



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 7, 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 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.

Dr. Barth made a motion to amend the agenda to move item 8.ii. **2009-2010 School District Budget** to follow the Student Representative Report. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- The student representative will not be present this evening due to an illness.
- The Pre-K –K Blast took place on Saturday, March 28th, at Schuyler Achievement Academy, sponsored by NYSUT and the Albany Public Schools Teachers Association (APSTA). This was an outstanding event with over 150 families participating. Thank you to all the staff that assisted in putting this event together and made this campaign for parents to choose Albany Schools so successful. Last year, week one pre-registration for pre-kindergarten there were 87 students registered. This year, week one there were 211 students registered.
- The Historic Albany Foundation has selected William S. Hackett Middle School to receive a 2009 Preservation Merit Award for Rehabilitation of a Significant Public Building. A ceremony will take place on Tuesday, May 12, 2009 at James T. Foley Courthouse. The District is very excited to receive this award. Appreciation goes to the Board, the Architect, Envision Architect, the facilities team, the community and the Hackett staff for their commitment to such a wonderful project.
- Ms. Leslie Bogucki, physical education teacher at Albany School of Humanities, she has also been an outstanding coach for the Lady Falcon Girls Basketball Team. Ms. Bogucki is retiring from her coaching position after 26 years. She will continue to work in her position at ASH where she has taught for 13 years. Ms. Bogucki has led the Lady Falcons to great accomplishments which included Section II in New York Class AA Championship in 1997. The girl's state championship that year was the school's first state title in nearly 70 years.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Kathy Neuffer spoke about the contribution Dr. Joseph has made to the District and wished her well in her future endeavor.
2. Willie Brand addressed the board relative to the negative impact on the district caused by the reduction in nursing positions.
3. Marilyn Bernard addressed the board relative to the concern and focus of Arbor Hill Elementary parents to assure every child under the same roof gets the support and assurance that they need during the transition of students in swing space.
4. Jaquanna Gates addressed the board regarding the swing space at the former Philip Schuyler building. Focus should be on the student's goals and benefits.
5. April Bacon addressed the board regarding expectations that the District supports students and parents, treating them with respect.
6. Megan John addressed the board regarding the reduction in nursing positions in the District that may jeopardize the quality of health screening, assessments, treatments, medication administration and management of chronic and acute medical conditions that cannot be performed by unlicensed personnel.
7. Britta Lovegrove addressed the board regarding the reduction in nursing positions in the District and how this would jeopardize the health treatment for students who have serious health issues such as liver transplants, brain tumors, diabetes, cancer, tube feedings and catheterizations, just to name a few. Increased absenteeism will occur with the reduction of nursing positions.
8. Bob Reilly addressed the board regarding the upcoming superintendent search and changing the culture of the District by raising expectations, encourage responsibility and look for leadership.
9. Alexandra Streznewski addressed the board regarding conditions at the TOAST swing steps urging the board to take proactive steps to improve the unhealthy conditions at that school.
10. Bernice Aviza addressed the board regarding the board's consideration of a change in the District's policy that requires insurance coverage for neighborhood associations using school facilities for their meetings.
11. Shirley Brand addressed the board regarding the Use of Facility policy requirement that groups using school facilities provide insurance coverage for the use of facilities.
12. Joe Cunniff addressed the board to encourage the board to eliminate the requirement for insurance coverage for neighborhood groups who use school facilities for their meetings.
13. Marlon Anderson addressed the board regarding the open budget process that has taken place through this year's budget development and the appointment of a new superintendent, urging the board to delay this appointment until after the November election for the purpose of having input from the Mayor in this decision.
14. Lisa Angerami addressed the board regarding the proposed staff reductions of one social worker and one teacher position at Hackett Middle.
15. Leah Golby addressed the board relative to the issue of transportation for parents and students who do not have access to a car, noting that students in New York City are provided transportation if they live more than .5 miles from school.
16. Christina Willey addressed the board to thank the members of the board for their thoughtful and intelligent discussions during the budget development process. Ms. Willey also expressed gratitude for Kendra Chaires, the Interim Principal at Eagle Point Elementary School. Kendra is a new administrator, new to the building and she has had a very positive impact with the students and staff at Eagle Point. Ms. Willey also requested that the board reconsider the cost of installing playground equipment in swing space facilities.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

No report

DISCUSSION ITEM

2009-2010 School District Budget

Dr. Joseph advised the board will be presented clarification requested at the last meeting relative to staff reductions. Mr. Hogan will review new budget documents so that board members can see the summary outcome of the decisions that were made at the last meeting.

Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers advised there are six reductions in the Special Education Department. The confusion resulted from a clerical error. The document should have read specials subjects, not Special Education Department. There are a number of special subject areas that are at Philip Livingston Magnet School and as the District dissolves Philip Livingston Magnet Academy, there will be positions in art, music, library, and guidance that will be reduced.

- Dollar amounts are unaffected?

No. Dollar amounts remain the same.

- Explain the increase in the tax levy given the lower budget and the stimulus funds the District is getting.

The biggest loss in revenue this year was \$1.6 million reduction in interest income due to falling interest rates. There was also an adjustment in state aid based on a \$1.2 million one-time catch up for building aid in this year's budget. That piece was not included in the state aid budget that came out for next year. Last year the board adopted, and after the fact, the Legislature actually reduced the state aid in the Governor's proposal, which is very unusual.

Mr. Hogan gave a short presentation, starting with upcoming dates. The Property Tax Report Card will be submitted to the State Education Department and the newspaper on 4/8/09; the budget newsletter will be mailed on 4/28/09; board meeting and budget hearing are scheduled for 5/5/09 and the school budget vote is scheduled for 5/19/09. There was one change on the revenues as a result of board actions last evening. The Fund Balance Appropriation was reduced down to \$3,375,000, a \$300,000 decrease, which reduces the tax levy by 0.298%. Expenditure changes approved by the board include the increase the budget \$194,378 from the 4th draft to the final draft, increasing the tax levy 0.19%. The District restored two Guidance Counselors positions, Field Trips, Teacher Travel and Conferences, Strategic Plan/High School Restructuring was reduced by \$50,000, three Computer Aides, Professional Development. Also included are related benefit costs for the restored positions. The budget total is now \$203,840,950, which is a \$2,900,538 decrease from the current budget, a reduction of 1.40%, with a tax levy increase of 2.55%. This budget is \$11.6 million below a contingency level.

- With a lower budget than last year, and the Stimulus money the District will be receiving, why is there an increase in the tax levy?

The biggest loss in revenue this year was \$1.6 million reduction in interest income due to falling interest rates. The District also had an adjustment in State Aid. In the current budget the District had a \$1.2 million one-time building aid, which is in this year's budget. The budget next year does not contain that figure. Last year the board adopted the budget and after the fact the legislature actually reduced State Aid from the Governor's proposal by approximately \$700,000, which is very unusual. Normally, the legislature enriches State Aid.

Dr. Barth made a motion to approve the following resolution:

ADOPTION OF BUDGET

RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Albany City School District adopt the proposed budget for 2009-2010 to be presented May 19, 2009, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the amounts stated in such proposed budget in the total amount of \$203,840,950 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. April 7, 2009. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Middle School Enrollment Report

Dr. Joseph advised Mr. Cioffi would be presenting updated enrollment information related to the middle school enrollment plan adopted by the board in February 2009. The District was asked to verify enrollment and also to consider maintaining 6th grades in some of the elementary schools. Through the review the District came to recognize that although there was a desire to maintain the 6th grade at Sheridan Preparatory Academy, there is just no space. The Principals of the other three schools worked very closely with the parents of the 5th grade students and staff, etc. to make the decision. All were in favor. That information was built into the enrollment figures being presented this evening.

Mr. Cioffi gave a presentation that included a review of the feeder school listing indicating the three schools that would be maintaining their 6th grade classes next year; total projected enrollments developed by Mr. Armlin for Hackett and Myers Middle School through 2011-2012 with 100% cohort survival and with charter school impact based on 81% enrollment. (figures reflect the 150 students that will be placed at North Albany Academy); total enrollments with 6th grades included based on actual student numbers (figures do not include Albany School of Humanities or Giffen Memorial Elementary School 6th grades, they do include 6 Special Education classes). Maintaining the 6th grades at selected elementary schools provides greater flexibility in student enrollment. Yearly evaluation of student enrollment will be necessary. The recommendation is to maintain 6th grades as follows: Eagle Point Elementary School - 1 section; Arbor Hill Elementary School - 2 sections and Pine Hills Elementary - 2 sections. Board members indicated their approval of this modification and moving forward with the enrollment plan.

