



SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING

April 6, 2009

7:00 p.m.

Albany High School

PRESENT: Barbara Gaffuri, President
Melissa Mackey, Vice President
Judy Doesschate, Secretary
Dr. Mark Barth
Rose Brandon
Daniel Egan
Wayne Morris

Dr. Eva Joseph
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan
Linda Rudnick
Linda Jackson-Chalmers

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.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Sal Villa addressed the board regarding the proposed reduction in guidance counselor positions in the 2009-2010 budget, urging board members to consider guidance counselors as an extremely serious part of the success of school programs.
2. Nolene Smith addressed the board regarding staff reductions in the middle of a crisis. It is important for students to have someone they can go to when they need guidance. Ms. Smith also talked about the cost of the NUA contract and the lack of concrete evidence of success. Ms. Smith urged the District to bring students back to the high school from Harriet Gibbons because that program is not a success.
3. Marty Anderson addressed the board relative to his duties as a guidance counselor in the College Center at the high school. While he does not carry a case load, he assists students and parents with career counseling, college applications and financial aid. Ms. Anderson asked that the board reconsider the reduction of guidance counselors in the upcoming budget.
4. Ellen Gerard addressed the board regarding guidance counselor positions at the middle school level, urging the board to reconsider reductions in these positions. The increase in counselor's case load has the capacity to negatively effect student achievement and test scores.
5. Michael Panetta addressed the board regarding the reductions in guidance counselor positions. Guidance counselors are the one constant in a student's academic career and the only person responsible for the historical and cumulative information for every student, each and every year.
6. Donna Porterfield addressed the board regarding the reductions in guidance counselor positions. These reductions will cause long-term horror. Behind parents and students, counselors are the last gatekeepers to make sure students leave the school district prepared for the twenty first century society.

7. Robert Hammond addressed the board regarding the reductions in guidance counselor positions. Guidance counselors are the backbone of the school's purpose of both teaching and guiding our children. Guidance counselors are dedicated to providing instruction and support.

8. Cathy Corbo addressed the board regarding the reduction in guidance counselor positions, recommending the use of unexpected funds to pay for these position that are being considered for reductions.

9. Beverly Padgett addressed the board relative to the budget and the proposed reductions in guidance counselor positions. There are other items in the budget that can be cut. Reconsider the program at Harriet Gibbons.

10. Marilyn Kaplan addressed the board in appreciation of the enormous task of developing the budget. Ms. Kaplan stressed how important guidance counselors are in the lives of students. Their job is to guide students through the middle school and high school and life after Albany High. Through her association with the Sponsor a Scholar Program she has personally seen the effect guidance counselors have on students in terms of program guidance.

DISCUSSION ITEM

2009-2010 Budget Development Discussion

Dr. Joseph began the presentation with a review of the process that started in February. The district was aware that the process of budget development would differ from prior years based on the level of anticipated state aid, as well as the fiscal challenges in terms of revenue and other income sources. The focus of this budget was on contraction, not expansion, looking at what could be reduced, how the District could do more with less and how the District could continue to stay focused on students, maintain programs and services that work were essential for them, while the District faced its fiscal challenges. Staff members have reviewed and evaluated all current educational programs and delivery of services. Dr. Joseph referred to the chart presented in February outlining programs as essential and mandated, essential, but not mandated and elective strategies. This program schedule was used as a guide. There are a number of reductions in the budget that is being presented this evening specifically related to a lower enrollment and some scaling back of services. The District held community forums informing the public about specialty programs. The key focus throughout the process was maintaining and sustaining programs and services for students.

Mr. Hogan reviewed the numbers from the three draft budgets previously presented for review, highlighting expenditure changes in the 4th draft this evening. Mr. Hogan reviewed the one change in state aid with an additional appropriation of \$1.1 million, which reduces the tax levy by 1.44%. Expenditure changes included charter school tuition rate freeze, budget vote contractual expenses, operations equipment, operations contractual expense and benefits. The overall effect on the tax levy is a reduction of 1.894%. In summary the 4th draft budget being presented this evening is set at \$203,646,573, which is \$11.8 million below the contingent budget amount, with a tax levy of 2.06%. New programming initiatives include an increase in foreign language from 10 weeks to 20 weeks in the 6th grade and the continuation of Strategic Planning and High School Restructuring Plans. IDEA Federal Stimulus provides for new programming in the amount of \$991,000. Title I Federal Stimulus allows for new programming in the amount of \$731,000. Planned budget reductions call for staff reductions of 106.1 FTE's, with a tax levy reduction of 5.49%. Planned budget reductions were reviewed in detail.

