



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 3, 2011
7:00 p.m.
Albany High School

PRESENT: Dan Egan, President
Rose Brandon, Vice President
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary
Felicia Green
Edith Leet
Melissa Mackey
Alexandra Streznewski
Dr. Raymond Colucciello
Paul Aloy
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan
Ken Cioffi
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Linda Rudnick

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.

District Spelling Bee winners, Benzie Johnson, Ivory Henderson, Gavin Wolfgang, Kitty Sharp, Treisy Guardado-Romero and Matthew Flynn were recognized by the Board. Tamera Thomas was unable to attend the meeting this evening. All of these students will represent the City School of District of Albany at the Regional Bee competition that will take place at Proctor's Theater on February 9, 2011, along with 100 other school finalists from the Capital Region. Each student will be presented with a Certificate of Recognition for their successful participation in this annual event.

Kelly Haggerty, a Special Education Teacher at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology introduced Beth Laddin who she and her class nominated as one of the Top Educators in the Capital District by Channel 13. Mrs. Laddin was the first of 13 educators who will be recognized as one of the Capital Region's Top Educators this year. She is a Social Worker who goes above and beyond in helping students, making dramatic changes in student lives. Mrs. Laddin commented that she is able to do her job because of the leadership at TOAST. The story related to Mrs. Laddin can be found at wnyt.com.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Jon Thompson extended congratulations to the winners of the District Spelling Bee and Mrs. Laddin, Top Educator. These people, who go above and beyond, are the reason this School District is so good. Jon reported that students are excited about the upcoming Snow Ball at Albany High School. The basketball team will be playing at Troy High School this Friday.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Noelene Smith addressed the Board relative to comments related to parent involvement from low income neighborhoods in the restructuring of the high school. An article in the Times Union on January 17, 2011 had negative statements about parents, "Albany High has a significant number of poor students who receive little support or discipline at home and need remedial help in most of their classes". Ms. Smith noted that these negative comments continue to disenfranchise parents. The District needs to do a better job in reaching moving parents from isolation to inclusion in this process.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Information Item Related to the Facilities Project

Mr. Hogan and Mr. Peckham of CS Arch presented information on an EXCEL Aid based facilities project. Excel Aid funds provide funding to school district to cover costs of construction projects to Districts at no cost to taxpayers. The project would be an \$8-10 million project. In order to get the project on the ballot in May, the Board will need to make a decision to go forward with the project by mid-March. Mr. Peckham advised that in order to receive these funds, the project has to be aidable under normal building scenarios. Unfortunately, the old Schuyler building is not eligible because the State does not fund schools for the programs currently housed in that building.

The project will look into expanding the cafeteria at Giffen to house the breakfast program that involves all the students at the same time. Also, the Abrookin building needs windows and a new roof, along with work on the heating and ventilating system. These things would benefit the building for other uses in the future.

Another building that could benefit from capital expenditures, other than the projects already approved and scheduled for this summer is Albany High School. These additional projects would enhance the academy structure the District is presently putting in place. The addition of 8-10 classrooms would allow the science classes to be provided on the second and third floor along with other classrooms to enhance the academy structure.

- Would the District be able to do all three suggestions?

The District anticipates that the scope can be developed to accomplish all three projects.

- Is there an option of using Excel in the future should Schuyler be used as a regular school? Excel Aid was an allocation made a few years ago. What happens with this funding in the future is not known. There is the possibility that these funds will be taken away in the future.

- Is there a possibility of moving the Abrookin program to Albany High School?

There is not sufficient square footage or funds available to accommodate the Abrookin program at Albany High.

Discussion followed relative to the fact that there are improvements currently scheduled for the high school building and that Abrookin should receive the same consideration in costing out this project. Preliminary numbers indicate approximately \$400,000-500,000, \$2-3 million at Abrookin and the balance of funds for at the high school, estimated at \$4.5-5 million. Board members supported moving forward with this project, looking at Giffen, Albany High School and Abrookin.

