



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

October 2, 2014

7:00 p.m.

Sheridan Preparatory Academy

PRESENT: Dr. Rose Brandon, President
Dan Egan, Vice President
Ginnie Farrell, Secretary
Sue Adler
Kenneth M. Bruce
Anthony Owens
Alexandra Streznewski

Dr. Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard
Jeffrey Honeywell, Esq.
Bill Hogan
Kathleen Culligan

Absences: None

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.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Falcon 5K

I would like to begin with a huge, heartfelt thank you to the Albany Booster Club for Sunday's amazing Falcon 5K in Washington Park. What a wonderful event for our school district and our community. More than 500 runners and walkers participated for the second year in a row, and Mother Nature cooperated once again with magnificent weather. I'm already excited about the third annual Falcon 5K in 2015! My thanks again to the Albany Booster Club and everyone who volunteered to make it a great day.

Albany High Open House mailing

As you are aware, we had a problem with our mailing in advance of Albany High School's Open House last week. Our mailing did not get home to families until the day after the event. This is unacceptable, and I would like to apologize to our families for that error. The problem was exacerbated by an unrelated technical malfunction on the night of Open House that temporarily impeded our staff from printing student schedules. Our staff is investigating the mailing error and we will be putting in place new procedures to ensure that our families are not inconvenienced in this way in the future. A complete report for you will be forthcoming.

Hall of Fame/Homecoming

We have another fun weekend coming up next week. It's Hall of Fame and Homecoming weekend, and we have several activities planned to celebrate. Our annual Hall of Fame Induction Dinner is Friday, Oct. 10 at the Italian-American Community Center on Washington Avenue Extension. We have eight new members joining the hall this year and look forward to celebrating their achievements. Homecoming is Saturday, Oct. 11. It begins with our Wall of Fame ceremony at Albany High at 11 a.m. and is a busy and fun day for our high school and our entire community. I'm especially looking forward to the Homecoming parade, which steps off at noon Saturday with our Albany Marching Falcons leading the way. Please join us for as many of these activities as your schedule allows.

Albany High PSAT/SAT and Freshman College Visits

All of that Homecoming activity happens on a three-day weekend this year. We are off on Monday, Oct. 13 in observance of Columbus Day. When we return, we are very much looking forward to a special day for all of our students at Albany High School. Wednesday, Oct. 15 will be a college day for all grade levels at Albany High thanks to the hard work of our staff, and our partnership with The Albany Promise.

All of our seniors will have the opportunity to take the SAT for free, and all of our sophomores and juniors will take the PSAT, also at no cost to them or their families. We also will engage all of our freshmen in half-day field trips to several area colleges and universities.

This is an exceptional way to emphasize important steps on the pathway to college for our high school students. It's especially important for the students in our upper grades because taking the PSAT or SAT opens the door for scholarships to colleges everywhere. We are pleased to bring these opportunities to all of our students, and excited to see the many ways that our students and families will benefit.

Board President Recognition

For my final item tonight I would like to recognize our board president, Dr. Rose Brandon. Dr. Brandon has been an active participant in leadership development opportunities that the New York State School Boards Association offers through its School Board U program. NYSSBA has recognized Dr. Brandon's outstanding efforts with its Board Excellence Award, and I am pleased to present that certificate to her tonight.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Marlon Anderson addressed the Board regarding the workshop session having Public Comment at the end of these meetings. Mr. Anderson asked the Board to consider placing public comment at the start of these meetings. Mr. Anderson also spoke about student test scores.
2. Melissa Mackey addressed the Board regarding the location for the Board candidate forum in terms of accessibility for residents in the South End. Ms. Mackey also noted, as a former Board Member, she has become somewhat frustrated that the District is not moving forward. Reports on student achievement have not been positive. Board members should be focusing their attention on the business of the District, rather than involvement with other community positions. There is work to be done here in the District. The high school project will become a beautiful building, similar to the elementary school buildings that are presently falling short.
3. Noelene Smith addressed the Board regarding the number of school days (16-17) students were in school in September. Ms. Smith noted the Board has yet to discuss the School Report Card data released by the State in August that indicated our students have gone down 2% in their scores. These are our children, and they are not being educated. This is very frustrating. When 80% of students in several grades can't read at Level 3, there is no way a new high school is going to make a difference in their reading ability. Ms. Smith advised she would form groups to come to these meetings to force this Board to make decisions that will increase student scores.
4. Meghan Matthews Gondelman addressed the Board regarding the PBIS program in our schools. Ms. Matthews Gondelman presented an assignment that was distributed to students by a teacher that is blatantly prejudicial. Ms. Matthew Gondelman expressed concerns for the safety and well-being of our students. Students in afterschool programs are in playgrounds that are open to the public, and school buildings are also opened to the public at this time.

