



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

July 14, 2010

7:00 p.m.

Pine Hills Elementary School

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

Dr. Raymond Colucciello
Bill Hogan
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Linda Rudnick

ABSENT: Linda Jackson-Chalmers

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 made note of the Governor's veto of the Charter School Tuition Cap Legislation. If this legislation is not voted down, the District stands to lose an additional \$5 million, along with the previous reduction in state aid. The District will face additional reductions in staff and services. Mr. Egan advised the only thing that can be done at this time is to remain vigilant and when the time is right, urge our legislators to do the right thing.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Colucciello advised that prior to this meeting, he, along with Board members and the Principal, toured the newly renovated Arbor Hill Elementary School. This is a beautiful building, with vibrant colors. Everyone is very excited for students to return to that building in September. An opening ceremony will take in the weeks following the opening of the school. Congratulations to this Board as the District winds down with the opening of the last building in the Facilities Plan. Congratulations also go out to the Contractor and the Project Manager.

Adding to Mr. Egan's comments, Dr. Colucciello advised this community supported the District in May with the passing of the budget. The District put forth to the public a fair budget. Last week the District was handed a curve, which is the potential of a \$5 million shortfall. Those responsible for managing the resources of the District have an obligation to prepare for this reduction in the event the veto is not overturned. This may mean an additional reduction of 80 to 100 staff members. This will be devastating to the District. The tuition rate for each of the District students in Charter Schools will increase from \$11,712 to \$14,072. Up to date information will be provided through School News Notifier (SNN). This program will provide up to date information directly to personal email addresses. This service is available through the Districts' web page.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Marlon Anderson encouraged the public to contact Legislators regarding the Charter school situation in Albany. Relative to Harriet Gibbons High School (HGHS), Mr. Anderson advised the District needs to further investigate the role of HGHS before making any sudden decisions.
2. Chuck Miller addressed the Board regarding HGHS, commenting on the great loss closing this school will incur. As a former graduate of the school, he was able to fulfill his dreams. Mr. Miller encouraged the District to turn this school into a full four-year high school program.
3. Noelene Smith addressed the Board regarding an issue parents are having in communicating with teachers. Ms. Smith encouraged the District to reach out to the parents of HGHS students to talk about how the students will be moved to Albany High School.
4. Marsha Rubinowitz addressed the Board regarding the validity of the data collected as a basis for eliminating the program.
5. Nancy Wawrla addressed the Board regarding the closing of HGHS. There must continue to be an option other Albany High School for students who have traditionally struggled in their school work.
6. Caitlin Lediger addressed the Board regarding HGHS. The program provides students with smaller classes with caring and nurturing environments. Teachers are trained to specifically to work with high risk, high need students.
7. Diane Solomon addressed the Board with the Top Ten reasons for not closing HGHS.
8. Richard Gibbons, son of Harriet Gibbons, the namesake of HGHS, spoke in favor of keeping the program in the school. It is an integral part of the community.
9. Laura Hopson addressed the Board regarding HGHS and the special faculty and staff. Students feel cared for in this environment.
10. Rory Glass, former teacher at HGHS urged the Board to keep the school open. The school has unique characteristics. The District hasn't given the school sufficient time to work.
11. Tiffany Amiah, a graduate of HGHS, addressed the Board regarding her personal experience at HGHS.
12. Jawaun Daniels addressed the Board regarding his experience at HGHS. The school offered him a small learning environment where he was able to learn.
13. Maisha Dobbs addressed the Board regarding HGHS. Many of the students who attend HGHS have backgrounds that require this setting in their lives. The school is an opportunity to receive the support and encouragement to achieve and build self esteem.
14. Ginnie Farrell addressed the Board regarding the Charter School cap. Ms. Farrell offered her support to work with the District in uncapping Charter Schools in New York State.

15. Barbara Fidderman addressed the Board regarding HGHS. There is such much more going on in the classroom than academics. These students have so many things going on in their lives that affect their education.
16. Catina Mavedones addressed the Board regarding the Governor's decision on Charter School tuition. Ms. Mavedones encouraged those present to contact their Legislators to urge the Governor to reinstate the freeze on Charter School tuition.
17. Joe Nelson addressed the Board regarding his experiences at HGHS. Albany High School is too big for a lot of students.
18. Alicia Holt-Riley addressed the Board regarding Harriett Gibbons High School. The program can not be preserved at Albany High School.
19. Nikki Holt addressed the Board regarding her experiences at HGHS. Ms. Holt graduated from HGHS in 2004 and was able to continue her education and earn a Master's Degree in Social Work.
20. Shimire Morris addressed the Board regarding her experiences with her daughter at HGHS. Her daughter would have been lost at Albany High School. The small environment allowed her to succeed. These students need the one-on-one attention they get at HGHS.
21. Laurie Lieman addressed the Board regarding the Governor's veto of the cap on Charter School tuition and the shortfall to the District as a result of this action.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Mr. Egan presented the following Routine Consent items for approval: Appointments (Miscellaneous); Abolish Position, Create Position, Reappointment, and a Resolution to Appoint Impartial Hearing Officer. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to approve Routine Consent Items. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Mr. Morris asked that Abolish Position, Create Position and Reappointment be set aside.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve routine consent items absent the item set aside.
Motion passed.

Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to table Abolish Position, Create Position and Reappointment pending further discussion in Executive Session. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion.
Motion passed.

