continue to educate the board on the NUA. It is not a discussion on contract approval. Do we want to put a placeholder in the budget or in the additional funding that is available for continuation of this kind of effort with the understanding that that is not an ultimate commitment until there is further discussion about the development of the program.

This year the administration felt it was important to provide the board with a sense of what the program components are for next year. The dollars in the budget are a placeholder and there are some dollars that are mandated. The Contract for Excellence is a piece that the District has been prescribed to be responsible to for at least the coming year. It is essentially the dollars for Title I and for IDEA a placeholder. The District can come back post-budget with the contract consideration with additional presentation of information and build in some of those real examples.

Extended Day Programs

Arnelle Ullrich, Extended Day Programs Coordinator was a presentation on the Extended Day Programs throughout the District. Program Goals, a comprehensive listing of programs and the cost of those programs was part of the presentation. A review of the various funding mechanisms was outlined as part of the General Fund and Grant Funding. The next steps include program enhancement, continuous collaborative efforts with partners and sustaining funding.

- Is there consideration of expanding services before school hours?

It would be beneficial to have an in-house program before school. The District does have breakfast programs. It would be beneficial to have teachers and possibly volunteers at those morning programs to help students with homework assignments.

b. Draft Budget Information

Mr. Hogan gave a presentation on the third draft budget with revenue changes that assumes the Legislative State-Aid proposal received on March 31st, which adds \$484,353 of new revenues to the General Fund Budget. The state-aid proposal reduces the budget by \$1.4 million or 1.36% of the tax levy. Significant expenditure changes were outlined, which reduce the tax levy by 2% and Other Expenses reducing the tax levy by .36%. Mr. Hogan reviewed the tax levy based on a contingent budget (16.88%; the 1st Draft Budget (15.43%); the 2nd Draft Budget (7.58%); a zero increase budget (6.28%); and the 3rd Draft Budget presented this evening at (5.10%). It was also noted that if the freeze on charter school tuition is passed, the tax levy could be reduced by approximately 2.4% and the tax levy would be reduced from 5.10% to 2.7%. The three components of the Federal Stimulus Aid package were reviewed, along with the guidelines for spending stabilization aid, Title I Funds, the IDEA Program as well as the Contract for Excellence. Other possible reductions were also reviewed. Additional budget discussions will take place on April 6th with approval of the budget at the April 7th meeting. Future discussion relative to the application of additional state aid or relief from expenses to the tax levy and/or restore educational programs with any increase in aid relief from expenses and target the increase in tax levy to a specific percentage or other options including reducing the tax levy further.

- What is the definition of all after school sports?

The whole sports program other than physical education mandated. This reduction is long in consideration in the 3rd draft budget.

- Is there clarification of construction costs included in the Federal Stimulus Program?

This issue needs additional follow-up. There has not been any definitive information in the latest information forthcoming to the districts.

- Have healthcare cost reductions been taken into consideration as a result of increased employee contributions?

This needs additional review. It appears that these funds can be incorporated into the budget.

- Additional information relative to transition aid figures for charter schools and money to address issues with regard to TOAST.

- There needs to be money put aside to address repairs necessary at TOAST, particularly if the ALC program is to be moved to that location.

- Has there been discussion with the teacher's union to discuss contract issues?

Meetings took place with the three unit presidents early on in the budget development process to indicate that the District would entertain opportunities to open contracts or discuss any aspect they felt they could assist in developing the budget. It would be up to them to come back to the district to say that they were willing to negotiate any changes.

- In terms of guidance, if the charter school tuition is frozen, recommendation would be to stay below 3% tax levy increase.
- What would the affect of staff reductions be on our programs? Especially eighteen teachers at Albany High due to scheduling.

As the district has worked through the master scheduling the consultant assisting the district in this process looked at the level of staffing and felt that looking at the current staffing level, current enrollment, there were a number of positions where people did not have full case loads. Presently there are full-time teachers who may only be teaching three or four courses instead of five. In looking at some of those inefficiencies, which the district was not able to address last year, he targeted, with the District, a conservative number of reductions possible if everyone's schedule is built to full-time equivalents with five instructional periods. Specific positions would be reviewed following the first master schedule has been run and specific subject areas are targeted. In addition, some teachers have very small class sizes and those classes could not be collapsed this year because of the scheduling problem.

- In terms of energy costs, a suggestion was made to encourage each building to conserve energy costs, allowing schools to retain a portion of the savings realized through conservation for school costs.

- Cost differential for the Accelerated Learning Program?

It went from \$150,000 to \$225,000 for the elementary and the middle level program was increased \$19,000 out of the General Fund, up to \$81,700.

- If the district has to think about being conservative, I wonder if we could use the middle school summer program as an opportunity to do a 6th grade transitional program for students who are going to be going on to the middle schools focused on team building.

The district does have a summer transition program. It is a one-day orientation program at each of the middle schools as part of their transitional activities.

- Is there a total figure for professional development in last year's budget?

The two biggest pieces are the NUA and Teacher's College, a total of \$250,000. It is proposed that next year NUA would be reduced to \$625,000 and Teacher's College would be reduced to \$100,000 in total, which is a significant reduction.

- Continuing concern about NUA is having more specific goals. The annual report indicates the activities that are going on, but there is no way to tie what NUA is doing to the outcomes the district would like to see. It is unlikely that the district will be able to determine whether or not NUA has had the kind of impact we would like to see for the amount of money that has been invested in the program.

- Is the proposal to eliminate foreign language in all the elementary schools?

Yes, foreign language at all elementary, magnet and non-magnet schools. Foreign language would remain in 6th grade in those schools that have 6th grade and also in the middle schools. Students would get the equivalent of 20 weeks, 3 hours per week, of foreign language instruction at grade 6, which is significantly more than the present program.

- The teacher's union came forward prior to the start of the budget process with a list of suggestions. What were those suggestions and are they incorporated in this proposed budget? A compilation of a number of suggestions was presented. The list was reviewed and those that were pertinent to being addressed were incorporated in the proposed budget. There was a lot of duplication and some of the items were vague. There are some ideas that can be pursued. There were a number of suggestions in terms of energy efficiency.

- Have the staff reductions of the 106.1 position been included in this budget? These reductions are included in the budget. These positions are still considered reduced. The Stimulus money does not apply to any of these positions. These reductions are the result of the closing of Philip Livingston, reduced enrollment and position that have been transferred from the general fund to grant funding and the scheduling piece at the high school.

- If there are additional funds forthcoming in this budget, I would like to see a training program for Home School Coordinators, particularly at the high school. They are taking on administrative and counseling responsibilities and training would be helpful.

- I have concerns regarding reductions of guidance counselor positions and special education positions or eliminating foreign language in magnet schools. Also reductions of field trips and teacher aide positions in computer labs.

These items will be kept aside so that if the tax levy is in a very comfortable spot, some of these things could be restored.

Board members indicated that they were comfortable with the tax levy increase below 5%.

Adjournment

Mr. Morris made a motion to adjourn the public meeting so that the board could convene into executive session for discussion of particular personnel. The board will not reconvene this evening. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 p.m.