Dr. V noted that concerns expressed have been addressed. It is our job when we discover when materials are not, we take care of it. Those materials have been remedied. We appreciate your bravery and concern. This is the kind of work that has to come forward because this is not acceptable.

Dr. Brandon noted that discussion of test scores is on the agenda for the October 16th Board workshop meeting. Following the Board discussion, the public will have the opportunity to chime in on the discussion.

5. April Bacon addressed the Board regarding what has been going on in the schools, based on parent discussions. She personally does not have problems with teachers, administrators, etc. One of the things we have to address is student test scores. We are losing sight of the fact that these students are people. The Board appears to be detached. They do not come into the schools. Evaluate the schools. The Board needs to look out for the 9,000 plus students you serve throughout the District. We have to learn how to change, evolve and understand. We are still doing the same things over and over. Ask the parents how they feel about their child's school experience. Things should be taken care of before a parent needs to come to the Board. Ms. Bacon asked Board members to step up their game.

6. Alfredo Balerin addressed the Board regarding school taxes because of the issues that are going on outside of the buildings. The community element and social economic conditions are affecting our kids. This District is looking to come to the public asking for \$200 million, not to create a program that is going to focus on literacy, or to help kids with wrap-around services they need to be successful, but to build a new building that is going to make people who don't live in this community more money (contractors and engineers), taking away resources from our kids. When the Fund Balance is depleted, you can't come to the public for more money. The District will not get more money from the State this year. If you are coming to the public for \$200 million, don't give us a building, give us programs. If we get these students up to a higher achievement level we will get the public moving back into the community.

7. Edith Leet addressed the Board noting that the first quarter in coming to an end and according to Policy 4750 teachers should have identified students are in danger of failing and have gotten them services. Ms. Leet asked that numbers next week include how many children are identified at risk of failing, and how many are being supplied with appropriate services, and how many were retained last year, and each of those students have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). She is also interested in obtaining a sample PEP.

In terms of a new high school, Ms. Leet also asked that the Board consider the cost of maintaining a new building, and staff costs. Mrs. Leet made suggestions related to grade configuration that should be considered. Public comments should be available at the beginning of the meeting for things that are going to be on the agenda for discussion and at the end of the meeting for public input to what has been discussed at the meeting. This should not be an additional time burden.

FACILITIES

Action

Dr. Brandon called for a motion to accept the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Mr. Egan made a motion to accept the Final EIS. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion. Mr. Hogan advised this is the Final EIS. The specific option that we are looking at right now is taken from parts of options in this book. This EIS basically is the most comprehensive and will cover any deviation we do from this. The particular option will fit within the parameters of the study. It will cover the changes. The language referring to upper house and lower house, a lot of the language simply say small learning communities. This is an environmental study. This is not a vote on a particular program.

- Is there a shelf life for this document?

There is not a definitive expiration date. This document will remain valid for at least three to five years. After that, you would have to go back and evaluate any of the assumptions that were used in preparing the Final EIS had changed.

- How is the three to five years measured?

Three to five years from when it is adopted and when you have the vote. You have to complete the SEQRA process prior to scheduling the vote.

The Board voted 6 ayes and 1 opposed. Ms. Adler was opposed.

Motion passed.

INFORMATION

High School Project

Mr. Peckham of CSArch gave an update of the high school project starting with a review of the project floor plans, cost estimates, intent to schedule public referendum. Mr. Peckham advised the Board of Education has approved the Final Environment Impact Statement. The Board is also expected to approve the Statement of Findings under the SEQRA process, addressing mitigation of issues identified in the Environmental Impact Statement such as traffic, cultural resources, and construction phase impacts. This will be scheduled for the October 16, 2014 meeting. A formal resolution establishing the January 15, 2015 public referendum is also expected to be presented to the Board at this meeting. Mr. Peckham also advises reviewed dates leading up to the construction start in April of 2017.

