



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
March 18, 2010
7:00 p.m.
Albany High School

PRESENT: Dan Egan, President
Judy Doesschate, Vice President
Rose Brandon, Secretary
Barbara Gaffuri
Edith Leet
Melissa Mackey
Wayne Morris

Dr. Raymond Colucciello
Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Linda Rudnick

ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:00 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

Scholar Athletes, Owen Daniels and Fern Beetle-Moorcroft, who were selected as the top student-athletes in their respective sports from among all of the more than 90 high schools competing in basketball throughout Section II. Owen Daniels hopes to be able to attend Columbia University in the fall. Fern Beetle-Moorcroft hopes to attend college in Philadelphia.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were a total of 50 speakers, identified in the listing below. Comments were directed to proposed reductions presented in the first draft budget related to positions and services provided to students by the School Nurse Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Teacher Assistants and Librarians throughout the district. Comments also included discussion of program changes such as music, art, sports, band, the marching band color guard, Reading Recovery, Harriett Gibbons, Montessori, Dual Language and possible school closings. Speakers urged board members to reconsider proposed reductions and to focus on identifying additional funding sources, reducing overtime, supplies and reductions in support staff.

Adam Aleksic	Anne Erling	Enrique Lopez	Treven Santicola
Marlon Anderson	Virginia Farrell	Davis MacLeod	Sam Shipherd
Heidi Arnoud	Dennis Gaffney	Marilyn Massan	Sherry Stone
Steve Chamberlain	Roberta Greenberg	Priscilla Mix	Alex Streznewski
Kayla Clark	Margaret Greenwood	Joelle Mix	Fiona Streznewski
Sara Dallas	Pater Halewood	Yngwie Mix	Kelly Streznewski
Jacqueline Daniels	Keisha Hernandez	Renita Montgomery	Lev Sundandce
Bill Davis	Noah John	Charles Parmalee	Cody Thompson
Paige DeLong	Sara Johnson	Kathleen Pruzek	Jamaesha Washington
Patty Donnan	Jim Lembo	Gloria Purington	Donna Young
Leif Engstrom	Laurie Lieman	Robert Reilly	Bess Zafran
Erin Engstrom	Silvia Lilly	Vincent Rigoso	

Mr. Egan thanked those who spoke, noting that the district is facing the same issues that districts throughout New York State are facing in these challenging economic times.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Appointments; Leaves of Absence; Resignations; Award of Bids/RFP; Appointments to Committee on Special Education; 2010-2011 School Calendar. Ms. Mackey made a motion for approval. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION

485-a Property Tax Program Resolution

Mr. Hogan presented a resolution for the district to participate with the City of Albany in a tax incentive program to promote new development in vacant, unused structures in Albany. Mr. Hogan introduced Megan Daly, Deputy Commissioner and Michael Yevoli, Commissioner of the City of Albany Development and Planning Department. The district has previously participated in the 485-e program, which expires in June. The goal is to create a greater tax base by increasing the value of those under-utilized commercial and industrial properties. Increasing those property values reduces the tax burden on the homeowner. Tax incentives are granted after the investment is made. Presently there is approximately 800,000 feet of vacant space in the City.

- Do you have figures on trend of buildings becoming vacant?
Figures have increased. Larger scaled buildings are becoming vacant.
This resolution will be presented for approval at the next meeting.

Bond Referendum for Albany High School

Mr. Hogan advises the district is looking at a small improvement project at Albany High School. The project would be designed in two phases. One would be a \$7.6 project at the high school, at no additional cost to the taxpayers. This is based on the sale of the ALC building and also a lawsuit settlement. Leveraging that \$1.9 million with state aid on the project would increase available funds to \$7.6 for construction at no cost to the taxpayer. These renovations are considered health and safety issues. This project fits in with the Strategic Planning in

restructuring the high school, providing a safe environment for our students. The project would include changing out carpeting, fixing bathrooms, ceiling and door repairs. A detailed scope would be developed. Public approval is required on this project. There are two opportunities to present this to the voters, May 18, 2010 with the budget vote and November 2, 2010 in the general election. This will be an enhancement that is much needed at the high school. In order to present this to the voters, the board will need to act at the next meeting in order to meet the requirement of placing this on the ballot in May. Following voter approval the project would need to be approved by SED, followed by the bidding process. This timing will determine when the work can be started.

- Would carpet be replaced with tiles and/or linoleum?

Carpets will be replaced with washable products.

- Could drawings be done prior to voter approval?