- Is it necessary for the Board to take additional action to change the initial enrollment resolution?

Counsel advised the resolution was structured to allow for some flexibility. Information will be brought forward to principals and parents will be notified.

Albany High School Scheduling Report

The Board of Education heard a presentation from Scott Bojanich related to the Albany High School scheduling process. Mr. Bojanich outlined what was learned from the experience of last year, what the team is doing differently and where the process is at this point in time. Powerschool would not schedule an 8 period, alternating day, partial lunch schedule. Currently there is no other software package capable of this program that is large and complicated. Pearson trainers and Broome-Tioga BOCES highly recommended the District hand build the master schedule. The timeline from last year was adequate but not if the expectation was that the software would build the master schedule. This year the master schedule is being hand built utilizing an on-site consultant and technical support. Additional staff is involved on a routine basis to assist in the process. Powerschool tools are being used to assist in determining better placement of classes. All dates in the 2008-2009 scheduling process have been met or exceeded. An added step with Curriculum Supervisor has been included in the process Supervisors were given information regarding course requests from last year vs. this year to assist in determining the number of sections and staffing. A model of the master schedule exists in the Main Office Conference Room and is adjusted with the assistance from the high school guidance staff and curriculum supervisors.

- Why didn't we do this last year?

We didn't have sufficient knowledge of the issues. The problem wasn't identified until August, which was too late.

- What is the plan if this happens again?

With consultants on board, keeping the District abreast, the expectation is that this will not happen again. The consultants continue to assure the staff that the process is on schedule.

- When will the first draft run?

May 15, 2009. Schedules are expected to be mailed on July 22, 2009.

- How will the board know is a deadline has been missed?

Dr. Diggs will be notified immediately of any problems and will notify board members.

- In a typical year, how many students will need to have significant changes?

That will be determined on how well classes are schedule, using Power School to help generate the best place to put them. The Albany High School schedule is big and complicated. Along with that there are several programs that make it difficult to schedule.

- It appears that Power School doesn't help build the schedule, but it can help test whether the schedule works?

It will build the schedule after the master build is complete. Once the master schedule is complete, Power School works very well in scheduling classes. This master built will not be needed next year. These extraordinary efforts will not be necessary.

- Have any decisions been made to eliminate any of the course offerings in the high school for next year?

Classes with over 15 students will not be eliminated. When it makes sense the District will put classes with low enrollment together, depending on the curriculum. If there is a class of 12 but those students are all seniors and need the class for sequence in order to graduate, the class will run with 12 students.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Routine Consent Items were presented as follows: Proceedings of Meetings, March 3, 2009 and March 19, 2009; Resignations/Retirements; Leaves of Absence; Appointments (Itinerant Substitute Teachers 2008-2009, regular Substitutes, Miscellaneous); and Emergency Conditional Appointments); Attendance at Conferences, Treasurer's Report; Budget Transfers under \$10,000, Budget Transfers over \$10,000, Revenue Status Report – 1/31/09, Appropriation Status report 1/31/09, Real Property Tax Adjustments, Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Award of Bids; Membership Dues (National School Boards Association); Authorization to Enter Into Contracts; Committee on Special Education, Subcommittee on Special Education, Committee on Pre-School Special Education;

Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve Routine Consent Items as presented. Dr. Barth seconded the motion. Mr. Egan asked that the proceedings of March 3, 2009 be set aside.

The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion absent the item set aside.

Motion passed.

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve the March 3, 2009 proceedings. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Mr. Egan noted on page 2 relative to the inspection at Giffen Memorial Elementary School, "New York State Department of Health" should read "Albany County Department of Health". The form itself says New York State Health Department. However, it was County Officials that conducted the inspection. Also "flying colors" should be deleted from the sentence.

The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the proceedings as corrected.

Motion passed.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Action Items Related to the Facilities Project

Approval of Change orders

Change orders for Hackett Middle School, New Scotland Elementary School, and Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology were presented for approval. Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

ACTION ITEMS

Hall of Fame Program

The City School District of Albany Hall of Fame proposal was presented for approval. Mr. Egan made a motion to approve the program. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Policy #4532 School Volunteers

Policy #4532 was presented for approval. Dr. Barth made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

- What are the next steps in this process?