The presentation continued with a review of the conceptual buildings drawings, tentative phasing of construction activities and the estimate financial impact on a homeowner. The presentation concluded with a review of floor plan options. Mr. Hogan reviewed revised cost estimates, indicating a cost of \$196 million with increased state aid, resulting in a lower cost impact to homeowners. The tax impact to homeowners for homes assessed between \$150,000 and \$250,000 has been reduced from a range of \$65 - \$121 to a range of \$50 - \$93. Mr. Hogan advised the District worked closely with professional financial advisors in developing these numbers.

Board members expressed their gratitude to the architects and the finance staff for the excellent work they have done in putting this project together over the past couple of years. Several Board members expressed their concerns relative to the perception in the community that a new building is not necessary. They have no confidence that this will be approved with a referendum in January. There needs to be a conversation with the City in terms of the financial impact taking into consideration City taxes. Improved academic performance needs to happen prior to a new building.

Comment was made that there will never be a good time to put forth a referendum. In support of the referendum, changes to the facility are essential to provide the programming to insure improvement in student performance. By putting this referendum before the voters, the public will be speaking. Mr. Peckham noted it's really the voter's choice whether you go forward or not. Additional dialogue with the public is what is planned as far as community interface between now and the vote. Do you go to the public to get information or go to the public to tell them why we need the project, and this is what it will cost. You need to educate the public and then let them make the decision. For the past two years we have had the input stage. Now is the time to get the information to the public to let them decide.

ACTION

2013-2014 Financials

Mr. Egan made a motion to accept the 2013-2014 Financials as presented. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion. Mr. Hogan introduced Mr. Alan Walther, Partner and Alison Blessing, Manager, from the Bonadio Group. The Bonadio Group conducted the independent audit of 2013-2014 financials for the District. The Audit Committee met with the auditors to review the audit in detail, prior to tonight's meeting. Mr. Walther advised the Bonadio Group was retained as the external auditor for the District following a competitive bidding process that took place earlier this year. Mr. Walther noted there were no serious concerns identified in the audit. Overall results are an unmodified opinion, which is the highest that can be given. There were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal controls.

One instance of non-compliance with unassigned fund balance being in excess of 4% at 4.65%. There were significant deficiencies with regard to time related to federal projects. In our opinion the financial statement present fairly. Mr. Walther reviewed the balance sheet, representing a snapshot of the financial position of the District as of June 30, 2014.

- Why has the same problem been brought forward again this year relative to the Extra Classroom Activity Fund, in that accounting controls are insufficient? When there is a qualified opinion like this, it would be helpful for the public to understand the reason that this issue is stated each year.

Mr. Hogan noted a full report related to the findings will be provided to the Board.

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

Motion passed.

Vision Card A1 & A2 – Student Learning

Mr. Egan made a motion to accept the Vision Card A1 & A2 – Student Learning, as presented. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion.

- What is the purpose of approving the report?

The Board is accepting the report as the District moves forward.

- Should this be part of a policy?

This Vision Card will be part of the consideration during the superintendent's evaluation.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to accept the motion.

Motion passed.

AIS RtL Plan

Ms. Farrell made a motion to approve the AIS RtL Plan. Mr. Owen seconded the motion.

- Concern that the plan we are asking to approve this evening conflicts with an existing policy. The policy is in the process of being revised. The compliance piece necessitates approve prior to the policy change.

The Board voted 4 ayes, 1 nay and 1 abstention.

Ms. Streznewski was opposed and Mr. Owens abstained.

Mr. Bruce was absent for the vote.

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION

Dr. Bandon presented Special Education Policies 4321 – 4321.21 for discussion. Policies have been reviewed by the Policy Committee, with Ms. Sharpe in attendance.

Policy 4321.5

In page 1, under minimum requirements, “All new entrants to the District shall be screened for possible disabilities, giftedness, and limited English proficiency in accordance with Educ. L §3204(2)(a).” This is the only place in the policies that the word “giftedness” appears.

Discussion followed relative to removing that language out of the policy. Ms. Sharpe advised counsel advised that Education Law indicates that all students should be screened. A suggestion was made to include an additional sentence as follows: If giftedness is suspected, a report is made to the parent and Superintendent.