Yes. However, if the referendum is not approved those costs would not be reimbursed.

2010-2011 Budget Development

Dr. Colucciello noted the district has spent numerous hours working on the budget. This is the most difficult year in terms of budget development. This is a world economy that has not been experienced in 80 years. The district appreciates the commitment of speakers and takes comments very seriously. The district will take comments into consideration. Dr. Colucciello clarified that there was never any intent to take away staff from the Dual Language program. This situation is the result of state regulations pertaining to reduction in forces. The district is bound to follow state law in reducing staff. The individuals included in the reductions are the result of when they were appointed and certification. Adoption of the budget is scheduled for April 13, 2010. The budget hearing is scheduled for May 6, 2010.

The goal is to present a budget that the public can support for our students. Dr. Colucciello noted the Governor's budget includes a reduction in state aid of \$6.7 million. A decision regarding the closing of New Covenant will take place on March 23rd. The district is prepared to accept those students in our schools. The district continues to work with bargaining units. The district must follow the Taylor Law in this process.

Mr. Hogan reviewed the current situation relative to the draft budget. With Tier I reductions included and additional adjustments in fund balance and revenues, the increase in tax levy would be 9.15% unless there are further reductions. An additional \$6.4 million in budget reductions are necessary in order to bring the tax levy to the goal of 2.95% increase in tax levy. There are also a number of unknown factors. The 25/55 retirement incentive remains a possibility. Federal Stimulus money is questionable. The New York State Budget deadline is April 1, 2010. However, this date is not certain. Mr. Hogan noted 70% of the budget is workforce. School districts are very labor intense.

Mr. Hogan reviewed adjustment to the budget following the last presentation in the amount of \$4.4 with a tax levy increase of 9.15%. Dr. Colucciello reviewed a listing of Tier II reductions, including employee givebacks, closing elementary schools, reducing scholastic sports by 50%, eliminating special education TA's, eliminating summer school K-7 and eliminating literacy and math coaches. Reductions listed in Tier II have not yet been taken. They are under consideration as the district struggles to close the remaining \$6.4 million dollar budget deficit.

Dr. Colucciello also reviewed the impact of Tier I reductions, highlighting those that have been concerns of the board and the public and items that have been mentioned by board members in past discussions. The district will continue to review these items to insure that students continue to receive the best the district is able to provide. Dr. Colucciello noted that if the district is subjected to additional reductions in aid, there will be additional reductions in the upcoming budget. Mr. Egan noted this is painful and it is the responsibility of the board to adopt a budget that works for the district.

- What will next year and the year after will look like?

The district has looked at this through guidelines. The district is ready to look back at the long range goals of the district. The highest one is student achievement. The district would look at these programs to determine which goals the district needs to focus on. One of the first things is the high school and the 9th grade failure rate. The goal of district school is to have none our our schools on listings such as “in need of improvement”.

- Is there a possibility of cutting supplies?

Building allocations are given to schools based on state aid. The schools prioritize within their own building. This, along with other items will be reviewed.

- Rather than close a school can the district rent out space to co-related organizations?

These are agencies that are also dealing with funding issues. Also, the district is restricted in what entity could be brought in to the schools. The district will look into this possibility.

- If Academy Park staff is moved to vacant space in schools, why would there be extensive costs in renovations?

The district would be moving 40-50 people. The building needs to be fitted to accommodate the different offices.

- Are elementary schools asking parents for paper?

If so, my concern is that not all parents are going to be able to afford paper. Also, perhaps the board can be more mindful of requests that take up paper and possibly permanently post documents on a secured website.

- When we say reduce interscholastic sports by 50% what do we mean?

We have not actually identified what area that would be. The decisions would be made based on certain criteria, particularly the number of participants, in the same way this was done last year.

- Relative to closing elementary schools, for Eagle Point and Philip Schuyler how many students come through open enrollment?

That will be addressed in the school zone discussion.

- How many teachers are affected by the change in the music program from 3rd grade to 4th grade?

One teacher is affected.

- Can cuts from the Music Program wait until next year when several Music teachers will be retiring?

The district is not able to act on the assumption that teachers will be retiring.

- Can we guarantee that students will receive the same instruction without School Nurse Teachers?

Classroom teachers will teach the health curriculum as is done throughout hundreds of other school districts.

- Would School Nurse Teachers be eligible to take a position as an RN?

The district would be obligated to follow the Taylor Law. The answer is yes.