INFORMATION

High School Restructuring

Dale Getto advised the District was able to realize money in the School Improvement Grant to make two changes in the purchased services line and one in a professional salaries line. The state representative will pass on this change for SED consideration. On February 17th at 11:45 a.m. at the College of St. Rose a forum on the school climate survey will be presented to community partners such as Albany County Children and Youth, Probation, Family Court Judges, City of Albany Police Department, as well as several non-profits and community leaders. It is anticipated that the survey will be distributed to every student, staff and parent at Albany High School.

The Board of Education was provided with a comprehensive presentation by James Butterworth, Executive Director of the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA), of the provision of services CASDA will be providing consultation to the District in the restructuring process at Albany High School. Services will include curriculum development for all curriculum supervisors and high school administrative staff for effective department meetings, and curriculum mapping. Instructional Improvement and planning in coordination with the High School Principal for School Improvement, and assisting the District professional development coordinator in identifying and publicizing offerings for faculty which represent appropriate follow-up experiences consistent with the instructional themes. Assist the District in creating a learning environment to address school climate, review research and best practices, creating a vision, conducting a Leadership Practices Inventory, selecting a survey for implementation, and building capacity for meaningful student involvement. Training will be provided for supervisors, administrative staff, faculty, and core department staff members. Instructional Improvement will be provided for faculty. Planning will be conducted with the High School Principal for School Improvement, the District professional coordinator and other strategic partners identified by the District. Team Development will provide for the Building Leadership Team (BLT) in assuming its responsibilities in guiding school improvement.

Mr. Harper reviewed the high school lottery process in terms of communicating information to students and families on the lottery process and the Magnet Academies. An extensive marketing campaign took place in December with brochures, radio announcements, print ads and movie theater announcements. Assemblies were also conducted at the middle school for 8th graders and 9th & 10th graders at Albany High School to receive information. In addition to numerous publications there were five forums held to inform parents. Applications were mailed to students in early due to the District by January 31, 2011. To date the District has received 1,741 student lottery applications. In addition, there are 537 8th graders. Total anticipated count is 2,220-2,230 students.

- Are you working with the students who did not submit an application?

Yes, those students will be contacted.

- Do you know how many charter schools students or private school students are included in the applications?

Presently, there are 35 applications from student who are not registered in the District. On March 15th and 7th the District is holding registration for charter school and private school students.

- Why do partnerships break-down?

Both partners need to meet their own needs. The only way to get staying power is craft the partnership to have a win-win situation for both partners. Communication and trust are also important in maintaining partnerships.

- Is there an optimal time limit for a partnership like this?

State representatives who did the JIT report stated that it would take about seven years to improve Albany High School. In about two years the District will start to turn the cycle toward improvement.

- What kind of approach would you have in the District?

The only way to reduce the student drop-out rate/graduation rate is to take a systemic K-12 approach. One of the problems is that in school communities, the elementary and middle school faculty and staff don't feel that sense of urgency about students slipping behind because the cause and the effect are separated by time. Literacy is the single most important issue.

- Can you point us to a high school that has successfully restructured and made the transitions necessary to improve student achievement?

CASDA has suggested a trip, when appropriate, for District staff to have an opportunity to visit the Yonkers City Schools. These students are the best in their class. They are more diverse, they are poorer, have lower per pupil expenditure, and by all state assessments they will outperform Albany by 30 to 40 points. This is not a flash in the pan. Also, Dr. McCalla and Mr. Harper have visited the Newburgh Academy, which was broken down into 7 houses. Visitation and talking with colleagues is very helpful. Success is based on high expectations and the support to reach those expectations.

- What are the supports?

It starts with a belief system that kids can be successful. Faculty, staff, parents and students have to believe. Everyone has to respect each other for open communication.

- How do you get faculty and staff to believe?

The National Association of Secondary School Principals put out a key document called *Breaking Ranks II* that talks about good high schools having three elements. They have rigor, relevance and relationships. The JIT reports talks about focusing professional development on a handful of issues and staying the course over a number of years.