- Is there an explanation for the significant increases in a number of budget items?

Most of these are setting the budget to what we know the expenses are to be. It doesn't mean a one-year increase. It's a combination of the budget being too low and cost increases.

- The \$200,000 increase in the high school restructuring and the reimbursable subs and overtime has been a concern. Is there an explanation?

On the high school restructuring, the Strategic Planning dollars for the most part were put into that line item. A projection was made based on the number of strategies in the implementation plan, knowing that the high school discussion would rely on consultants guiding the educational program planning and potentially any design, moving forward in that kind of planning.

- NUA funds of \$625,000 are coming from three sources, not the general fund budget?

Yes. Monies will be forthcoming from the Contract for Excellence, Title I and IDEA. The NUA discussion can be separate because it is not going to change the tax impact in the general fund.

- What are the improvements at Philip Livingston Magnet Academy you noted in expenditures in the 4th draft budget?

This is the replacement of doors, painting and other minor improvements to the facility.

- How much money is designated for improvements at that facility given the fact that the ALC will be moved to that location?

There is \$10,000 designated for the interior. Exterior roof work is planned, along with window improvements. There is no question that the facility needs major renovation. Livingston is actually a better site than the ALC building. Last year, following a State Education Department site visit, it was determined that use of the building beyond five years would require major renovations if the District continues use of that building.

- Explain the \$500,000 increase in the Food Lunch Fund.

The School Lunch Fund lost \$750,000 in 2007-2008. The appropriation into the new budget was increased by \$500,000. The original allocation was \$800,000. That amount was reduced to \$700,000. The District is optimistic the fund will do better than that.

- How much money is being allocated to fix the roof at Livingston?

Those funds will come from the Maintenance Department budget. This is not going to be a full roof replacement. This will be fixing leaks, etc.

- When is the decision relative to 6th graders in the elementary schools scheduled? Are we budgeting for that?

Details are still in discussion with principals. Efficiencies was staffing related to class size, along with the \$700,000 contingency in the budget is expected to cover costs.

- The net cost of summer school is zero. Is this due to consolidation?

Those programs are being funded through Title I monies. This is for elementary and middle school programs. There is a small piece for the high school of approximately \$12,000 - \$13,000.

- What kind of transportation is being provided for this program?

Students will be transported to and from school on yellow buses provide by Durham School Services.

- In a 1.5 mile radius?

The District has not ever provided transportation for summer programs. The program plan needs to be developed. This is a Title I program and SED has advised that summer transportation services are an allowable expense under Title I.

- What is the net cost savings in the Alt Ed Program? Is this due to the location?

This is mostly utility expenses related to the relocation and also a staff position.

- Is the District moving one of the Pre-K programs from Giffen to ASH?

Yes. When ASH enrolled for Pre-K they enrolled 36 students. This is the first time that building will have more than one Pre-K. That reduces the Giffen Pre-K classes to three. Two will be Head Start Programs and one will be a District program.

- What was that total change to the General Fund Budget from the Extended Day Program? Programs are being maintained.

- Is the majority of the money for the high school restructuring for consultants?

The \$200,000 is a place holder primarily for the kinds of consultants that we will need depending upon how fast the progress is. Is it going to be about the educational program? Is it going to be a team? It's also a placeholder for any other strategic plan implementation that has a cost associated with it.

- Extended Day Program figures, were they capped or actual enrollment? In the future I'd like to get information about what is the cap, how much are actually enrolled and numbers under served and over served.
- The budget figure for Professional Development is the same amount, \$125,000 from 2008-09 to 2009-10. What does that pay for?

There are a number of other broad based training pieces that are covered under this item, the Academy of Engineering, IBO Training and AP Training are a few. Title I monies are also used for professional training.

- Are there more specifics related to the focus of NUA for next year?

There will be a specific discussion in terms of dollars earmarked in Title I and IDEA for NUA prior to the board acting on approval of the contract. The sustainability plan put forward last year, the District is in the 3rd year of growing and the focus is to continue cohort one, strengthen cohort two and start to build cohort three, which is another group of teachers who will be involved in the training.