- The schedule change from 9 periods to 8, how will that be addressed.

Courses would be developed to accommodate those seniors who need additional courses to graduate. Random elective classes would not be offered. It will require planning with input from guidance counselors. The district has always had 9 periods. However, it was called prelim. All students had the option of taking that period. This will result in 4 minutes added to each period throughout the day.

- How will the cuts in the Art program affect students?

At the high school there are currently 41 classes. Studio Art is mandated. There are 20 sections. They can be reduced to 17 sections. There are currently 21 electives that average only 16 students per class. There are currently 7 classes under 15. Overall there would be 28 sections of Art at the high school next year. Elementary classes will continue status quo, with the exception of taking the certified art teacher out of Pre-K. The regular Pre-K teacher will teach Art. Middle School classes will remain the same. At the high school this year there are 90 courses with 20 or less students and 400 courses with 15 or less students. There is room to right size at the high school.

- I am still hearing from teachers about over-heated classrooms. The district needs to get more serious about energy savings.
- We're not relating how programs are relating to the mission. Discussion would be more productive if the board had information regarding what these programs would look like with the proposed reductions. I would advocate freezing travel for staff. Cell phone was a big number. I would that we reconsider literacy coaches. I am in support of a secure website for information to be permanently posted, which would eliminate the volumes of paper used in copying documents for distribution to board members.
- The cost of moving the administrative offices is not credible.

That figure is based on school construction figures.

- If the state budget is not approved before July or August. How does that affect the district? The district is required to move forward with a budget in May. In order to accomplish this, the board will need to adopt a budget by April 13th. If there are additional funds available when the State budget is passed, the district cannot add those funds to the budget. The public votes on a budget figure and the district cannot spend more than the public approves. This is unconditional. Taxes can be reduced should additional money comes forward through the approved State budget.

- Could the district revisit becoming a member of BOCES?

As a non-component school district the district receives additional state aid. The district would lose money at this time if it becomes a member of BOCES. The district can participate in BOCES programs at an increased cost. At this time the district is able to offer programs more economically than contracting with BOCES.

- In order to move the process forward there needs to be decisions related to Tier I. The board needs to define a direction so that information can go out to the public. In addition to information related to what is being cut, information regarding how these programs are going to look like needs to be presented so that people are informed.
- We need to see the plan and determine whether or not we are accomplishing the mission. Additional information is needed. What are programs going to look like throughout the grades?

A program presentation with Tier I and Tier II cuts will be presented to the board.

- The request for an educational plan is coming from the officers of the board, perhaps the officers can come together relative to what this would look like might be helpful in assisting the district in getting this information put together.

Board officers will work on this. Board members are invited to forward comments to the board officers.

HARRIETT GIBBONS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Clement, Principal of Harriett Gibbons High School (HGHS) presented information relative to the program offered at HGHS. HGHS is in its fourth year as a 9th grade program. Mr. Clement, along with Mr. Benson, Ms. Venezia, Ms. Stokes and Ms. Rabinowitz, presented information on the Mission of the school, what makes the school successful, student profiles and a justification for expanding the program to include the 10th grade. Many parents and students want a 10th grade option, allowing students to continue in a more supportive environment, through a full-service school. Everything that goes on in the community is more intensified at HGHS. Students come to HGHS with a variety of challenges and a variety of talents. The smaller school provides the environment for these students to mature and grow and look forward to being successful in school and graduating from high school. Recommendations include the evolution of the HGHS program, renaming the school to create new perceptions. Expanding the program for an additional year would better prepare students to re-enter Albany High School. Mr. Clement advised the school is able to accommodate additional students. Resources are in place to support these students.

- Would students be better served with expansion of the school for 4 years?

At this point expansion to a two year school is the recommendation. Following the completion of the Alternative Education Think Tank findings, that possibility could be addressed.

- Presently, the drop-off in achievement when students return to Albany High School is evident.

HGHS provide a different approach to instruction. Students can be reached in a variety of ways other than 45 minutes of lecturing. The smaller learning community provides the environment that supports student learning.

- If 9th & 10th grade are combined, students would still be going back to Albany High.

There is still a transition piece for these students. However, they would be more prepared for the transition.

- Is this option going to be the student's choice?

In consultation with the student and parents, the decision will be made. This issue needs further discussion following approval. Also, staffing will follow the students.

Hall of Fame

Dr. Colucciello noted board members were presented with a listing of proposed Hall of Fame inductees for consideration. Dr. Colucciello noted that with board review, these names will go forward. Board members indicated their support in awarding these inductees.

