



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ALBANY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**January 16, 2014**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Albany School of Humanities**

**PRESENT:** Dr. Rose Brandon, President  
Dan Egan, Vice President  
Ginnie Farrell, Secretary  
C. Anthony Owens  
Alexandra Streznewski  
Dr. Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard  
Bill Hogan  
Dr. Tresa Diggs  
Dr. Liz Ten Dyke  
Kathleen Culligan  
Mark Place

**ABSENT:** Sue Adler  
Felicia Green

**Call to Order:**

- Meeting was called to order at 7:05 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. Brandon called for a motion to amend the agenda to include the following items under Routine Consent; Revised listing of Authorization to Enter Into Contracts, 2014 School Liaison Listing, 2014 Board Meeting Schedule, and 2014 Committee Chart. Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion.

The Board voted 4 ayes and 1 abstention, to approve the motion. Ms. Streznewski abstained.  
Motion passed.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

**Systemic Change**

Dr. V gave an update on the important work of systemic change that is taking place within the District. The District is fully engaged in the important work of systemic change as we settle into the new year. The District has had four more conversations around our draft strategic roadmap since our last board meeting. We have engaged more than 90 community members and staff in those conversations about our 2020 Vision.

Our meeting last Thursday night at the Albany Housing Authority was especially energizing and a great example of our success in building stronger connections in our community. More than 40 people attended that meeting in the South End on a cold, dark winter night. We are grateful to the partners who helped make that event so productive, including Willie White of A Village Incorporated and Noelene Smith of the Albany Family Education Alliance. Our thanks also go out to Steve Longo, and the Albany Housing Authority for hosting us, and to our friends at Price Chopper for providing us with pizza for dinner.

There have been deep and powerful discussions about our challenges and our strengths throughout our community engagement process around our draft strategic roadmap. We have one more community conversation scheduled for next Tuesday night at the Pine Hills branch of the Albany Public Library. After that, I look forward to sharing the key messages from all of our feedback with you as you work toward a final version of the 2020 Vision in the weeks to come.

On Tuesday night, Bill Hogan provided an excellent budget presentation for more than 60 parents, community members and students here at Albany High. We didn't have much good news to share about the way our financial outlook for 2014-15 is shaping up at this point, but Mr. Hogan did great work in defining our broader fiscal problems.

Good news did come out of the workshop, however. Those in attendance are eager to work together with us to try to get our message heard by our state leaders, and we will be organizing those advocacy efforts in the weeks and months ahead.

There are three main messages that we plan to focus in on:

1. The state needs to eliminate the gap elimination adjustment and make all school districts in New York state whole before taking education dollars away to fund specific programs. The GEA has cost us more than \$40 million over the last four years -- \$7.5 million in the current school year. Those dollars would go a long way for us, and we will work hard to empower our community members to help spread that message.
2. We believe the governor's proposal for a two-year property tax freeze would head school districts to a fiscal cliff three years down the road. It sounds good in an election year, but the reality for school districts could be a large tax increase in year three. Our position is that the money the governor plans to put toward a tax freeze would be much more helpful to school districts if they used it to restore our level of funding to the levels the funding formula says we should be getting.
3. Finally, no new charter schools. We learned this week that KIPP has withdrawn its application for an early renewal of its middle school, but its application to open a new elementary school still is pending before SUNY. That school would cost us as much as \$5.6 million a year on top of the \$35 million we already have in charter-school expenses. We will continue to oppose that application.

We will continue this conversation at our second public budget workshop next Wednesday night here at Albany High. We also are working with our building leaders to schedule school-based budget workshops in February and March. These advocacy efforts will be an important part of those conversations as well.

Earlier in the day Tuesday, I was joined by students from Myers Middle School at an education rally at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. The theme of the day was, "Save Our Schools." It was a great experience for the students to have the opportunity to participate in that type of civic-engagement activity. I am thankful to Dr. Wilkins and their teacher, Dave Weiss, for helping them take advantage of that.

We are fully engaged in our schools in the work of improving teaching and learning through a variety of professional development initiatives.

- Learning walks this week
- Studio classrooms next week

Dr. V invited Board members to participate in these activities as your schedules allow. We will keep you updated on all future dates so you can see first-hand the powerful impact these initiatives are having on our organization.

### **National Board Certified Teachers**

Dr. V also recognized the achievement of seven educators in the District who have received their profession's gold standard – National Board of Teaching Standards Certification. Teacher Mentor Rita Floess, introduced the following teachers, Dawn Castle, Kristen Clancy, Suzann Cornel, Kim Gravel-Jones, Diane Groezinger, Anne Miller, and Ann Paulsen. Following the introduction, Ms. Floess spoke about the accomplishments of these teachers. Congratulations!

Dr. Brandon noted that Public Comment would occur at the end of the meeting.

### **ROUTINE CONSENT**

Routine Consent Items were presented as follows: Human Resource Items, Attendance at Conferences, Field Trips, 2014 Board Meeting Schedule, 2014 Board Committee Chart, the 2014, the 2014 School Liaison Listing, and the revised Authorization to Enter Into Contracts. Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion. Mr. Owens asked that the Field Trip be set aside.

The Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion, absent the item set aside.  
Motion passed.

Mr. Egan made a motion to approve the Field Trip. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion. Mr. Owens suggested that field trips involving travel to southern locations, when possible, include college visits for the students, adding an academic component to the field trip. Board members indicated their support for this suggestion.

The Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.  
Motion passed.

### **INFORMATION**

#### **2014 School Budget**

Dr. V spoke about the tenets of the 2020 Vision: Coherent and aligned educational programming leading to college and/or career readiness; Caring and competent teacher in every classroom; Powerful leadership in every position; and Excellence in governance and management. In addition, the Operational Plan includes: Accountability system that includes, all divisions, all buildings, all classrooms; focused learning for teachers and leaders; Powerful communication between the citizens, leadership, organizations and Board of Education; Sustainable partnerships between universities/colleges, social agencies, governmental agencies.

