

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

March 5, 2015

7:00 p.m.

### Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy

**PRESENT:** Ginnie Farrell, President  
Sue Adler, Vice President  
C. Anthony Owens, Secretary  
Dr. Rose Brandon  
Anne Savage

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

**ABSENT:** No absences

#### **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**

#### **District artists shine**

It's been a busy week for our district's talented student artists. **First**, six Albany High students have had their artwork selected for the 2015 Art in Three Dimensions show. This annual juried show is an opportunity for Capital Region schools to showcase their three-dimensional art programs. It's the first time our district will be represented at the show, which opens with a reception at 6:30 p.m. March 18 at Mohonanssen High School.

The student artists are:

- Christopher Francisco, freshman
- Nasiah Israel, senior
- Laura Manilenko, junior
- Lianne Parmalee, senior
- Nelson Santiago Tolentino, junior
- Iyana Wizdom, freshman

Second, works by three other Albany High artists will be part of the fourth annual Building Communities Youth Art Contest. Judges selected pieces by junior Katerina Cakri and senior Nasson Taylor-Skervin as winners. Junior Hser (Sayre) Day Moo's artwork received an honorable mention. The contest is sponsored by Albany Barn and the Albany County District Attorney's Office. It was open to Albany County students. The winning works will be displayed at an exhibit that opens tomorrow at Albany Barn's Main Stage at 56 Second Street.

And last but not least, 178 pieces of art by district students from kindergarten through grade 8 are on display on the Empire State Plaza concourse, part of a display celebrating National Youth Art Month. The student works were inspired by the famed modern art collection at the Empire State Plaza. The exhibit opened today and runs through March 22.

### **Annie at Albany High**

Two weeks from tonight, the Albany High Theatre Ensemble will present first of four performances of the hit Broadway musical *Annie*. The performance opens with a 7 p.m. performance on Thursday, March 19. Additional shows will be at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 20 and Saturday, March 21, with a matinee at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 22. Tickets are \$15 for general admission and \$5 for students and seniors. Don't say "Maybe," or that you'll go to see the show "Tomorrow." Make plans to attend one of the performances. As soon as they dim the lights, I'm sure you'll find yourself saying, "I Think I'm Gonna Like it Here."

### **Music in Our Schools Month**

Music in Our Schools Month kicked off last night with a fantastic performance of the All-City Chorus at Myers Middle School. Our celebration of music in our schools continues next Wednesday with the All-City Band Concert, also at Myers, and the All-City Strings Concert at Hackett Middle School on March 25.

The Albany Marching Falcons also leave for Ireland on March 14 for their highly anticipated participation in the Dublin Saint Patrick's Day parade.

### **Spelling Bee**

Every year our elementary and middle schools have their own spelling bee, and each school's winner competes in a district-wide bee against the winners from the other schools. The top six district finishers then go on to compete against the best spellers from all over the Capital Region. This year's regional spelling bee was held last Tuesday at Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady. Tonight we are proud recognize the six students who represented the district that night. Introducing the students and presenting them with certificates will be Karen Bechdol, our director of curriculum and instruction. Congratulations to all of you and to your families for a job well done. The students were:

- Rachel Andrews, Grade 4, New Scotland Elementary School
- Helena Bristol, Grade 4, Eagle Point Elementary School
- Leah Gonzalez, Grade 7, William S. Hackett Middle School
- Graham Gordon, Grade 6, Stephen & Harriet Myers Middle School (MYERS)
- Onovu Otitigbe-Dangerfield, Grade 6, Albany School of Humanities (ASH)
- Gellona Rivas-Parson, Grade 5, Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST)

In related news, Governor Cuomo is proposing a tuition increase for charter schools over the next two years. If that becomes part of the state's budget, it will add about \$500,000 to our \$35 million annual charter-school bills for 2015-16, and approximately \$850,000 for 2016-17.

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

Ms. Fiona Leary noted as Basketball Season comes to a close, she offered congratulating to the Boys' Varsity Team for their season. The team played an outstanding sectional game. Unfortunately, they lost by a few points. The Girls' Varsity Team also lost their sectional game by a few point, however, they had an excellent season.

