



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**April 1, 2008**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**Albany High School**

**PRESENT:** William Barnette, President  
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary  
Dr. Mark Barth  
Judy Doesschate  
Melissa Mackey  
Wayne Morris

Dr. Eva Joseph  
Joseph Dragone  
Linda Jackson-Chalmers  
James Matthews  
Jeff Honeywell

**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.
- Mission Statement was read.

**Quality System Recognition Award**

- The Albany High School Transition Team has been named to receive the 2008 School/Community Partnership Certificate – Quality System Recognition Award for its transition program for our students with disabilities. This is the second time Albany has received this award in partnership with New Vision. Members of team are as follow: John Arnold, Transition Coordinator, Peter Kantowitz, Social Worker, Dr. Elizabeth Gialanella, Psychologist, Catlin Magin, Psychologist, Martin Anderson, Guidance Counselor, Donna Holmes, Sub- CSE Chairperson, Joey DiPiazza, Special Education Teacher, Matt Moore, Special Education Teacher, Kate Fazioli, Special Education Teacher, Carol Connelly, Special Education Teacher, Nancy Dignum, Special Education Teacher.
- Additional introductions included Patricia Dowse, Vice President of Operations, New York State Rehabilitation Association, Inc, Jane Kriegler, Janice Keegan and Andrew McKenzie of New Vision and Dr. Edward Placke, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, State Education Department, VESID all of whom participated in the presentation and spoke about the quality of the program in Albany. Recognition was also given to the students who participate in this program who struggle every day to overcome obstacles in their lives.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

- The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA) National Conference that took place here in Albany over this past weekend was very successful. NUA officers proclaimed it the best conference that they have held in terms of school district participation and collaboration.

Recognition was extended to Dr. Dragone and Ken Cioffi, APSTA executive board and school district staff for all their hard work in assisting to make this event so successful. Over 1,000 participants from the district attended the conference. Board members were also recognized for their support in this endeavor. This is the second year of the partnership with NUA. The board will hear about the results of this year's work and plans for next year at the round table meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

- The SURR site team for Philip Livingston completed its review. The exit conference took place earlier this date with faculty and staff for the purpose of reviewing a draft report, which identified strengths, findings and recommendations. That report goes to the State Education Department (SED) in draft form for additional review. The district will receive the final report within the next four weeks. The report will be part of the consideration in terms of recommendations, along with the data that have been collected at the school itself and the Comprehensive Education Plan for the school. Those documents will be used to generate a district action plan regarding Livingston, as well as a school improvement plan. The board will continue to receive updates relative to time lines and the district's obligations and commitments.

#### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Paul Swyer addressed the board regarding increasing school taxes and their effect on seniors on fixed incomes.
2. Marlin Anderson addressed the board regarding students and teachers in the schools.

#### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

Ms. Rouse is unable to attend the meeting this evening. Ms. Rouse forwarded comments to be shared this evening. Unfortunately, the district staff was not able to open her email.

#### **ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS**

Routine Consent Items were presented for approval as follow: Proceedings of Meetings, March 4, 2008, March 19, 2008 and March 25, 2008; Resignations; Termination; Termination Rescinded; Re-Appointment; Vacated Position; Leave of Absence; Abolish Position, Creation of Position; Appointments (Probationary Appointment Extensions, Regular Substitute, Grant/District Fund Programs, Coaching-Winter 2007-2008, Intramural Program, Albany Evening High School, Tutors, Emergency Conditional Appointments); Attendance at Conferences; Treasurer's Report, Budget Transfers under \$10,000, Budget Transfers over \$10,000, Budget Status Report – 02/29/08, Real Property Tax Adjustments, Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Bid Awards; Membership Dues; Campaign for Fiscal Equity Resolution; H.M.B. Consultants Contract; Committee on Special Education, Subcommittee on Special Education, Committee on Pre-School Special Education; Contract for Grants and Special Projects (Center for Disability Services, Inc.). Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

## **FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT**

### **Information Item Related to the Facilities Project**

#### **Final Design – Arbor Hill**

Board members, Mr. Barnette, Mr. Morris, Ms. Doesschate and Ms. Mackey, along with the superintendent and members of the facilities team conducted a walk-through at Arbor Hill to discuss concerns relative to the recommended design of the proposed renovations. A second walk through will be scheduled to accommodate others who are interested. Discussion included the location of the principal's office, which is a considerable distance from the front door of the building.