There needs to be a district wide, possibly a volunteer or a designated staff person to take the lead as a coordinator. A number of schools presently have volunteers and they have their own

accommodation and application process. This policy will standardize that process. Ultimately a handbook for volunteers will be developed. The next step is that it will come to the cabinet for implementation.

- Will this still be a part of Human Resources or will it be a separate entity?

That will be part of the discussion with cabinet.

- There are several action steps within the Strategic Plan. I would ask that staff take a look at that when talking about. There was also a suggestion that the board be provided with an update at the July or August board meeting.

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Use of Facility Policy

Dr. Joseph noted there has been a request related to Policy 1010 Use of School Facilities. This issue evolved at the request from Mr. Cunniff in terms of how to resolve the access of the school facilities by the neighborhood associations for their meetings, given the constraints presented by the insurance policy. The District discussed this situation with counsel because of the liability aspect. The District wanted to be sure if there was any latitude that it would be on solid ground. Mr. Honeywell crafted a resolution and trusting his guidance and judgment, it provides the coverage and the opportunity to allow neighborhood associations, which are certainly at the heart of where the neighborhood schools are, access District schools for meetings.

Mr. Honeywell advised the District has a long-standing building use policy which has as one of its components that any outside entity using school space would provide evidence of general liability insurance. A request has been made to amend the policy to allow neighborhood associations to use the school facilities without having to supply the insurance coverage because of the cost factor. The resolution is crafted to be mindful of that and also to limit itself only to meetings of neighborhood associations. This eliminates one pool of insurance of recovery in the event that someone is injured attending such a meeting. Mr. Honeywell noted the District has ample insurance coverage. Any additional rider is unnecessary. The following resolution was presented for approval.

Ms Doesschate made a motion to act on this resolution this evening. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. Following a discussion Mr. Honeywell clarified that there is no change required in the original policy. There is not action on the underlying policy. This resolution acts as authorization of an exception in a limited circumstance for the one purpose indicated.

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

Motion passed.

The following resolution was presented for approval:

USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

WHEREAS, Board Policy 1010 sets forth the policy of the City School District of Albany for Use of School Facilities; and,

WHEREAS, one requirement of that policy is that any group wishing to use school facilities must purchase and provide certain minimum liability and property insurance coverage; and,

WHEREAS, the Board understands that certain recognized neighborhood organizations within the area of neighborhood schools wish to use those schools for meetings but do not have the ability or funding to reasonably provide insurance coverage; and, an appropriate use of school buildings which should be encouraged.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Board of Education hereby waives the requirement for insurance coverage under Policy 1010 for use of school buildings for any neighborhood association recognized by The Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations (CANA). This waiver is strictly limited to use for meetings and does not apply to any use for events or any other type of activity that may be undertaken by such neighborhood associations.”

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve the resolution. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Board Member Election Resolution

Ms. Doesschate presented the following resolution asking legislative representatives in the State Legislature to introduce legislation and then to work to pass legislation that would move the election of members of the Board of Education from the November election to the May Budget Vote, as exists for every other Board of Education that is elected in New York State.

Resolution of the Board of Education of the Albany City School District Regarding the Election of Board Members and Requesting Legislative Action

WHEREAS, the Albany City School District is the only small city school district or common school district in New York State that is required by law to hold its elections for members of the Board of Education at the same time as the general election in November; and

WHEREAS, Education Law Articles 53 and 41 provide that all other small city school districts and common school districts in New York State shall have their elections for members of the Board of Education on the third Tuesday in May; and

WHEREAS, the third Tuesday in May is the same day established in law for eligible voters of each school district to vote on the proposed school district budget; and

WHEREAS, the Albany City School District is also required to hold a public vote on the proposed school district budget on the third Tuesday in May and would not be required to expend additional funds to hold the elections for members of the Board of Education on the third Tuesday in May; and

WHEREAS, the statutory provisions applicable to the Albany City School District School board elections are located in several different sections of the Education Law (See Ed Law sections 2502, 2601, 2601-a, 2602, etc.) that create unnecessary confusion; and

WHEREAS, the inclusion of candidates for the Board of Education on the general election ballot is inappropriate because such candidates are not allowed to be affiliated with any political party for the purposes of such elections; and