Ms. Leary also noted that several students have had an opportunity to travel to Costa Rica, France, Spain, Italy, They studied the culture, environment and food in these countries. The Marching Band will also be traveling to Ireland to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Mr. Leary advised she was fortunate to attend the UNA-UAA trip with the Model UN in New York City. It was an amazing opportunity to hear about human rights and environmental issues. The senior class participated in a fund raiser at UNO Pizza, which was very successful. Thank you to those who continually support the students.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Vincent Riguso addressed the Board regarding the possibility of building a new high school. Mr. Riguso noted concern that the Governor would be taking over the District. Mr. Riguso also noted his concern about the maintenance of artificial turf in terms of equipment, and the possibility of injuries to students.
2. Maria Figueroa addressed the Board regarding the safety of her children, requesting a review of what is happening at Delaware Community School.
3. Samuel Carrera addressed the Board concerning the staff in the after-school programs. Their behavior is not appropriate in front of students. Parents are concerned about the after-school programs. Kids are not treated honorably or respectfully. They should also have strong academic support.
4. John Sipos addressed the Board regarding communications at Delaware Community School.
5. Marlon Anderson addressed the Board regarding the need to focus on the main problems in the District. The goals should be primarily to get off the list of failing schools.
6. Andres Rivera addressed the Board regarding on-gong issues at Delaware Community School. Mr. Andres noted parents are eager to volunteer.
7. Edith Leet addressed the Board regarding students not reading at grade level. There needs to be additional support to the volunteer program. Ms. Leet suggested paying people to come into the schools to help students who need help.
8. Mark Bob Semple addressed the Board regarding the new high school. Kids deserve a new building. Mr. Semple encouraged people to approve the new high school, the athletic complex and renovations across the District.

### **INFORMATION**

Melissa Hastings, the Early Childhood Coordinator in the District, gave a comprehensive overview of the Early Childhood Education Program. The Program consists of 44 classrooms, at 21 locations, 10 Community Based organization Collaborations, serving 694 students. The program is I Early Childhood: Beginning a Journey, Building a Foundation developmentally Appropriate, Student Centered and Play Based. The focus of the program s clear expectations and consistency. Curriculum and Instruction include planning, intentional and purposeful, using assessment to inform instruction. Assessment observation includes baseline, progress monitoring, and goal setting.

Professional Development includes site visits, current research and best practice and book studies. Family Engagement includes classroom engagement, newsletters, and, family engagement workshops. Community Outreach includes Birth – 5, Early Childhood Forums and Albany Promise.

Ms. Hasty advised the next steps include SED coordinated Monitoring Review – (mid-March), request for Proposals – Collaborate Partners for 2015-2016, Link on District website specific to Early Childhood, Birth – 5, review and revision of the Prekindergarten report Card, teaching strategies GOLD, Social emotional curriculum, support for ELL students and families, review and update current curriculum, and reviewing District procedures and policies to align with SED regulations.

Key considerations in governance include teacher turnover rate and oversight by building principals. Ms. Hasty noted that the District has had a Pre-K program in the District since 1990. Funding has remained funding this program is flat. We have been trying to build that foundation for these children. The District is being penalized for being active for our children. We need to advocate for our children.

Dr. V noted that Melissa Hasty and Lisa Momberger are the only two employees working this program. This is early childhood for the City School District of Albany.

- Have there been exit interviews with these teachers who are leaving as to the reasons for leaving other than salaries?

There have been some who were asked to leave. A review of the turnover will be conducted in the future.

- The schedule of the day include direct instruction. How much play based learning is taking place on a daily basis?

The curriculum is based on Stat sample schedule can be forwarded. There is at least 45 minutes of motor time and 2 hours and 10 minutes for play based learning. Activities are broken up throughout the day.

- What would you propose, other than salary, to improve this program?

Lisa came on in November and she has been very helpful. To look more closely at the partners that are the collaborating partners to determine who is invested at the level the District is working on a daily basis.

- Is it your wish list to expand Birth – 5 throughout the District?

Conversations with Albany Promise is looking at the entire City in looking at the Birth – 5 program. The professional development program we have talked about allowing any staff to attend the sessions.

- Do we have any data on the performance of each of these providers? Every year we continue to fund all of the providers.

It is time to do an RFP. Performance will be taken into consideration in the selection process.

- Is there consideration for after-care for Pre-K?

There are providers in the community who have approached the District.