Policy 4321.14

Ms. Sharpe defined the diploma options and credentials for Student with Disabilities. Students no longer graduate with IEP Diplomas. The State Education Department has abolished the IEP Diploma. Last year two credentials were presented. Students who used to receive IEP Diplomas in the past now receive Career Development Occupational Studies Commencement Credential and the Skills Achievement Credential. Students now will leave high school with either one of these credentials. The difference between these two is the Skills Achievement Commencement Credential is for most disabled students, and the Career Development Occupational Studies Commencement Credential is something students can achieve in addition to the Regents Diploma. It’s looking at students and providing work experiences to develop job skills. Students are getting credit for those hours worked. The Skills and Achievement Credential allows students to go on to supportive employment. The Career Development Credential allows students to go on to Hudson Valley.

Policy 4321.15

There was a discussion related to the definition of self-contained classrooms. Ms. Sharpe advised the District continues to have self-contained classrooms for students with Autism. Those ratios range from small classrooms with four students, a teacher, and two assistants, up to nine students, a teacher and three assistants. The District has self-contained classrooms for students with behavioral management, ED students. There fewer of the learning disabled classrooms for LD students. There are also co-teaching classrooms.

Policy 4321.20

In page 2, paragraph #3 related to the placement of students in a non-public school located in the District currently states that the notification deadline is published in the school calendar. Ms. Sharpe noted that the policy has been modified to reflect this information.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Dr. Brandon called for a motion to amend the agenda to include an additional listing to the Human Resource listing. The following items were presented for approval: Human Resource Items; Treasurer's Report; Budget Transfers under \$10,000; Budget Transfers over \$10,000; Appropriation Status Report; Revenue Status Report; Real Property Tax Adjustments; Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Grant Financials; Authorization to Enter Into Contracts; Field Trips; Request to Rescind Contract (Leadership & Learning- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Co, \$33,500.00), and the Committee on Special Education, Subcommittee on Special Education, and Committee on Pre-School Special Education. Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Mr. Owens seconded the motion. Ms. Adler set aside the following contracts: City of Albany Dept. of Youth & Workforce Services, Siena College for Urban Education, and St. Anne's Institute.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion,
absent the items set aside.

Motion passed.

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve the City of Albany Youth & Workforce Services contract. Mr. Owens seconded the motion. Ms. Adler noted that it appears that Mr. Hogan is overseeing this contract. Is there no programmatic administrator responsible for this contract? Dr. V advised that Mr. Hogan has been providing assistance to Stan Harper in writing this particular contract. Stan Harper in Pupil Personnel will be overseeing the implementation of the services. Ms. Adler noted that the measurable results for this contract are basically a list of the work that the program seeks to accomplish. The measurable results not be what the program is to perform, but, and actual result, i.e. the percentage of reduction in the truancy rate.

Ms. Streznewski noted this program has been in place for a number of years. Ms. Streznewski asked if there is value to these services. Dr. V advised the difficulty is that the abatement program never did have outcome measures. Building that partnership between attendance officers and the truancy abatement group has been challenging. The District is working with the group in defining the results so that there can be measurable results in terms of the impact of that program.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve the St. Anne's Institute contract. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. Ms. Adler commented favorably relative to the actual measurable results being included with the contract. As part of the contract process Ms. Adler suggested that the Board members receive copies of the measurable results, with multi-year contracts. Discussion followed relative to results would be included in a VisionCard and whether the Board should be receiving a separate report.

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

Motion passed.

Mr. Egan made a motion to approve the Siena College for Urban Education. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion. Ms. Adler commented that there are no measurable results in this contract.

The Board voted 6 ayes, 0 nays, and 1 abstention.

Mr. Egan abstained.

Motion passed.

Board Committee Reports

Audit Committee met earlier this week to review the 2013-2014 Financial Statement previously discussed at this meeting.

Ms. Adler noted the Government Relations Committee will be presenting the charge of the committee for discussion on the next agenda. Ms. Adler noted there was discussion regarding an RFP for lobbying services. This may be problematic in terms of the amount of time that the RFP process requires.

Board Member Items

None

Other Business

Dr. Brandon asked that information regarding the numbers of 9th grade students who are repeating the grade be clarified.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Farrell made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.