- What data are we looking at to determine where our students are falling behind?

There is a program called Data Wise that I would recommend. Creating a data base and building a profile for every child on a regular basis.

- What do we have at the elementary school to incorporate that as well? We need to start at the beginning.

The Curriculum Committee is looking at language arts. Additionally, data at the Pre-K-K level is being evaluated. In addition to state-wide tests, the District has a system-wide reading program with benchmark assessments that are administered to students three times a year. With the onset of the RTI program the District is looking at formative assessments, and interval assessments to measure student achievement. The District is also investing in the Fountas and Pinnell program so that the District can get actual reading levels on all students from Pre-K through 8th grade. We are beginning to shift the focus so that it's not just on one snapshot, but a comprehensive look.

- Is there a plan for presenting professional development to the lower grades?

At the elementary level there is certain degree of rigor. The expectation is that students can and will perform.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Proceedings of Meetings (January 3, 2011; Appointments (Probationary Appointments, Miscellaneous, Itinerant Substitute Teachers 2010-2011, Tutors 2010-2011; Leave of Absence; Transfers, Retirements; Treasurer's Report; Budget Transfers under \$10,000; Budget Transfers over \$10,000; Revenue Status Report-12/31/10; Appropriation Status report-12/31/10; Real Property Tax Adjustments; Bid Award (Integrus Energy Services of New York, Inc.); Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Resolution to Appoint Board of Registration for the School Budget Vote; Field Trips, Attendance at Conferences; Health Services Contract (Bethlehem Central School District, Glenville Central School District; North Greenbush Common Central School District; Lansingburgh Central School; Authorization to Enter Into Contracts; Committee on Special Education; Subcommittee on Special Education; Committee on Pre-School Special Education. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to approve Routine Consent Items. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Ms. Mackey asked to set aside Field Trips and Extra Classroom Activity Funds.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) the motion absent those items set aside.

Motion Passed.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve Field Trips. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion. Ms. Mackey commented on the fact that there is a field trip overseas and there is no indication of any fund raising associated with this trip. Ms. Mackey encouraged the District to pursue fund raising for these overseas field trips to present an opportunity for other students to be able to participate. A suggestion was also made to seek corporate sponsorship for this purpose. The field trip policy will be presented to the Policy Committee for review.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve Central Treasurer's Extra Classroom Activity Fund. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion. Ms. Mackey asked for clarification of where monies from concession stands or Booster Club monies are deposited. There is no indication of that on the report. Staff will follow up on this item.

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

Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM

Policy Approval

The following policies were presented for approval:

- 4321.2 Appointment & Training of Qualified Personnel
- 4321.4 Confidentiality of Educational Records...
- 4321.10 Hiring and Training of Highly Qualified Personnel
- 4321.11 Participation in State and District-wide Assessments...
- 4321.12 Universal Design Policy
- 4321.13 Appointment of Surrogate Parent of a Student with Disability
- 4321.15 Least Restrictive Environment
- 4321.16 Appropriate Space for Special Education Programs
- 4321.17 Independent Educational Evaluations

- 4321.18 Reimbursement for Travel to and From Residential Programs
- 4321.20 Services and Supports for Students with Disabilities
Attending Non-Public Schools
- 4321.21 Child Find Policy
- 4321.22 Section 504 Policy & Procedures

Mrs. Leet made a motion to approve the policies as presented. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2011-2012 Budget Development

Mr. Hogan gave a comprehensive presentation on the development of the 2011-12 School Budget. The presentation began with the Governor's State Aid proposal that indicates a decrease of \$4.3 million. Current budget estimates indicate a preliminary deficit of \$9.9 million based on cost drivers and projected growth from mandates. Unfunded mandates total approximately \$12 million, which includes \$5 million in charter school tuition increase. Revenues are decreasing \$2.6 million. There is some indication that the districts will receive mandate relief. Hopefully, there will be action before April 1st. Reserves and fund balance were reviewed. Debt Service and Employee Benefits are targeted to liabilities, only 1% remains in reserves. In the Fund Balance, the actual amount available is the Unreserved/Undesignated Fund Balance which is 7.60% of budget. Mr. Hogan noted the district is currently using fund balance funds in the amount of \$6 million and reserve debt reserve funds in excess of \$2 million, which increases the use of reserve funds by \$4.5 million. It is not prudent to use all fund balance funds in one year. Fund balance should be connected to a long-term plan.