**FACILITIES**

Ms. Farrell noted that staff has requested more time to review this resolution prior to presentation to the Board for approval. Ms. Adler made a motion to table the resolutions pertaining to the Capital Improvements on Multiple Buildings. Mr. Owens seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Farrell presented the following resolution authorizing the District to present a proposition to the voters at the May 19, 2015 annual district meeting:

**RESOLUTION DATED MARCH 5, 2015 OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF ALBANY AUTHORIZING A PROPOSITION TO BE PRESENTED TO THE VOTERS AT THE MAY 19, 2015 ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETING.**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF ALBANY (the "District") that the following proposition be presented to voters at the annual District meeting to be held on May 19, 2015:

RESOLVED, shall the bond resolution adopted by the Board of Education of the City School District of the City of Albany on March 5, 2015 which authorized: (1) the minor renovation of Albany High School, construction of, and improvements to, various District athletic fields, including site work, and the acquisition of original furnishings, equipment, machinery or apparatus required for the purpose for which such fields are to be used, at a maximum aggregate cost of \$2,484,000; (2) expenditure of such sum for such purpose; (3) expenditure of \$841,360 of unassigned fund balance; (4) levy of the necessary tax therefore, to be levied and collected in annual installments in such years and in such amounts as may be determined by the Board of Education taking into account state aid and EXCEL grants; and (5) in anticipation of the collection of such tax, issuance of bonds and notes of the District at one time or from time to time in the principal amount not to exceed \$1,642,640 and levy of tax to pay interest on said obligations when due, be approved?

The proposition shall appear on the ballot labels of the voting machines and in the absentee ballots in the following abbreviated form:

**PROPOSITION**

Shall the bond resolution adopted by Board of Education authorizing the minor renovation of Albany High School, construction of, and improvements to, various District athletic fields, including site work, and the acquisition of furnishings, equipment, machinery or apparatus, at a maximum aggregate cost of \$2,484,000, expenditure of \$841,360 of unassigned fund balance and providing that \$1,642,640 (and the interest thereon) be raised by a tax levy to be collected in annual installments, with District obligations to be issued in anticipation thereof, be approved?

Mr. Bruce made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Owens seconded the motion.

- Concern was noted relative to the inclusion of the Press Box and other outliers of the project. Mr. Peckham, of CSArch advised most all of this work is in the direct vicinity of the athletic field. It will not be impacted by the overall high school project. At the same time, most of the things you are asking about are outside of the track and therefore, other than escalation of time, things costing more, there isn't a great difference if they are done prior to the high school project.

Mr. DiPiazza advised in order to meet the expanded use, in the current condition, the field is not able to host any of those events. It was determined to do what we in order to get the expanded use from the facility.

Ms. Ryan advised the press box elevates so activities can be recorded. Activities can also be announced from this location. It is also common practice to have coaches and officials placed in the press box. Mr. Peckham advised typically a high school press box is about 8' deep and 24 – 30' wide. It is not a skybox. Ms. Adler requested another name for this apparatus.

- What are we gaining by breaking this out of the high school reconstruction, given the timeliness?

Discussion followed regarding the possibility of the project being voted down in May and the possibility of bringing it forward in November.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion.  
Motion passed.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **2014-2015 Budget Development**

Mr. Hogan began his presentation with a review of the agenda and the budget calendar. A review of the 2015-16 budget challenges were presented, specifically State-aid, which is still not clear. State-wide averages could range from 0% to 4.8%. Budget challenges on the expenditure side include increased growth at the elementary level, an increase of ENL positions due to enrollment growth and mandates, increase of full-time teaching assistants previously filled with substitutes, Charter School tuition increase, Affordable Health Care Act, implementation of Core Standards and new course offerings. The updated budget indicates a projected deficit of \$908,623, which changes the tax levy to 0.80%. Mr. Hogan indicated in the worst case scenario, if the reductions were made, the remaining budget gap of \$1.9 million could be closed with an increase in tax levy of 1.71%

Mr. Hogan noted that Reserves are funds set aside to meet expected future payments, or set aside for a specific purpose. This tool can be used to help smooth out spikes in the annual budget and in the property tax levy. "The practice of planning ahead and systematically saving for capital acquisitions and other contingencies is considered prudent management." (Local Government Management Guide: Reserve Funds, Office of the NYS Comptroller)

Fund Balance is the total accumulation of revenues minus expenditures since the inception of the School District, less any withdrawals. The fund balance is equivalent to the district's lifetime savings. Mr. Hogan noted the CSDA has proactively managed its budgets, fund balance and reserves through the recession and continues the practice of managing long-term funds with long-term planning. The District is NOT on the NYS Comptroller's list of school districts under fiscal stress or susceptible to it. Ten local districts are currently on this listing. Statewide there are nearly 100 districts on the list and high-need urban/suburban districts are four times more likely than low-need districts to be on the list. The planned usage of fund balance and reserves extends to 2017-18 and could extend beyond that by underspending budgets. Mr. Hogan reviewed Reserve and Fund Balance relative to the planned use of these funds and the plan for maintaining these funds for the future, based on regulations. Mr. Hogan advised the District cannot continue to use these reserves and fund balance funds to balance the budget every year. These funds will be depleted in that process.