- Changes to the proposed design add costs and schedule delays due to SED review time. The facilities team will examine the impact of moving the location and determining priorities to cover the cost of any changes. A report on the proposed changes will be forwarded to the superintendent next week.
- Given enrollment figures and the size of that building, would it be less expensive to renovate the entire first floor, not close off any areas in a two deep with the option of renovating upstairs if warranted? Part of the reasoning for shutting off a portion of the building on two floors is the way the mechanical system works and the space is combined. Following additional discussion a number of board members agreed that there would not be additional investigation of a two deep program; there will be investigation regarding the principal's office.
- Is there a possibility that community members might be able to do a site visit at the building? This request will be discussed with the principal along with possibility of including the PTA and Building Advisory Committee to participate in a community walk-through. This item will be presented for approval at the April 24, 2008 board meeting.

### **Action Items Related to the Facilities Project**

#### **Approval of Change orders**

Change orders for Hackett Middle School and School 19 for approval. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

#### **Approval of Resolution for Extension of SEORA on Arbor Hill**

Dr. Barth made a motion to approve the resolution. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

#### **Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) Bids for Hackett Middle School**

Ms. Mackey made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

**Bids for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology and Giffen Memorial School**

Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**2008-2009 Budget Discussion**

There is no updated information regarding additional state aid to add to the discussion this evening. At this point there is no change in the state aid figure. However, the district has continued to work on expenditure projections and there are a few reductions that impact the budget. Additional information related to questions previously presented by board members is being distributed to board members.

A budget summary detailing a proposed budget of \$206,741,488 was presented. The state aid figure is the amount presented in the Governor's proposal in January, which is \$84,462,006. Miscellaneous revenue has been adjusted to include additional dollar amounts in the utility tax and Medicaid reimbursement revenue has been reduced. The fund balance remains the same as last year and the tax levy indicates an increase of \$2,444,639 or 2.49%. Expenditures in this budget indicate a reduction of \$125,000, (\$100,000 from the textbook allocation and \$25,000 from operations and maintenance) from the previous budget presented on March 25<sup>th</sup>. The overall budget is increased \$17.9 million or 9.52% and the tax levy increase is 2.49%. Additional information relative to major increases includes the base budget increase of \$6.4 million dollars, Charter School \$2.4 million, Benefits \$1.87, Special Education \$2.6, Debt Service \$3.2 and Utilities \$1.2, which totals \$17.9 million dollar increased budget.

- Does the Charter School tuition include special education services? The Charter School figure is just tuition. Special education services are provided by the district and paid for by the district. They are not part of the tuition base. Services are provided to special education and regular education. They include health services, textbooks and transportation.
- The \$100,000 reduction in textbooks will not impact the adoption of Mathematics? The district actually looked to this year's budget to see if there were any dollars for textbooks that had not been expended. Those textbooks will be purchased with these funds.
- The \$25,000 reduction in operations and maintenance was realized as a result of prioritization. There have been reductions across the board for every department from their original requests.
- Is there a dollar amount in the budget for alternative education? The amount that is in the proposed budget is for a contract provider. The district has not settled on any particular contract provider. However, there is the assumption that the TOPS would be provided as a full day contract service. As a basis of comparison, board members have been provided a cost estimate for the district to assume that full-day program, which will be doubling the present program.

The district would be doing the program slightly differently based on how instruction would be provided. The dollar amount that is in the proposed budget is contract service. As a point of reference, should the district choose to go a different route, that's an estimate of what it would cost for the district to support the program internally. That figure is not in the budget.

- Why would it be more if the district provided the services? The district does not have the capability to provide the services in the same way as the model provided through Berkshire in a district site. The district would have to purchase hardware, site licenses, etc. Also, certification and qualification of teachers is also different. Wrap around services are also provided in the Berkshire model. This would require the district to hire additional staff.
- Have other contract providers been investigated? There has been some interest from other agencies. Additional discussions will take place following the budget development process.
- The TOPS would not involve overhead. The program would be housed in an existing building. For a day program and the number of students (75), the only option at this point is Philip Livingston. The district would need to think more creatively if that is not an option.
- Has there been a change in building aid? Building aid remains at approximately 76%.