- I wonder if its time now to cut our losses and consolidate our gains with NUA and to make a commitment to take the professional development and NUA monies and come up with a ratio here, something that is a placeholder and something that is committed to NUA. I'm not comfortable with \$625,000 going to NUA right now and I'd like to have that assurance that when we get to that topic in subsequent meetings that we can entertain some other items about this money. The one size fits all approach has its limits.
- There is a co-teaching special education class at Giffen that has more than 25 students. Could you explain what the District expects to be the maximum number of students in a co-teaching situation?

There is no cap on the total number of students in the co-teaching classroom. Students that come in late in the year and that particular school is their home school, the District tries to program for kids in the least restrictive environment, which would be the home school.

- Where are the computer aide positions?

These positions are in the computer labs at Giffen and Albany School of Humanities. They are assistants that are stationed in the lab and they assist students when they come into the labs to help kids get on the computers. The elimination of these positions will force the teacher to do more

hands on with the students as opposed to what the teacher aids do. There are no assistants in the other schools for the computer labs. These positions increase the efficiency in the labs.

- Relative to professional development, the District needs to look at ways to really target the areas where we know professional development is needed. We know it is needed at the high school. We need to find some way of engaging middle school teachers to be actively involved in professional development that really is going to move us to the place we want to be, which is improving achievement.
- Are placeholders, meaning things that the board is going to come back and revisit and get more specific information and help brainstorm about how that money is going to be spent and what numbers are absolutely locked into place?
- Once a budget is approved, what monies are going to be discussed in terms of how those funds are going to be used, i.e. NUA, Strategic Planning.

Following additional discussion, motions were presented for consideration and action as follow:

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to add two guidance counselor positions (\$93,300) to the proposed budget. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Dr. Barth made a motion to add field trips (\$31,950) to the proposed budget.

Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Mr. Morris made a motion to add travel and conferences (\$37,760) to the proposed budget.

Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

The board voted 5 ayes, 2 nays (Mr. Egan & Mrs. Brandon) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

Dr. Barth made a motion to reduce the high restructuring amount in the budget to \$100,000.

Following discussion the amount was increased to \$150,000. Dr. Barth was in favor of increasing the amount to \$150,000. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The board voted 5 ayes, 1 nay (Mr. Egan) and 1 abstention (Mrs. Brandon).

Motion passed.

Dr. Barth made a motion to add retiree dance program. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

Discussion followed relative to the fact that this program is presently at Philip Livingston and is being eliminated based on the closure of that school.

The board voted 1 aye and 5 nays to approve the motion.

Motion failed.

Mr. Egan made a motion to reduce professional development to \$75,000. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Mr. Egan made a motion to add the computer technology aide support positions (\$103,647) to the proposed budget. Mrs. Brandon seconded the motion.

The board voted 6 ayes and 1 nay (6-1). Mrs. Gaffuri was opposed.

Motion passed.

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to restore foreign language for the Magnet Schools. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. Discussion followed relative to the elimination of foreign language program in the elementary grades, including the Magnet Schools, based on the effectiveness of this program versus increased effectiveness of having foreign language for a longer period of time for all 6th grade students.

The board voted 1 aye and 6 nays (1-6). Mrs. Gaffuri, Ms. Mackey, Mr. Morris, Dr. Barth, Ms. Brandon and Mr. Egan were opposed.

Motion failed.

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to add \$250,000 to the fund appropriation balance. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. Mr. Hogan noted the unreserved fund balance is \$7.683 million. The original appropriation was \$3.6 million. The District currently has an unrestricted fund balance of \$7.7 million. \$3.6 million is allocated in this budget. This budget is over spending \$3.6 million by using fund balance. By using the assumption of \$3.6 million next year as a revenue subsidy, the District is using 47% of the fund balance. The recommendation is that funds be put back into the fund balance for use in future years. Following discussion relative to the impact on the tax levy Ms. Doesschate amended the motion to increase the appropriation to \$300,000. Mr. Egan approved the increase.

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

Motion passed.

Mrs. Gaffuri noted a piece of the Extended Day Program includes a \$5,000 program from the Addiction Care Center, where Mrs. Gaffuri is employed. Mrs. Gaffuri expressed concern as to whether or not the board had a problem with her voting on a budget that includes this item. Mrs. Gaffuri noted in discussion with counsel and the State Comptroller there has not been any concern noted.

Board members noted a vote on the budget is scheduled on the agenda for April 7, 2009.

Adjournment

Mr. Egan made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m.