



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 9, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Albany High School

PRESENT: Alexandra Streznewski, President Dr. Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard
Ginnie Farrell, Vice President Bill Hogan
Dr. Rose Brandon, Secretary Dr. Tresa Diggs
Sue Adler Dr. Linda Rudnick
Dan Egan Kathleen Culligan
Felicia Green Mark Place
Jeffrey Honeywell, School Attorney

ABSENT: Edith Leet

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.

Ms. Streznewski noted that the Superintendent is delayed this evening due to a Fireside Chat that was previously scheduled. She is expected shortly. Also, the agenda this evening allows for a budget discussion prior to public comments. The purpose is to allow the public to receive the latest information prior to making comments.

DISCUSSION

2013-2014 Budget Development

Mr. Hogan reviewed the agenda for the first discussion session and a second discussion directed toward the tax levy. The goal this evening is to come to consensus on various items in the budget, based on the latest information available. Mr. Hogan also reviewed the budget calendar, and a Contingency Budget. If the budget is not approved on May 21, 2013, the District has the option of presenting a revised budget to voters for a second time. If the budget fails to receive voter approval after two budget votes, the District would follow a contingency budget for the 2013-14 school year. Under a contingency budget, the District cannot levy a tax for 2013-14 more than the tax in the 2012-2013 school year. Additional reductions of \$2.6 million would be required.

Mr. Hogan continued with information about unknown variables, e.g. transition aid. The proposal presented this evening assumes State aid will increase by \$3 million or 3.88%, which is less than the average in the county at 4.9% (after building aid). Another unknown is the Governor's Teachers Retirement System (TRS) proposal, which is scheduled to be addressed by the TRS Board this evening (April 9). Mr. Hogan reviewed items that have been added to the budget based on comments at the last Board meeting and changes in State aid (\$2,126,966). Tier I restored items total \$894,800, plus \$300,000 to be determined this evening by Board members. Net Tier I reductions total \$2,550,795).

Mr. Hogan reviewed the proposed additions, restorations, and Tier I reductions. Mr. Hogan noted one of the Tier I restorations is a figure of \$300,000 that could be Board-designated additions. Board members reviewed each of the four listings on restorations and reductions and determined whether or not they were in favor of each item. Mr. Hogan will take this information in developing an adjusted budget for presentation at the next meeting.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Liz Turner addressed the Board regarding the confusion that students have relative to cutting programs. As they schedule their courses, students are being told that some programs are being cut, and therefore they do not enroll in them. Art, Music, Sports, and Foreign Languages are the subjects that keep students in school.
2. Dr. Bruce Roter addressed the Board regarding instrumental music at the third-grade level. Music must be part of the educational process in the early years. Instrumental music teaches coordination, discipline, and self-correction. Hopefully, the budget for instruments will be increased.
3. Marlon Anderson addressed the Board regarding the issue in Albany regarding the budget and academic achievement. The people who invest in education year in and year out are not getting a bang for the buck. You can't sell a budget to people when we are not seeing academic achievement results.
4. Anna Marie Lippitt addressed the Board regarding foreign language, music, and art. These are the things that make Albany different. The teachers in these programs are the best. These are the activities where the community gets together. There is an issue with scheduling electives in the higher grades. There needs to be a conversation about budgets for sports and the arts in terms of equality.
5. Nancy Wawrla addressed the Board regarding the difference between the alternative education day program, and evening program. The day program offers art courses. If the art program is eliminated in the alternative education program, that means that the students who come from the high school do not have art, which is a mandatory elective for graduation.
6. Peter Halewood addressed the Board regarding the technology budget for the high school. This budget seems extremely high in light of proposed cuts in the arts programs. The scheduling issue is real. Students in the IB program are not able to take music.
7. Donna Young addressed the Board regarding the impact of the budget on foreign language, music, and the IB program. These advanced courses are essential in educating students. Students should not have to choose between music and the IB program. Ms. Young urged the Board to reconsider the elimination of the Chinese program.
8. Jan Parmalee addressed the Board regarding the music program. The Board should be considering increasing the program. These opportunities should be offered at the elementary level. There should be pre-AP and pre-IB courses offered to students in the 9th and 10th grade.

Mr. Hogan noted that the District has cut 12 administrative positions during this fiscal crisis and is now looking at restoring one administrative position. As previously stated, the District was one of 10 schools out of 700 districts in the state that was recognized because the District was so lean in administration. The District received an additional \$500,000 in State aid as a result of this recognition. This needs to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Hogan noted the technology budget covers 20 buildings and 10,000 users a day. Also, a large component of that budget is building a data warehouse for student data for the entire District. This is a critical function as we move the District forward.

Tax Levy

Mr. Hogan noted the District will receive some new sState aid this year, and we are grateful. However, the District will still receive \$5.7 million less next year than 5 years ago. Not only have we not had a raise in 5 years, State aid has been reduced by \$5.7 million. This explains why we have had to make all these budget reductions. Currently, this budget assumes an increase in the tax levy of 2.95%. The overall impact on the budget indicates, budget to budget changes, the Districts State aid will increase 3.3%, and with the tax levy, that would be a 2.95% increase. Total revenues would increase only 2.67%, because other revenue lines are declining by \$386,000, when all revenue lines are factored into the budget.

As the District develops the 2013-14 budget, it also needs to look ahead to the 2014-15 budget, which will include increases in salaries, pensions, and health costs. The District is anticipating challenges with a loss in revenue of approximately \$3.6 million in two areas. The School Improvement Grant, and the Magnet Grants amount to \$2.5 million, which currently cover the costs of 27 positions. Reductions in transition aid of \$1.3 million are expected. This totals \$3.6 million, all of which needs to be taken into consideration in long-term planning and budgeting. The District needs to maximize revenues at this point. The District has built into this budget teaching and technology of \$1.4 million, which will help jump start student achievement. Also, the use of reserves can help alleviate some future reductions. Mr. Hogan concluded with the struggles between 2% vs. 3% tax levy, the difference between a 2% and 3% tax levy on an average house valued at \$150,000 is \$14.00 annually. That \$14.00 will generate \$1 million income for the District. That goes into the tax base. Over five years that totals \$5 million. Board members indicated general agreement with the 2.95% tax levy. Additional budget discussion will continue on April 18, 2013, at New Scotland Elementary School.

Ms. Farrell made a motion to amend the agenda to include a discussion item on voting locations for 10 minutes. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

The Board voted 4 ayes, 1 opposed. Ms. Green opposed.

Motion passed.

Voting Locations

In response to public concern related to voting locations, expressed by a member of the Albany City Common Council, Ms. Adler noted she is in favor of attending the Common Council Caucus tomorrow evening with the Superintendent. Discussion followed related to the person who should respond to the Common Council: the President of the Board or the Superintendent. The Common Council is looking for clarification relative to voting locations prior to addressing a resolution brought before the Council. Ms. Streznewski advised she and the Superintendent will discuss the response to the Common Council in terms of who addresses the Council and who will attend in support of the /District. Ms. Streznewski concluded the discussion by suggesting that she and Dr. V continue discussion to come to a decision.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Egan made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cutting