



## PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 16, 2015

7:00 p.m.

Albany High School

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

Dr. Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard  
Bill Hogan  
Jeff Honeywell

**ABSENT:** No absences

### **Call to Order:**

- Meeting was called to order at 7:15 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**

### **State Exams**

Dr. V advised District students completed the third day of this year's state English-Language Arts (ELA) exam today. Thank you to all of our building leaders and staff for their efforts to ensure that the tests were administered seamlessly. The District had 628 students opt-out of the ELA exam this year. That is about 16 percent of the total number of students in grades 3-8. As in many school districts throughout our region and the state, the District's opt-out numbers were significantly higher this year. Building leaders were prepared and provided appropriate environments for students who took the exam this week, and for the students who opted out. In schools where there were large numbers of students opting out, students were in the cafeteria, auditorium and other classrooms to provide space for students to read quietly during the administration of the exam.

### **Marching Falcons**

Dr. V noted that the Albany Marching Band performed in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Dublin, Ireland, last month. The group did an outstanding job representing District schools and the City of Albany. District families and staff are extremely proud of their accomplishments. Members of the band were present to talk about their amazing experience. Marching Band Director Bryan Cady spoke about the various activities the group experienced during the trip.

### **Board Vacancy**

Mr. Honeywell provided clarification regarding the vacant position on the Board of Education. Whenever there is a vacancy that is not at the end of a term, the statute reads that the Board shall elect/appoint (synonymous) a person to fill the vacancy. However, the statute does not have a specific process for how that happens. Consistent with prior occasions such as this, the District is inviting persons to submit a statement of interest with background materials, etc. The person appointed by the Board (in public session) is by statute filling a term through December 31 of this year (2015). The actual term being filled is the one vacated by Mr. Egan, which actually runs through December 31, 2016. The Board has no authority to appoint someone for essentially a year and a half. The Board can only appoint until December 31, 2015.

The reason for that is the rationale under the law is the Board will appoint someone until the public can actually exercise its vote to decide who would fill the remainder of that term. Another unique thing to Albany is that the Board of Education members are elected in the General Election. Other districts elect in May. There will be two Board seats elected in November. One will be a full term, and one will be a one-year term. Essentially, the person with the most votes will get the long term, and the person with the second most votes will go for a one-year term. If the person appointed is interested in continuing service on the Board they will need to campaign for the General Election in 2015, and again in 2016.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Katherine Malle Sipos addressed the Board regarding the vacancy on the Board. Ms. Malle Sipos reviewed the responsibilities of the Board. Ms. Malle Sipos noted there are a lot of big decisions that are upcoming. The District needs a highly qualified, fully staffed school board.
2. John Sipos addressed the Board regarding the proposal to build a co-educational athletic field for the high school sports teams, physical education classes and other opportunities. Mr. Sipos suggested the District consider renting the new fields to offset the cost of the project. Mr. Sipos urged the Board to move forward and to stand behind the Athletic Department.
3. AnnaMarie Lippitt address the Board regarding the Marching Band trip to Ireland. This is the only event that brings the high school and middle school together. It also brings the parents together. Ms. Lippitt advised she would like to see additional monies allocated to the Marching Band and Winter Guard. Ms. Lippitt asked for clarification of the proposed pool renovations. Ms. Lippitt also spoke about the proposed calendar change for 2016-17. Removal of the February break will affect future international trips in the District.
4. Alice Oldfather addressed the Board regarding state testing. Many families opted-out in solidarity with teachers in having their voices heard. However, in making the decision for her children, she has read about the risk of the loss of state-aid. The loss of funds to the District of Albany would have a significant effect on our students. Student scores will also go down significantly.
5. Kate Russell addressed the Board regarding the Board vacancy. Ms. Russell urged Board Members to keep the process transparent. She encouraged the District to put as many teachers as possible in front of students. This is the only way the District will close the achievement gap. Ms. Russell expressed concerns regarding future costs of the Athletic field. The discussion of Grade Configuration, and the issues at the ALC have not yet been started.

