



## PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 12, 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  
Bill Hogan  
Dr. Tresa Diggs  
Linda Rudnick  
Linda Jackson-Chalmers  
Ken Cioffi

**ABSENT:** None

### **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.
- The Mission Statement was read.

Mr. Egan asked for a moment of silence in memory of Dian Swerzowski who passed away earlier this week. Ms. Swerzowski was a Teacher Assistant at Albany High School. She will be dearly missed by her students and co-workers.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

### **Arts Advisory Committee**

Dr. Colucciello introduced Gloria Savino, Instructional Supervisor for Fine Arts and Fiona Thompson, Volunteer Coordinator for the District. Ms. Savino and Ms. Thompson provided a presentation on the District's Arts Advisory Committee. They spoke about the membership of the committee, and the purposes of the committee. Three sub-committees have been developed, Mission and Vision, Community Partnership and Grants Committees. The committee will meet again on May 3, 2011 to review Mission and Vision statements, review of grant opportunities, discuss Schenectady Project with Michael Anthony Williams and a possible partnership with Albany High School, a sub-committee to recruit interested students to participate in this committee and a survey to gather information on current partnerships. The May 3, 2011 will take place in Room 116 in the Schuyler Building from 5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

Dr. Colucciello introduced Dr. Bruce Roter, a parent in the District who is a professor at The College of St. Rose and Gregory Jones, Principal at New Scotland Elementary School and Josephine Amore, a music teacher in the District. Dr. Roter and Ms. Amore spent countless hours with the student at New Scotland, preparing a presentation of an opera composed by Dr. Roter about peace and tolerance. Mr. Jones noted his concern that 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> graders would be able to stay on task for more than 20 minutes. Ms. Amore reviewed the opera through the summer and auditions took place in September. Students rehearsed three times each week. The students premiered the opera in January and the Massry Center at the College of St. Rose. This was a great opportunity for the students. Dr. Roter noted it was his joy and honor to work with the faculty and students at New Scotland. The theme of the project was "It's possible". Board members expressed their appreciation of those involved, expressing their pride in being part of a District that has so many talented students and staff.

Mrs. Leet provided information related to the “Crop Walk” (communities responding to overcome poverty), sponsored by the Council of Community Churches. This is an effort to raise money to overcome hunger, focusing on young students who have difficulty being successful in school because of hunger. Twenty-five percent of funds raised stay in the community. The walk will take place on May 1, 2011 starting at the First Lutheran Church on State Street at 12:30 p.m. with registration. The walk will begin at 1:30 p.m. This is a 4.5 mile walk and also a golden mile for those who prefer a shorter walk. All bargaining units in the School District have agreed to encourage their membership to participate. Students will also participate. Students will also be collecting canned goods for this project. Expansion of student participation will take place in the future.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Vincent Rigosu addressed the Board regarding increased taxes in the City of Albany and his concern that the tax levy adopted by the school district resulted in a 10% increase in his property taxes.
2. Jennifer Justice addressed the Board regarding a teacher survey indicating a number of issues that result in teachers extending themselves to serve the students in the District.

### **FACILITIES PROJECT**

#### **Action Item**

Mr. Hogan and Mr. Peckham of CSArch presented bid awards for consideration and approval. There were two resolutions to be approved. The first resolution related to the renovation of Albany High School renovations; Contract No. 2 for General Construction, Contract No. 4 Electric and Contract No. 5 Plumbing. Mr. Peckham also reviewed four alternates included in the resolution. Bids came in well within budget. Funds to cover these improvements have already been identified. There will be no additional funds from the public in this project. Total amount of all bids awarded is \$3,424,828.00. The Facilities Subcommittee has reviewed these resolutions and is recommending approval. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to approve the resolution. Dr. Brandon seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Mr. Peckham presented a second resolution related to renovations of the Pre-K space at Arbor Hill Elementary School, awarding a contract to Zandri Construction Corp. as General Contractor for the project. Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve the resolution. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion. Total amount of this award is \$188,000. Mr. Peckham noted that the low bidder failed to submit their subcontractor declarations with their bid required by the Supplementary Instructions to Bidders. Therefore, based on conversations with counsel, their bid has been rejected. The Facilities Subcommittee has also reviewed this award and is recommending approval. This project will also be completed at no additional cost to taxpayers.

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

Motion passed.

### **Budget Update**

Dr. Colucciello and Mr. Hogan began a presentation on the 2011-2012 budget by providing clarification of misleading information related to the District.

- Enrollment in the District is decreasing.

