



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
July 1, 2008
7:00 p.m.

Albany High School

PRESENT: William Barnette, President (left @9:30 pm) Dr. Eva Joseph
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary Joseph Dragone
Dr. Mark Barth Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Judy Doesschate James Matthews
Melissa Mackey

ABSENT: Wayne Morris

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.
- Mission Statement was read.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- The commencement exercise for Albany High School was an outstanding event. The total number of graduates was 516, which is the largest graduating class in the district. Two board members, Dr. Barth and Mrs. Gaffuri had graduates in that class. Congratulations to all.
- The Summer Meal Program kicked-off today. The program is taking place throughout the summer until August 22, 2008. A free breakfast and free lunch is offered to anyone under the age of 18 at all school sites where summer school is taking place, Arbor Hill Elementary, Albany School of Humanities, Philip Livingston Magnet Academy and Albany High School. Breakfast is from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. each day and lunch is from 11 a.m. to noon. There are also 31 other sites within the City in collaboration with the City of Albany, Albany County, the State Education Department and the Cooperative Extension. Additional information is available on the district website.
- The board will be meeting in July at a Round Table Meeting on July 22, 2008. The meeting will take place at Eagle Point Elementary School.
- As we begin the 2008-2009 School Year, there are a number of changes. One of those changes is the Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs, Mr. Bill Hogan. Congratulations to Mr. Hogan.
- Another change is that this is the last board meeting for Dr. Joseph Dragone. Dr. Dragone will be with the district until August 1st. Dr. Dragone is leaving to fill the position of Superintendent for the Ballston Spa School District. Thank you to Dr. Dragone for all his excellent work during his tenure with the district and good wishes in your new position.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Jackie Carrese addressed the board regarding the leadership in the district.
2. Felicia Greene introduced fellow officers of the City Council PTA. Co-President with Ms. Greene is Mark Mishler, Co-Vice Presidents, Rose Brandon and Leah Golby and Treasurer, Cheryl Cahill.
3. Beverly Padgett addressed the board regarding secondary level education and the number of summer school students.
4. Edith Leet addressed the board regarding volunteers, particularly those who have come forward as board candidates to fill the vacant position on the board and policies on volunteerism.
5. Marlin Anderson addressed the board regarding the image of the school district.

Mr. Barnette made a motion to move item #7 Action Item to the next item on the agenda. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

The board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

ACTION ITEMS

National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA) Contract

The NUA Contract for 2008-2009 was presented for approval. Ms. Doesschate made motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Comments were made regarding information the district provided on how the district would be measuring the success of the NUA program. Presently there is a plan that goes to the 2012-2013 projection, which will contribute to the conversation next year when the contract will again be brought forward for approval. Comment was also made to consider a person to oversee and monitor the program in the next budget cycle.

The board voted 4 ayes and 1 opposed (4-1) to approve the motion.

Mr. Barnette was opposed.

Motion passed.

Superintendent of Schools Amended Employment Agreement

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve the amended agreement. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

The board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

INFORMATION ITEM

Elementary Report Card

The Board of Education heard a comprehensive presentation on the revisions to the elementary report card. Revisions are the result of consideration on how the district can report more frequently and accurately and engage families and parents through the report card system. This is an issue that was brought forward by CDEP. The process included a review of the current report card and report cards from a number of other districts. The report card will be distributed three times a year in November, March and June with progress reports twice a year in January and April or May. Elements of the document include a measure of what the student needs to know, an assessment of student progress. The report card will be a useful tool for parents to read and understand and invites parents in as partners in their child's learning. Teachers have been called together to review information related to the process. A curriculum writing team has been assembled and will work this summer to create two documents, a grading guide for teachers and a support guide for parents. Teachers will convene in September to make any changes.

Templates will be sent to the schools in October along with the distribution schedule. Additional trainings will occur as needed.

- There needs to be more of an explanation in the request for conference piece of the report.
- Performance key needs to be more consistent in the report card and progress report.
- Is the report going to be different for each grade? Yes, the content will look different. The layout will be the same. This work will be done during the summer.
- Will this document be electronic? It may not be on-line for the first report. The second report card will be on-line so teachers can write the information on-line. Teachers may need training in terms of saving and storing files on-line.
- Is there room on the document to inform parents that they can call an identified person to learn about programs that are available? There will be an accompanying guide that the parents will receive. This information could be included in the guide.
- What is the return rate of interim progress reports? Is there any follow-up when they are not returned? What is the literacy level of the document? We will look into readability for all parents. Baseline data at the elementary level will be new.
- There needs to be additional explanation of terms used in the report. That work will be conducted over the summer. The parent guide will include an explanation of terms, etc.

The next draft of this document will be provided to board members as part of an upcoming update.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Routine Consent Items were presented for approval as follows:

Proceedings of Meetings April 1, 2008, April 10, 2008, April 24, 2008, May 6, 2008, May 15, 2008; Transfers, Resignations, Terminations, Creation of Position, Leaves of Absence, Appointments (Administrative Appointments, Administrative Probationary Extension, Summer school, Food Service Summer Employees, Tutors, Intramural Program, NY Gear Up Program, Gateway Academy Grant, Mentoring Program, AHS Cafeteria 8th Period Coverage, District Fund Program, Itinerant Substitute – Clerical, Civil Service, Miscellaneous, Emergency Conditional Appointments); Attendance at Conferences; Treasurer's Report, Budget Transfers under \$10,000, Budget Transfers over \$10,000, Revenue Budget Status Report – 5/31/08, Appropriation Status Report – 5/31/08, Real Property Tax Adjustments, Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund, Bid Awards, Membership Dues (CASDA), APSAA Resolution, Mileage Reimbursement Resolution, Durham School Services Summer Transportation Resolution, Omni Group Service Agreement Resolution. Ms. Mackey asked that Proceedings of Meetings be set aside.