Dr. Colucciello reviewed guidelines for program review in terms of whether or not the program is mandated, how many students are impacted, is the program currently successful, can the program be reduced, are students in the program completing sequence, what is the level of savings realized with the elimination of the program, is there support for elimination or reduction. A chart indicating mandated programs, enhancement programs and enrichment programs for elementary, middle level and secondary programs was presented for consideration. Dr. Colucciello noted a number of the enhancement programs are grant funded. Mr. Hogan is working with a District-wide community budget committee that is also looking at all aspects of the budget development process.

- What is the difference between enhancement and enrichment?

Everything past mandate the District does not have to do. Typically, enhancement would be found on a number of Districts. Albany goes beyond enhancement to enrichment.

- Can the Board received costs of programs for consideration?

Program costs will be provided on specific programs that are under consideration.

- What would be the implication of a property tax cap?

Governor's proposal recommends 2% cap or the CPI figure, currently at 1.6%. The maximum tax cap would increase the levy by \$1.7 million. The cap is on the Board approval. The tax levy is based on assessments and changes in STAR aid.

- Is the 2011-2012 increase over the actual budget?

This is based on the actual, looking at trends and latest financial figures.

- What is the best practice for employee benefits?

There are no specific guidelines for reserves for employee benefits. Reserves are used to negate a spike in taxes.

- Look at how the District is using grant funds to implement mandated programs. Gants will be identified in terms of using these funds to support mandated programs.

- Can the District look at cutting a percentage across the District?

That possibility can be considered. The process also has to be fair. The process needs to be equitable and objective.

- Is the District considering the elimination of 120 staff members with no consideration of reductions in programs?

The District will be looking at all aspects of everything as it moves through the budget development process.

- Is there information related to the ideal class size?

The District continues to work on class size taking into consideration equity across the District.

- Is there a possibility of placing the sale of the old Philip Schuyler Building on the May ballot. With the programs that are located in that building at this time, there are no alternative sites to accommodate these programs. The District will be looking at all its building in consideration of cost savings.

- Board members are interested in costs for individual programs?

Those programs the Board identifies as programs to be reviewed will be presented with cost considerations.

- Areas to look at for efficiency are Library, Athletic and Physical Education, Special Education, Services in-house and contracted, and the Alternative Education Programs. Although it would be easier to eliminate an entire program. Having gone through two rounds of that, there is nothing listed that would not be devastating. Looking at efficiencies in delivering programs. Literacy programs at all levels should be preserved.

- Education is more than teaching to state mandated tests education includes art, music, etc. Also, we need to look at efficiency in our buildings and programs.

The District will look at everything before any consideration of staff reduction.

Voting Locations

Mr. Hogan advised he and Ms. Cutting have met with the Commissioners of the Board of Elections to discuss the possibility of the District using the electronic voting machines. There are a number of issues. Based on regulations, they are not permitted to release the machines. There people need to accompany the machines. The possibility of out-sources the programming of these machines is also doubtful. In addition to these machines, each location will be required to have a machine for handicapped voters. The District has the option of using the old lever machines for the next two years. However, if the District takes these machines, they will need to be stored by the District. Mr. Hogan and Ms. Cutting will be following up on this issue. Discussion continued relative to the number of voting sites and the option of reducing those sites. There may not be a good solution for this May. The cost on the old machines would be similar to last year.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

None

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mrs. Leet made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cutting