Mr. Hogan presented information relative to the Fiscal Environment in light of the State Wide Crisis. There have been five years of unprecedented financial cuts across New York State. Currently, 70% of public school districts receive less State-aid than 5 years ago. There has been no significant relief to slow the growth of expenses that increase several times the rate of inflation each year. New unfunded mandates costing millions of dollars continue to be imposed and a tax cap makes it more difficult to raise revenues. Things are a lot less than this fiscal crisis is indicating. Every single year there are millions of dollars in unfunded mandates from the State. Unfunded mandates alone in Albany can add \$1-2 million dollars with no relief. The District has expenditure lines that the District is mandated to pay that increase higher than the rate of inflation. The district needs to advocate for real mandate relief.

Mr. Hogan advised that assuming an inflation rate of 2%, State-aid is currently underfunded by \$15 million annually; the mandate costs of pensions and health insurance are currently \$9 million more than a 2% growth factor; the mandated costs of charter school tuition exceeds the applicable State-aid by \$17.6 million annually. On an annual basis, the District is \$41.6 million worse off than it was 5 years ago. Recent mandates include Unfunded Implementation of New Core Standards Curriculum; Unfunded Affordable Health Care, Unfunded APPR Employee Evaluation System; and Unfunded Dignity for All Students. Other budget impact issues include the loss of 24 people coming off grants; Enrollment growth in elementary schools, potential loss of charter school transition aid, and the tax cap that inhibits the district's ability to raise revenues.

The District values the programs and opportunities it provides to students. However, the lack of financial support at the State level will force difficult decisions. The District is facing a 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of unprecedented budget challenges; consistent with the past 5 years, the program, all line-by-line expenses, operational costs, and administrative positions will be reviewed.

Mr. Hogan concluded his report noting that the budget will evolve over the next several weeks. New information will be forthcoming, assumptions may change and numbers will change. Increased community outreach is scheduled for this year. Principals will host budget discussions in early February and early March. The Governor's State-aid proposal is expected to be released next week. The first draft budget will be released on February 6<sup>th</sup>, with the final budget adoption scheduled for April 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hogan also reviewed highlights of the Budget Workshop conducted by the District on January 14, 2014. There were 60 people in attendance who were very supportive of the District, and the sensitive to the fiscal challenges. People offered to help the District in an effort to tell our story. There were no comments or questions.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Office of the Superintendent Communications**

Dr. V advised through the Systemic Change Grant, the District has worked with Mr. Cheesebrow and TeamWorks International to work through effective governance and communications was part of that work. Dr. V invited Mr. Cheesebrow to attend this meeting for a public discussion of this document. Mr. Cheesebrow provided a brief overview prior to the discussion. The discussion will include how the Board wants to move forward in their communication among themselves and with the Office of the Superintendent.

The introduction of the document provides a listing of the policies the District presently has among Board members and the Office of the Superintendent. As part of the Board development process for this year, the Policy Committee will be going through a process of review, update, and looking at a number of these policies to strengthen and reinforce in the every-day practice.

One key point of discussion is that communication and partnership among Board members and the Office of the Superintendent is grounded in trust and competence. The Board Preferences and Capacity for Partnership or Isolation indicate Board and the Office of the Superintendent operate in either of two ways, trust or mistrust. Those that operate in mistrust predominantly will not engage in governance. They will engage in micromanagement. It takes excellence in management for excellence in governance. Communications is the key piece. Patterns and Practices for Consideration are based on comments from Board members.

- In #3, Board members requests – is that when Board Member Items? When a Board member calls are email requests a log is recorded along with answers. Is it possible to get a time when a response will be provided?

The entire Board received the recorded information bi-annually. A timeline has been established as the end of business on Mondays. Dr. V clarified that her responses will go to all Board members.

- In #5 perhaps the language could be concise and to the point.

This can be changed.

- In #13, is there a budget line? Do we have to consider establishing a budget line item?

This would be a meeting locally for the Board to conduct the bi-annual retreats. This can be an afternoon meeting. Within the next year this Board should move to the bi-annual retreats.

- In #3, a process where Board members submit questions to the Superintendent. The Superintendent determines that the answer is something that requires research, etc. or a simple response.

Mr. Cheesebrow suggested the three points 3, 10, 11 and 12 could be pulled together as a sequence that would clarify this situation.

- In #9 and #14 the Board as a whole can address a situation when a Board member exceeds reasonable expectations and practices.
- What is a good way to make the policy manual a workable resource? A suggestion was made to remove the regulations to reduce the size of the manual. This will be done unless a a regulation required.

Mr. Cheesebrow suggested that in the future the Board will be using this manual going forward in discussing governance and management issues.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Edith Leet addressed the Board relative to Board materials being available to the public. Also, mention was made relative to a correction that is necessary in the proceedings of the reorganization meeting. Ms. Leet also suggested a change in the wording of the budget report and a wish list that could be posted on the District website requesting donations from the community.

2. Michael Hunt addressed the Board a second time, urging additional consideration in offering the opportunity for student to apply to enroll in the Tech Valley High School. Mr. Hunt advised the admittance to tech Valley High has s process that would allow students admittance despite the fact that the home school does not participate in BOCES.

**Board Committees**

None

**Board Member Items**

None

**Other Business**

The first planning meeting for the second annual Falcon 5K fundraiser in September is scheduled for next week. Last year there was a significant number of participants. The two winners of the race were Albany High Students. The group is also looking for additional community sponsors.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Streznewski made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.