The board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion absent those items set aside.

Motion passed.

Dr. Barth made a motion to approve the Proceedings of Meetings. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Relative to previous discussions regarding identifying individual board members in the proceedings, it was noted that comments often times are made by officers of the board in the capacity of their position and at those times it is appropriate to identify individuals. The superintendent has been asked to look into the possibility of digitizing board meetings. The written minutes would reflect the agenda, discussion and action taken. If someone is interested in hearing the entire meeting, the digital file could be available on the district website for that purpose.

The board voted unanimously (5-0) 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 (School 19) were presented for approval. Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve the change orders. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

The board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment for New Scotland Elementary School

The board was presented a resolution to award the bid for project management and installation of furniture, fixtures and equipment for the New Scotland Elementary project to Accent Commercial Furniture. Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Mr. McMordie advised this contract is for the installation and management of furniture and equipment. Also included in the bid is furniture not available from state contract. The balance of furniture will be purchased through the state contract purchasing system.

The board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Philip Livingston Magnet Academy Corrective Action Plan

This is one step in responding to the School Under Registration Review (SURR) status at Philip Livingston Magnet Academy (PLMA). The corrective action plan has been developed in draft form to share with the board. This is the plan for 2008-2009 in response to the SURR Report. The report does not address the facility itself or the declining enrollment that the district would be considering beyond 2008-2009. Those issues will be addressed in other discussions. The focus of this plan is on the PLMA 2008-2009 school year and the recommended steps that are being recommended based on the SURR Report.

The Corrective Action Plan is the piece that reviews the report, helps to identify resources and supports from a district prospective to support improvement strategies at the building level. The Middle Level Education Task Force has reviewed the report and created a draft plan. The framework and recommendations were developed and supported by the State Education Department, Regional School Support Center, BOCES and Special Education Training and Resource Center. The draft recommendations were also presented to the PLMA PTA and currently the group is working on a monitoring plan. The strategies, pulled directly from the SURR report were reviewed.

The next steps are to draft corrective action strategies that will be placed on the district website for feedback and questions through July 28, 2008. The monitoring plan will be completed. The PLMA PTA will meet again to create the Comprehensive Education Plan and the Corrective Action Plan will be recommended for adoption to the Board of Education on August 5, 2008.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Student Code of Conduct Policy #5300

The board was provided pages indicating the changes that were made to the Student Code of Conduct Policy. A public hearing is scheduled for July 22, 2008, along with follow-up discussion. The original task force that reviewed the policy in 2007 was reconvened to review the policy in March 2008. The revisions to the policy are generally in the area of the student dress code. The revisions are focused on the concerns that a number of parents raised in the fall about the applicability of the language and consequences for violations at the elementary level. The City PTA was contacted to make recommendations. New language was provided that clarified and addressed the concerns of the parents.

A survey of the elementary principals was also conducted to ascertain whether or not they were experiencing compliance issues with the new dress code. Although most responded “no”, there were expressed concerns about the hooded sweatshirt part that further consideration was warranted. After review of the entire policy, the task force focused on the revisions that were made in last year’s Code of Conduct and generally agreed that those changes were meeting with the expectations of the staff and administrators that have to enforce the code. Focus then clarified some of the issues parents have related to the student dress code, differentiating what happens for an elementary violation, a middle school violation or a high school violation. Questions provided by members of the board were addressed via email.

- Concern was noted that students are being suspended because they are not wearing their I.D. Badge. Students were not suspended simply because they did not have an ID Badge. The students may have been disrespectful in the process of getting a replacement, etc. Normal practice is that the student would have to wait for a new badge and receive detention.

Discussion followed relative the scope of the revisions put before the task force in 2008 and review of the entire policy with the focus on the concerns brought forward related to the dress code at different grade levels. Other issues that were brought forward are the provision of school assignments to students who are suspended from school to allow those students to remain current with their studies. Rather than returning to a class having missed lessons, etc. causing them to be more disadvantaged. Also, additional clarification of who has responsibility for office discipline referrals.

Discussion continued with additional concerns related to the policy. Clarification was brought forward relative to the dress code issue that was identified in the fall about dress code enforcement at different grade levels. It was agreed at that time that the original task force would be reconvened to review this issue and that recommendations offered by the City Council PTA would be considered. Having completed that process, the revisions of the policy are being presented to the board for approval. Pending that approval the reviewed policy will be printed for distribution to students in September. Additional changes and recommendations will be brought forward to the Policy Committee for consideration during the next policy review process.

Referring to the question of whether or not the district is prevented from making changes during the school year, the answer is no. However, any changes to the policy require a public hearing and costs related to printing the revised version. The recommendation is that the district should not forego the public hearing and adoption of the work that has been completed to date. If there is further work to be done during the school year, that could be done through the policy committee.

Extracurricular Activity

Dr. Barth made a motion to table this item. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

The board voted 4 ayes and 1 opposed. Mrs. Gaffuri was opposed.

Mr. Barnette left the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee met earlier this week with Mr. Hogan, Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs. The committee discussed the development of a comprehensive procedural manual. The group also discussed internal controls and policies that need to be reviewed and the opportunity with the audits that are currently being conducted in the district, to look at the way the district functions and how to be more efficient. Also a schedule of financial reports that board members could be anticipating throughout the year.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

The issue of when the board would be discussing volunteerism in the district was mentioned. Board officers will discuss when this will be brought forward.

A request was made for data on the summer school program, i.e. grades, classes. There is a summer school report every fall.

Adjournment

Dr. Barth made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.