Between September 2008 and 2009; enrollment increased by 466 students.

- The District has \$15 million of Unappropriated Fund Balance.

The District has incorporated \$9.3 million of this money into the 2011-2012 Budget. The remaining amount represents about 1<sup>1/2</sup> payrolls.

- The proposed High School construction project will not raise taxes.

The taxpayer share of the proposed \$1.4 million construction project will be paid in full by EXCEL aid. There will be no increase to the taxpayers as a result of this project. The projects will be paid 100% through state aid.

The draft being presented this evening includes all of Tier I, II, and III reductions agreed upon by the majority of the Board. These reductions equal \$5,979,260. The draft also includes a reduction of \$2.1 million for the application of the Federal Jobs Bill because these expenses are required to move to the Special Aid Fund with grants. Appropriated Fund Balance Funds for the budget have been increased from \$6 million to \$9.3 million. Reserve Funds will not be used in the 2011-2012 Budget. In anticipation of another difficult budget next year, reserves will be used in the 2012-2013. This strategy will reduce the Unappropriated Fund Balance to below 4%.

New requests for spending have also been included in the amount of \$202,000. The current deficit equates to a 1.6% increase in tax levy if no further actions are taken. If there are agreements with bargaining units to modify labor contracts, the potential tax increase could be reduced. It was also noted that the average increase in tax levy for the District over the past three years has been 2.97%. In 2011-12 the City School District of Albany was one of 70 school districts in the State that received "Administrative Efficiency Aid". The credit on the 2011-2012 State Aid runs indicate the District will receive a credit in the amount of \$532,872 because of that. Unknown factors still be are bargaining units to modify labor contracts and mandate relief. The District continues to work feverishly with the officers of the bargaining units regarding a wage freeze. These groups have been very cooperative. Hopefully, there will be something positive as a result of these efforts. Also unknown at this point is mandate relief and whether or not there will be any relief forthcoming. The budget being presented this evening indicates a deficit of \$1,713,814. With no further actions taken, the resulting deficit could be closed by an increase in tax levy of 1.6%. Total expenditures are \$206,410,639. Staff reductions include 4 Administrators, 52.5 Teachers, 34.5 Non-instructional staff, a total of 91 positions. A comprehensive review of programs the District continues to provide at the elementary, middle school and high school levels was also provided for consideration.

Mr. Hogan explained that in New York State, school districts statewide set a tax levy that voters vote in May. Should the District approve this budget as presented this evening, the tax levy will increase by 1.6%. That is all the amount of money the District will receive in new revenues. Where the numbers change is in July the New York State Office of Real Property Services works with all the assessments within each taxing entity. They develop a tax bill between homestead and non-homestead, which is residential and commercial properties. These assessments are not finalized until July. The difference between the budget voted on in May and the tax bill residents receive in September is based on changes in assessments and STAR Aid.

Mr. Hogan advised that if the budget is not approved by the voters on May 17, 2011, the District can present a revised budget to the voters in a second vote or go to a Contingency Budget. The impact of a Contingency Budget would affect student supplies, community use of building and grounds, certain equipment and certain salary increases. A contingent budget would reduce a tax levy by .54% or approximately ½ of 1%.

- Ms. Green requested that the Board re-consider the reduction of the home school coordinator position at Pine Hills Elementary School based on the composition of the student population and the enrollment close to 400 students. The estimated cost would be \$78,000.
- Is there any way that some of the positions targeted for reduction could be funded by grant? There may be some grant funding available in the Magnet Grant.
- The District needs to feature the courses offered in the high school that are unique to Albany. Every opportunity the District has to publicize them would be helpful in encouraging voters to approve the budget.

There are seventeen AP course, full IB courses included foreign language, Chinese, Spanish and French, CTE course at Abrookin, Exploration Programs, Project Lead the Way, and photography.

- Due to the economic climate the District is forced to reduce staff, which effects program. This has been difficult. However, the District has done the best job they are able to do. When the District was faced with a contingency budget in the past, considering this would reduce the budget by ½ of 1%, community programs, i.e. the YMCA after school programs were faced with charging parents and in many instances parents could not afford to send their children to these programs. This is a plea to the community to support the budget. Hopefully, the District will be able to get down to a zero tax levy based on the unknowns at this point.
- Middle School Summer School is included in the budget because grant funds were identified to cover the cost. However, the program will be reviewed to make the program more effective. This program serves 90 students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Additional support for the home school coordinator position at Pine Hills Elementary School. Comment was made that home school coordinators need to be coordinating between home and school and not serving as an assistant principal.
- This has been a continuation of a three year saga in terms of budget reductions. Recognition to Ms. Green, along with Mr. Hogan and Dr. Colucciello, for their efforts in bringing this budget to a possible 0% tax levy. This is the best budget that the District can put together. The people of this City have over and over again, year after year, supported the District. The reason that monies are not available is because of actions taken at the state and federal level. This budget provides the best program.
- A request was made to include the student verification position at \$40,000, previously voted down, to be put back in the budget. This position has the potential to pay for itself and beyond in terms of verifying students that the District pays tuition on.
- This budget