It was noted that there is a proposed budget before the board with an amount of \$206,741,488. The district has identified revenue and given the projected state aid amount, a tax levy of \$100,561,391, or a tax levy increase under 2.5%. Questions have been asked and answered. People have done a great job in providing information. The task before the board tonight is more than a number, it is the educational plan for the students in the school district and there is a lot of information about the services this proposal would buy the students in Albany. That is an important discussion. The work that has been done to reduce expenditures has been great, given the reality of mandated expenditures and certain categories of state aid, including the Contract for Excellence funds.

It is also important that the public is informed about the story behind the numbers, which are the services provided in this budget. It is incumbent on the board and the district to continue the discussions explaining what is behind the numbers as the district moves forward to the vote so that people are informed about the services they are being asked to buy for the children of Albany.

Clarification was provided related to comments made at the last meeting being interpreted that the Pre-K program should be reduced. The question was how to improve cost efficiencies without sacrificing quality by using community Pre-K providers. This budget provides expanded Pre-K.

- If the board defeated the motion on this particular budget does the number change or can this figure be presented to the board a second time for approval? The board would provide direction and the district would present another number or talk it through and take a re-vote. The same number could be considered because a no vote could be due to miscommunication.
- When will the district know about the Safe Schools Grant? Response is anticipated in July. Recommendation is that there is approximately \$350,000 in the current budget for wrap around services for Hackett and the ALC. Also, those grant funds cannot be used to supplant dollars in the budget. It could not be used to save dollars the district has budgeted. It would be used to enhance what the district is doing, providing services included in the grant application.

Ms. Doesschate 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 2008-2009 to be presented May 20, 2008, and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the amounts stated in such proposed budget in the total amount of \$206,741,488 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.

Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

A proposal was made to keep the April 10, 2008 date on the calendar for continued discussion related to the services this budget would be providing to the students in Albany. The approved budget will be presented to the public for a vote on May 20, 2008.

**Board Member Vacancy**

The school attorney presented information to board members relative to filling the vacant seat on the board. Under the laws that apply to the district, the board is required to fill that vacancy. There are no particular time periods set forth for doing so nor are there any particular process or procedure established under law for doing so. The variety of circumstances, which have been either entertained or used in other districts in years past range from the board simply deciding on a candidate to be appointed to requesting expressions of interest and so forth, including an interview process. Anyone who is appointed would fill the seat until the next regularly scheduled election in November. The vacant seat is up for election this fall. The person elected in November would actually sit immediately, first fulfilling the vacant term of a month and a few days and then fulfilling a complete four-year term beginning January 1, 2009. Qualifications for the position are that the person must be a resident of the City of Albany, 18 years of age, a citizen of the United States and a qualified voter. (It was subsequently clarified by school counsel that the person appointed would fill the vacated term until December 31, 2008).

Board members discussed several options including past candidates who have received votes from the public, people who have already served as a board member, someone with experience and someone from the general public. Board members also noted that this issue should not be time consuming to the extent that it interferes with matters the board needs to address.

Following discussion, the board agreed that notice should be sent out, through mailings and news articles that the board is soliciting letters of interest and that they should submit resumes with an explanation of why the person is interested in serving. The request should include a return date, and response should be addressed to the Clerk of the Board.

In summary, the district would develop a communication for distribution that would include community groups, indicating the board is soliciting letters of interest from individuals that are interested in serving on the Board of Education who meet the requirements of a board member. Those interested are asked to submit a letter of interest and their resume or summary of their qualifications. That communication will also be clear so that the person would understand that they would be appointed to the board through November 4, 2008, election day. If they are not on the ballot in November (they don't have to be) then the person receiving the highest number of votes in the election would be appointed to the board at the November 5, 2008 board meeting to finish out the vacated term and then start a full term in January, and the person appointed prior to the election would vacate the seat.

**BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Policy Committee will meet next week to review Extracurricular Activities Code of Conduct.  
Audit Committee will meet next week.

**BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

None

**Adjournment**

Mr. Morris made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.