WHEREAS, in the 2008 general election confusion was caused by the initial placement of the candidates for the Board of Education on the ballot in a manner that inaccurately suggested certain candidates were endorsed by certain political parties; and

WHEREAS, the inclusion of candidates for the Board of Education on the general election ballot routinely results in such election being located in obscure portion of the ballot that has resulted in voters forgetting to vote for candidates for the Board of Education although they had intended to; and

WHEREAS, school board candidate names can be placed on the May ballot for the school budget in a prominent position without the potential for it appearing that any of the candidates have been endorsed by any political party; and

WHEREAS, the school calendar year runs from July 1st to June 30th and it makes sense to have the same Board of Education serve throughout the school year to provide consistent direction to the school district and its employees; and

WHEREAS, new members of the Board of Education have consistently found it difficult and unrealistic to begin their terms on January first, in the middle of the school year when the Board needs to immediately embark on development of school district's budget – one of the most demanding and important functions performed by any Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, if members of the Board of Education of the Albany City School District were elected at the same time as all other members of Boards of Education in New York State, they would be able to receive proper orientation and acquire experience that would enable them to function more effectively as board members and be confident in their contributions in the development of the district's budget; and

WHEREAS, there is no reasonable basis for the current distinction between the timing of the election of the members of the Board of Education for the Albany City School District and all other Boards of Education in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, it would be in the best interests of the residents of the Albany City School District to have a Board of Education composed of members who have had an opportunity to become fully familiar with the internal workings of the Albany City School District before such members are asked to address challenging budgetary matters,

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved, that the Board of Education of the Albany City School District does hereby find that it is in the best interests of the residents of the Albany City School District to change all relevant provisions of the Education Law to require that the election of members of the Board of Education for the Albany City School District be held at the same time as the vote on the proposed budget for the Albany City School District budget; and

THAT, the President of the Board of Education, through the Clerk for the Board of Education, immediately transmit this resolution to Assemblyman Ronald Canestrari, Assemblyman Jack McEneny, and Senator Neil Breslin asking them to introduce legislation changing the date of the election of members of the Board of Education for the Albany City School District to be consistent with all other small city school districts and common school district throughout the State of New York; and

THAT, the President of the Board of Education send this resolution to the Mayor of the City of Albany and all members of the Albany City Common Council asking them to support this resolution; and

THAT, the Board of Education authorizes and directs the Superintendent of the Albany City School District to undertake all activities that are necessary and proper in furtherance of the enactment of such laws, rules and regulations that are consistent with this resolution.

New board members coming on board in January are immediately faced with the budget development process. If board members were elected in May, they would have an opportunity for fiscal training and other kinds of training available to new board members to allow them to have knowledge of the position. This would also allow board members to serve terms in line with fiscal calendars and through the school year. The issue of having board candidates on the November ballot causes problems related to the misconception that the candidate is associated with any political affiliation, which is prohibited in the Education Law.

Changes to the resolution should be forwarded to Ms. Doesschate. Assemblyman McEneny has indicated that with unanimous approval by the Board of Education, and transmission of the approved resolution by the Board to him, he would then have legislation introduced to address this issue. The approved resolution should also be forwarded to Assemblyman Canestrari and Senator Neil Breslin, the Mayor and city officials.

- At some point the terms of sitting board members will end earlier than the full four years to phase in this process?

Mr. Honeywell suggested that the resolution should also include the term commencement date of board members from the current January 1st to July 1st. There would more than likely be a transition phase similar to when the Legislature changed board member terms from five to four years.

- It is a good idea to move elections to May, which would allow board members experience on the board prior to the budget process, which begins shortly after new board members are seated in January.

Suggestions related to phasing in board member terms should be forwarded to Ms. Doesschate. Upon review by counsel, the revised resolution to be presented for approval at the next board meeting.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Committee had to postpone their meeting. There are several outstanding tasks to draft a charge for proposed committees. The meeting will be rescheduled.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mrs. Gaffuri advised Onnolee Smith of the Albany Fund for Education who is looking for a volunteer from this board to become a liaison between the board and the Albany Fund for Education. This group meets monthly the first Monday of the month for approximately one and one half hours. Mrs. Gaffuri suggested that this position be rotated by board members. Mr. Egan volunteered for three months. Mrs. Gaffuri will contact Ms. Smith in response to her request.

Adjournment

Mr. Egan made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.