Ms. Green made a motion to add back into the budget one home school coordinator position at Pine Hills Elementary School. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion. Mrs. Streznewski noted she is not in favor of this motion. Similar comments can be made in support of restoring a number of other positions. Mrs. Leet noted the enrollment at Pine Hills warrants the position. The position increases the budget by \$78,000.

The Board voted 5-1-1 to approve the motion.

Ms. Streznewski was opposed. Dr. Brandon abstained.

Motion passed.

Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to add back into the budget the student verification position. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. Is there a possibility that someone on staff could provide this service? There are contractual issues to be considered. An outside party may have experience in this area that could be advantageous. There is the possibility that the District could realize a significant amount of money. A question was presented regarding paying a stipend to an existing employee to provide this service. That would be dependent on how the position is staffed. The stipends commonly presented to the Board for approval are APSTA positions. If an APSUE employee were to be considered with a stipend this would have to be negotiated. Various options will be investigated upon approval of the motion. Ms. Streznewski noted these two additions would support two teaching positions. The increase to the budget for this position is \$40,000.

The Board voted 4-3 to approve the motion.

Mrs. Leet, Ms. Mackey, and Ms. Streznewski were opposed.

Motion passed.

Mr. Hogan noted the revised budget figure is \$206,528,639 which results in a 1.71% tax levy unless additional reductions are realized in the future. Mr. Egan read the following resolution.

#### **Adoption of Budget**

**RESOLVED** that the Board of Education of the Albany City School District adopt the proposed budget for 2011-2012 to be presented to the voters of the City of Albany to be voted on, on May 17, 2011, and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the amounts stated in such proposed budget in the total amount of \$206,528,639 be and hereby are appropriated as estimated expenditures in the amounts and purposes therein specified, and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the total amount of estimated revenue and the amount necessary to be raised by real property tax in addition thereto and to finance the total estimated expenditure shall be and become applicable in the amounts therein stated for the purpose of meeting said appropriations.

Motion to approve the resolution was made by Ms. Streznewski and seconded by Mrs. Gaffuri. Comment was made that the public needs to remember it is the responsibility of the State to provide for the education of our children. School districts act as agents of the State and rather than treating districts as partners, they treat the districts adversaries, stating that districts are spending recklessly, etc. The State did not use their reserves to increase State Aid to school districts. The State needs to support school districts in providing a sound basic education.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0).

Motion passed.

Dr. Colucciello expressed his gratitude to Board members and the administration for their diligence through this budget process. Focus will now move toward getting the budget approved by the public on May 17, 2011.

Ms. Mackey left the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

## INFORMATION

### Albany High School Re-design

Dr. Diggs introduced high school administrators, instructional supervisors and technical support staff, who provided a presentation on the re-design of Albany High School. Julie Barber, Bryan Cartwright, Margaret DiGiulio, Dale Getto, Stan Harper, Dr. McCalla, Doreen Mitchell, Sofia Newell, Michael Panetta, Mark Place, Gloria Savino, Dan Stilson and Cecily Wilson gave a comprehensive presentation on the redesign of Albany High School. The presentation included Organizational Structure (Leadership Groups, Academic and Student Supports), Instruction (Project Based Learning, Flexible Groupings, Differentiated Instruction, Curriculum Mapping, and Literacy). Instruction will include diverse teaching strategies, increased rigor/expectations and expanded student supports. School Climate-Empowering Students through student government, clubs and service organizations, internships, community partnerships, sports, youth court and displays of student work. Build Community through town hall meetings, pep rallies, assemblies, seminars/symposiums, 21<sup>st</sup> Century University/ business partners, and digital/traditional communication methods. Improve Communication through greater accessibility, E-communication, "Snail Mail", and coffee klatches. Future Steps – a description of activities that will take place through the next several months was provided.