Mr. Hogan reviewed potential budget reductions in the event state aid is held at current levels. Mr. Hogan advised the Reading teachers are district-wide, based on the numbers in each school. In the worst case scenario, if reductions were made, the remaining budget gap of \$1.9 million could be closed with an increase tax levy of 1.71%.

Moving into the instruction/curriculum mode, Ms. Bechdol reviewed the Studio Classroom (draft stage) in Literacy and Math planned for 2015-16. The District is hoping to run 16 of these imbedded professional development sessions next year. Ms. Bechdol noted that sounds like a lot, however, sessions are either five days for Year I sessions or two days for Year 2. They are not in the classroom interrupting students. That's not the case, there is discussion, research, lesson planning around common core, etc. Classroom involved is approximately forty minutes/five times per year. Studios will continue to run by the Center for Educational Leadership that are grant funded.

Ms. Bechdol reviewed activities related to instructional coaching, training coaches about establishing relationships with teachers. The coaches are key to the professional development. Coach contact reaches 45% of elementary teachers, 53% middle school, and 25% Albany High School teachers. Ms. Bechdol reviewed the K-12 Academic intervention Services in secondary education. There are approximately 1,300 secondary students in AIS, and 500 students served by reading teachers. This is all embedded throughout the day.

- How many of the 8th graders are on target to pass to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Ms. Bechdol noted she sees a real change in regard to AIS in this District. There is a curriculum, teachers are trained. Ms. Bechdol noted 47% of these students exceed more than one year's growth in a half a year. Statistics indicate similar results in Math. The next steps include the development and enhancement of measurement tools and collection of data to show evidence of change in teacher practice.

Mr. Hogan concluded the meeting with an explanation of the tax cap calculation. Mr. Hogan noted that the tax cap simply determines the number of votes needed to pass a school budget. If a school district increases the taxes less than or equal to the tax cap, then only a simple majority (50% plus 1 vote) of votes are needed to pass the budget. If a school district increases the taxes above the tax cap, then a super majority (60%) of votes are needed to pass the budget. The tax cap is 2.26% for the 2015-16 fiscal year.

- How much influence does the District have related to Pilots?

Mr. Hogan noted the Pilots are a negotiation of assessments. For the most these are phased in rather than a one-shot pilot. Generally, the District does get pilots.

- Does the chart on fund balance and reserves contain all the District reserves?

Yes. The General Fund are the funds the voters vote on, along with these reserves. There are other reserve funds the District services. However, you can't mix and match. The food service fund, debt service fund, capital projects fund. The general fund is the funds the voters vote on and the ones that are in our budget. These are the only funds available in the budget. The District fund balance is going down every year.

Essentially, the District is still spending more than it is taking in. Mr. Hogan advised the confusion is that sometimes individuals look at the spending side only. There is the possibility that revenues were under by \$6 million. There was not an \$8 million surplus last year. There was a \$2 million surplus. Last year it was because the District sold two buildings. There would have had a \$4 million, if the District had not closed on these two buildings. You have to look at both the revenues and expenses to determine the bottom line.

### **ROUTINE CONSENT**

Ms. Farrell presented the following items for approval: Proceedings of Meetings ( February 5, 2015); Human Resource Items; Treasurer's Report; Budget Transfers under \$10,000; Budget Transfers over \$10,000; Revenue Status Report; Appropriation Status Report; Real Property Tax Adjustments; Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Grant Financials; Authorization to Enter Into Contracts; Field Trip (Hackett – Montreal); Health Services Contracts (Glenville Central School District); 2015 School Budget Vote Resolutions (Appointment of Board of Registration, Voter Registration Date, School Vote Canvass); Disposal of Assets; Committee on Special Education (January 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 20, 22, 26, and 27, 2015, Subcommittee on Special Education (January 5, 14, 15, 21, 22, 26, 28 and 29, 2015, Committee on Pre-School Special Education (January 5, 6, 13, 20, and 27, 2015). Mr. Owens made a motion to approve Routine Consent items as presented. Mr. Bruce seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (6 – 0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

### **Board Committee Reports**

No reports

### **Board Member Items**

No items

### **Other Business**

Ms. Farrell suggested the Board consider a discussion regarding the vacant Board seat on a future agenda.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Adler made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Savage seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Catherine Cutting  
District Clerk