6. Ellen Roach addressed the Board regarding how happy her son was to get back to school to see his friends and going out to play. Ms. Roach expressed concern regarding the athletic field design approval prior to voter approval. The District has many more critical needs. The possibility of having the field ready by September 2015 has many variables. Ms. Roach also requested that documents posted to the website be duplicated in color for public review.
7. Mark Robinson addressed the Board regarding the revenue sharing that Albany County Land Bank has submitted to the Board. Mr. Robinson urged the Board to do due diligence in searching out other land banks to see how other municipalities utilize community benefit agreement to help the low income population in the City of Albany.
8. Linda Lewis addressed the Board regarding the advantages that would be provided to students with a new athletic field. Her son is an Albany graduate who now plays for the New England Patriots. She looks forward to seeing her grandchildren graduate from Albany.
9. Charles Robinson addressed the Board regarding the lack of opportunities for black kids in metropolitan cities. Mr. Robinson noted the City of Albany, according to Brandeis and Ohio State University, Albany is dead last for opportunity alone. Mr. Robinson encouraged the Board to look at training students so they can have prevailing wages. This city needs a major employer in the poorest community that will provide opportunities for our children.

### **FACILITIES**

#### **Action**

#### **Resolution to Approve Architectural Contract – Athletic Field**

Mr. Hogan presented a resolution approving the architect for the design of the athletic field. Mr. Hogan noted he spoke to the architect relative to the fee previously presented. Mr. Hogan advised that although the cost previously presented was reason and fair, 10% of the total project which is market price, in lieu of the consideration that this was being pulled from a much larger project, CSArch has discounted the cost from was discounted \$209,500 to \$173,275, which is \$8.25%. Mr. Bruce made as motion for approval. Ms. Adler seconded the motion.

Following discussion which included the timeline for the project to be ready in September 2015. The possibility of completion by that date is based on timely review by SED. Mr. Hogan noted the local share of the project is \$841,000 after state aid. The District has accounted for that money from the fund balance. Board members expressed their concerns relative to assurances from elected officials who are willing to work toward moving this project forward in order to meet the completion date. There has been precedent in the state relative to procurement through cooperative purchasing, and the project was completed within six months. The discussion also included the advantages to the students and the support previously indicated by the public that the project would be approved at the May vote.

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

Motion passed.

### **DISCUSSION/ACTION**

#### **2015-2016 School Budget**

Mr. Hogan presented the final budget for Board approval. Mr. Hogan advised, based on discussion at the last meeting, assuming Board support, the budget has been adjusted to include the items under investment proposals categories 2 and 3. The impact of adding category 3 items to the figures presented on April 1<sup>st</sup> increases the total to \$224,131,782 with a tax increase of 1.48%. Mr. Hogan clarified that the Board would vote on the tax levy in August. Mr. Hogan also advised the District has reduced the planned use of Reserves and Fund Balance from \$8.2 million appropriated in the 2014-15 to \$4.195 million in 2015-16.

Additionally, Mr. Hogan noted that during the recession which included the District' State aid being reduced by more than \$40 million (to balance the State budget), the District has been able to maintain most of its programs and control tax-levy increases. At the same time, enrollment has in the District has grown from 8,394 to 9,070, or 676 students. The average increase in tax levy over five years would be 1.36% if the 2015-16 proposal is adopted with the category 3 items included. Mr. Hogan concluded his presentation with the tax-levy impacts using current tax rates and apportionments.

Mr. Owens made a motion to approve the budget. Mr. Bruce second the motion. Discussion followed regarding the need for the additional items in the budget presented this evening in terms of providing additional support to students in need. Mr. Hogan explained the increase caused by additional mandates related to teacher evaluations. Ms. Adler noted that she is not confident that this budget will have a significant effect on student achievement. There was also concerns that the Board has been talking about keeping the tax increase at 1%, which is a level of expectation in the public. A suggestion was made to consider funds from the Employee Benefit Reserves to keep the budget at this level. Discussion also included the issue of teacher evaluation and the projected costs. Following a long discussion related to the budget development process Dr. V requested a five-minute recess for the administration staff to present the final budget figure. Mr. Hogan clarified the motion to adopt the budget of \$223,971,782 with the tax increase at .98%; and the fund balance funds of \$395,000.

The Board voted 5 ayes and 1 nay. Ms. Adler was opposed.  
Motion passed.