Alternative Education Think Tank

Dr. Diggs noted the Alternative Education Think Tank was created as a result of the district's Strategic Plan, Vision for Tomorrow, Strategy 2 – We will ensure the emotional and physical safety and well being of our students in collaboration with community and family partners; Result Statement 2.3 Create a think tank to evaluate how our existing alternative educational

programs are doing and research new innovative ideas. The Board of Education, with input from cabinet members selected Ray Schimmer, Executive Director of Parson Child and Family Center as the facilitator of the Think Tank. Mr. Schimmer provided guidance in the selection of the membership of the Think Tank. There are currently 32 members who have been actively participating in the process. To date the group has met 6 times and 5 subcommittees have been established. Subcommittee #1 Cohort Study and Program Evaluation, #2 Stakeholder Involvement, #3 Literature Review and Benchmarking, #4 Needs Assessment, and #5 Writing. The subcommittees have met on numerous occasions in order to accomplish their objectives. Three of the five subcommittees are active. Subcommittees #4 Needs Assessment and #5 Writing have not yet met. They will convene following the completion of the first 3 subcommittees.

Mr. Cioffi reported on the Cohort Study and Program Evaluation subcommittee. Mr. Cioffi identified the membership of the subcommittee, reviewed the process, identifying observations for the 2006 Harriett Gibbons Cohort, and indicating the three-year observations. Mr. Cioffi concluded with a listing of the next steps including collecting additional data on the Albany High School control group, complete MAPs and TOPs data collection, begin in-depth work on the 2007 HGHS cohort to examine any trends, formulate what all the data means and to begin the reporting process. Mr. Cioffi noted that the timeline is not sufficient to allow for proper review of all the data. Additional time is needed.

Mrs. Brandon and Ms. Mackey commended the subcommittee for the work they have done in gathering this information. Ms. Mackey noted that the data shows where the students come from. While student achievement in the out years is somewhat discouraging, the data indicates what students were able to achieve. The goal was to have these student complete 5 credits and the majority of time kids left with 5 credits. The transition back to Albany High School was not as successful as anticipated, indicating that additional support services were needed. The support is very important in the transition.

Jerry Spicer presented information from the subcommittee on Stakeholder Involvement. This group was charged with surveying teachers, parents and students at HGHS to determine how they feel about the school itself. 82% of parents wanted their children to attend HGHS and feel that their child is happy with HGHS. 92% feel HGHS is an effective program between 8-10 on a scale of 1-10. 91% feel that HGHS is an effective program. 82% wanted their children to attend college. Parents want HGHS to be a four year school from 9-12, increased parent involvement and more support in transition. 32% of students felt their academics have improved. 100% feel safe during transition to and from school. 95% are safe in the building and 81% feel they will do well this year. 84% feel they will go to college. 63% of staff feel the program is effective. 69% like working in this program. 89% like coming to work and are happy in this environment. Suggestions are to expand the program, flexibility in curriculum more counseling. Obstacles are attendance issues, inconsistency, budget, student scores, poor reading skills, not having students for a longer period of time and the lack of coping skills of students.

Ms. Lorraine Clark reported on subcommittee #3, Literature Review and Benchmarking. The committee was charged with identifying what is out there for best practices and programs. The committee reviewed the SED Education Department Policy and what resources are available. Conducted informal interviews with students, 3 were from the Abrookin Night School Program

and 1 Special Ed student who moved from MAPs to TOPs and who has been out of school for 3 years. As a committee over 55 pieces of literature were reviewed. Ms. Clark reviewed a number of models, identifying various recommendations for educating students in alternative settings. Additional information will be presented to the Board as the subcommittees continue their review.

Attendance Zones

Questions and comments following review of the attendance zones can be forwarded to Mr. Cioffi. This topic will be placed on a future agenda. Ms. Mackey requested that the catchment areas for Magnet Schools. The intent was for the board to clarify attendance zones.

ACTION

Approval of Policies

The Board of Education will act on approval of the following policies:

- 1120 School District Records
- 1120R School District Records Regulation
- 1530 Smoking and Other Tobacco Use on School Premises
- 1722 Research Procedures
- 1723 Senior Citizens and Continuing Education
- 1741 Home Instruction
- 1900 Parental Involvement
- 1925 Interpreters for Hearing Impaired Parents

Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to approve policies as submitted. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

None

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 1:00 a.m.