DISCUSSION

Albany High School – Joint Intervention Team (JIT) Report

Dr. Diggs and Mr. Harper presented a very comprehensive presentation on the District's plan to implement the recommendation of the Joint Intervention Team Recommendations. The update included a timeline, developed by Mr. Harper. Mr. Harper advised the timeline indicates the specific tasks, action steps, start dates, the person(s) responsible, costs, and completion evidence. This document is a work in progress. Because the District has not yet received funds through the School Improvement Grant, the work will not be completed this summer. Many of the dates may change.

Mr. Harper has been the point person at the high school, who has worked on organizing all the school improvement efforts. The Grants Administrator, Ronnie Pastecki, Instructional Supervisor, Doreen Mitchell, and several members of the high school Building Leadership Team have worked endlessly on writing the School Improvement Grant. Once the District receives those funds, it will appoint a School Improvement Administrator, who will be responsible for the implementation of the JIT recommendations and all other school improvement efforts. Dr. Diggs noted one of the recommendations of the JIT report included the restructuring of the high school administration. This will be accomplished by August 5, 2010. Discussions with teacher bargaining unit for changes with teacher evaluations, will be initiated by the Superintendent. The Board will be asked to act on a number of approvals for school improvement initiatives and funding, i.e. curriculum writing. Dr. Diggs noted the District is hopeful that information concerning the Grant will take place by the end of next week. Board members will be notified accordingly.

Dr. Colucciello noted the State Education Department is allowing the District to choose the option of transformation of the high school, with the belief that the District will have a different delivery system in September. There will be changes at Albany High School on the first day of school. The District is working on student attendance, policy and procedure follow through, administrative reorganization, teacher training, and curriculum alignment, etc. The District has the staff at Albany High School that can make this happen.

- History of students is very important, identifying student deficits that require intervention. Is there a way that student histories can be accessed through a data base so that teachers know the students' history?

The Technology Department is looking into programs that can provide this information. Statewide assessments are presently available in Power School. Availability of individual skills information is still being investigated. Professional development needs to be offered to allow teachers to be able to access and analyze information for all students.

- How are you involving parents and students in this process?
The Restructuring Committee has involved parents and students. They also participated in the Building Leadership Team and on-line surveys.

- Will professional development be mandatory?
That will need to be discussed in terms of the teachers' contract. The District has teachers that are willing to work outside of their contract. Many opportunities will be offered to the teachers throughout the year. Funds will be available to finance this training for staff.

- What are the Board's responsibilities in this process?
Board Members are encouraged to make visits to the schools, be part of the professional development, and observe the change and become involved in the student government that will be developed. Board members will also receive Vadir reports, student attendance report and reports on failures. First quarter information will indicate if students are succeeding. The District, along with Board members, will need to monitor reports.

- Are there specific documents that will need review? If so, reports, etc. need to be available to Board members prior to Board meetings for their review. Is there a possibility of developing a Curriculum Committee since curriculum is such an important part of the plan? Is Dr. Howard part of the process? Information will be forwarded to Board members in a timely manner to allow for proper review.

Dr. Howard is expected to periodically monitor progress.

- When the JIT report was issued, was there a meeting of the faculty and staff at Albany High School to discuss the report? Is staff aware of the severity of this situation?

A copy of the report was emailed to all staff. Staff was encouraged to respond with questions and comments.

- One of the recommendations in the report is that identified administrators would be given certain responsibilities and that the School Improvement Administrator would be the one who will delegates the responsibilities and monitors the process.

The School Improvement Administrator will be identified when the grant is awarded. There will be a Building Leadership Team.

- The report notes that the present curriculum should include how the classes will be taught. The tone of the JIT indicates that the District must do better to insure that students' needs are being met. Teachers need professional development so they are prepared to teach students in a way that they are able to learn.

- The District needs to identify a schedule of reporting student attendance, grades and Vadir information by teacher for Board review on a regular basis, starting in October. Teachers need to use Power School for a variety of applications, i.e. grade book, homework assignments, etc

Following the monthly meeting of the Building Leadership Team, information will be reported out to the Board related to attendance, grades, and Vadir information. The District will also look at increased use of Power School by teachers.

ACTION

Harriet Gibbons High School

Dr. Diggs reviewed a Transition Plan for Harriet Gibbons. Enrollment for 2010-11 is 73 students, who were recommended for placement in the program. Staff targeted for the program for 2010-11 is 29. Following approval of the Board to close the program, Dr. Diggs reviewed the steps that will be taken to inform staff, students and parents about the plan. The District has conducted preliminary work in terms of schedules for the HGHS teachers at Albany High School. Students scheduling will begin immediately and contact will be made with parents and students. Students will attend the 9th grade orientation with other 9th graders.

- How will these students be monitored to determine whether or not they are successful? Student choice will define what courses they will be taking at Albany High School. Students will be monitored through attendance, grades, interim progress reports, etc.

- How will support services be provided to Albany High?
Students will have the same opportunities. However, they may not be able to meet as often, given the numbers.

Ms. Mackey provided specific information related to the task of the Alternative Education Think Tank and the data that was used in coming to the decision to close the Harriet Gibbons program.

In response to an inquiry, Dr. Colucciello advised he is confident that this transition can be successful. This can be done. Staff will rise to the occasion and make this successful.

The following resolution was presented for approval:

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Harriet Gibbons High School Program located at Watervliet Avenue, and which operates as a program under Albany High School is ended at the Watervliet location effective immediately, and the students in the program shall be incorporated into Albany High School, and in various programs commencing with the 2010-2011 school year.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passes.

Mrs. Leet requested that Board members accept a Board Member Item. Mr. Egan noted as a point of order that the agenda does not include this item. Information will be forwarded to Board members in an upcoming update.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.