The high school program students will attend in September will consist of four academies: Citizenship Academy focusing on global economy and community; Discovery focusing on communication and arts; Innovation Academy focusing on Science, Technology and Engineering; and Leadership Academy focusing on civic and social responsibility. Common spaces in the configuration are the Guidance Suite and the Media Center. Department offices, psychologist and social worker offices, and Career and Technical Education courses will remain in their current locations. Information was also provided on the scheduling process and a sample schedule for each grade level. Drawings indicating the classrooms were also made available for viewing.

- What are teachers going to be doing differently than in the past?

Teaching will be teaching students at their individual needs based on the student's interest and experience. Within a 40 minute class in science students will have an introduction followed by a long term lab component. The IB middle years will also be provided to increase the rigor.

- Is there a different evaluation to determine if teachers are teaching in this manner?

Rubric will be created for evaluations to determine what teachers are doing well and where they can be supported.

- What have you done to launch the Citizenship and Leadership Academies? There is a disconnect in the course offerings. That lacks synergy.

In all the academies students will be taking World History, World History II which is mandated. Mr. Weltz is working with a group related to the Mock UN. This is in the initial stage.

- How have the students been involved in the decisions that have been made so far?

There are three student members on the BLT who have been involved in the process since September. Proposals have been brought forward to members of the Falcon Council, a very organized group of students, for their consideration. A point person will bring forward their review to Ms. Getto. The plan for implementing the School Climate Survey and members of the Falcon Council will provide students to assist in the survey. Students will also serve on the school climate council.

- Were students involved in choosing the colors for each academy?

The group wanted the colors of the academies to reflect the original colors of the high school that are focused and purposeful.

- The main restructuring committee has not been meeting?

A meeting will be scheduled for the end of April. Because of scheduling issues the group has had difficulty scheduling. The group will discuss an extended meeting schedule at this meeting.

- There is concern regarding the courses in the academies, i.e. law and criminal justice in one academy and the court room in another academy is puzzling.

There was an issue of balancing courses in the building. Students are able to take elective courses in all of the academies.

- Increasing AP participation. How are we doing with that?

AP courses have increased significantly this last year.

- Kudos to staff. The pulse in the building has improved significantly.

- How are students in the 8th grade going to be transitioned to attend the high school?

The transition camp is still being developed. Hopefully, the number of students participating will be doubled. Additional information will be forthcoming.

- All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students should attend the transition camp in preparation for entering the high school.

- Prior to the start of the 2011-2012 school year parents and community should be invited to the high to view the physical changes in the building.

- Board members expressed positive comments relative to the quality of the report this evening.

- How will the District build a sense of community for students, creating a team culture?

Teaming will be concentrated with the four core teachers, the positioning of the classrooms. In the classrooms project based programming will take place. Students will focus on issues they are interested in exploring. There will be interest stimulated for all students. Student directive learning will also be utilized. Town Hall meetings will also be developed so that students can be involved with issues in the building. Competition between students in the four academies will also help develop a strong sense of team.

Smaller learning communities are about the personalization. The most crucial thing in student achievement is the quality of teachers and the personal relationships they build with the students. We want every student in the school to know that there is a group of adults that know them and that the student can go to and turn to them. That will be a critical piece in moving students forward.

### **ROUTINE CONSENT**

Routine Consent items were presented for approval as follow: Appointments (Miscellaneous, Tutors, and Substitutes) Leaves of Absence; Resignations, Bid Awards (301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306A, 306B, 212E, 307, and 327); Field Trips and Authorization to Enter into Contracts (Achievement Academy, Advanced Therapy, Brighter Choice for Boys Charter, Brighter Choice for Girls Charter, Harbridge Consulting Group, Lamar). Ms. Mackey set aside appointments. Mrs. Leet set aside Authorization to Enter Into Contracts. Mr. Egan set aside the McKenzie Resolution.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve routine consent items.

Motion passed.

**BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

**BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

Ms. Streznewski requested that the budget development for next year, include the cost of individual programs.

Ms. Streznewski asked what the purpose is in providing attendance reports to Board members. The reports are informational. They are used as a tracking tool. There are a number of initiatives involving the community in the District's efforts to increase daily attendance. This will be a future presentation.

Mr. Egan thanked everyone, especially the Superintendent and Mr. Hogan for their efforts in developing the budget.

Dr. Brandon noted a group of administrators and a community member participated in a site visit to Lincoln High School and Saunders Tech School in Yonkers to witness their school improvement program. The programs are very impressive. A follow-up meeting took place on April 6<sup>th</sup>. Key talking points were discussed. Additional information will be presented to the Board as the redesign moves forward.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Green made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:40 p.m. THERE WILL BE NO MEETING ON APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup>.