Ms. Adler made a motion to amend the agenda to move the action items until after the information item. Ms. Savage seconded the motion.

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

## INFORMATION

### Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy Report

Dr. V advised the Schuyler Achievement Academy is in the second year of their school improvement grant. Principal Jalinda Soto, and Michelle Bridgewater, School Improvement Director, gave a comprehensive presentation beginning with the goals of the School Improvement Grant, Key Strategies; Academic Achievement: NWEA Math; 2014-2015 Winter Benchmark; Academic Achievement: NWEA ELA; NWEA 2014 & 2015 Winter Benchmark; Attendance (Teacher & Student); Office Discipline Referrals; and the Next Steps. Studio classrooms are supported by a literacy coach and a math coach. There are also three additional reading teachers, vertical and horizontal common planning, a behavior specialist, a home school coordinator and community partnerships with Parsons YMCA, and Boys and Girl Club.

Student achievement improvements were indicated in both Math and ELA for 2013-14. The math scores for grades K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, while there was growth, they were slightly below the national norm. Early intervention in the primary grades need additional attention. The ELA scores indicate the same need for additional focus on Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Grades 2-5 showed improvement, with grades 3, 4, and 5 exceeded the national norm. Ms. Soto also reviewed student retention. Student attendance was down in 2013-14 and increased to 91.58% as of April 2, 2015. Teacher attendance has increased for the last two years with a 97.7% attendance rate as of April 2, 2015. Office Discipline referrals increased significantly from (526) 2012-13 to 2013-14 (1,073) (SIG Year 1), and has decreased to 471 as of March 30, 2015. The spike was a result of an on-line system that included major and minor incidents. This year they are reported separately.

Moving forward, the plan is to continue with the Studio Model, Mass Insight has started a comprehensive review of the school. The school has just received their report and recommendations, which will be reviewed and integrated in the School Improvement Plan. Academic data, attendance and behavior will all be part of the improvement plan for next year. With one more year of the grant, the reality is how do we sustain some of the work that has already been started, and where does the school go from there. Dr. V noted that one of the requirements of the grant is a monthly phone conversation. Staff from SED commends this team every time this group is on the phone. SED sees our leadership team, and their staff as a model for excellence in changing of schools. Board members congratulated Ms. Soto and her staff on the good news. Ms. Bridgewater noted that 90% of the students were at Level 1 when this grant began. Last year the results were still single digits. Ms. Bridgewater noted the school is cautious with this data until they see some consistency. The school is still trying to close gaps.

## ACTION

### 2015 – 2016 School Calendar

Ms. Farrell presented the 2015-2016 School Calendar for approval. Ms. Adler made a motion for approval. Mr. Owens seconded the motion. Dr. Brandon noted she would not approve the calendar due to the April recess. Students need to be in school more than is scheduled on the 2015-16 calendar.

The Board voted 5 ayes, and 1 nay, (Dr. Brandon was opposed.)

Motion passed.

### **ROUTINE CONSENT**

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Proceedings of Meeting (April 12, 2015); Human resource reports, Bid Awards (Music Supplies & Equipment #16-412, Computer/AV Supplies #16-415, Roofing Repairs #16-305, and Science Supplies #16-427, Health Services Contracts (Averill Park Central School District, Niskayuna Central School District), Field Trips (Boston Science Museum – Giffen Memorial Elementary School, New England Aquarium – Sheridan Preparatory Academy); and Authorization to Enter Into Contracts. Mr. Owens made a motion to approve Routine Consent as presented. Dr. Brandon seconded the motion. Ms. NYS Mandated DTSDE RFP. Mr. Bruce set aside the Titan Roofing Contract.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve Routine Consent Items,  
absent those items set aside.

Motion passed.

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve the NYS Mandated DTSDE RFP. Mr. Bruce seconded the motion. Ms. Savage noted this document indicates that the district will not meet the deadline. Ms. Dunbar noted she spoke to the NYSD DTSDE and they advised that it is better to submit the information late than not at all.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve the Titan roofing Contract. Ms. Savage seconded the motion. Mr. Bruce asked what roof this contract would cover. Mr. Hogan noted this is for routine roof repairs throughout the District.

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

Motion passed.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Alfredo Bawling addressed the Board regarding the use of fund balance. Mr. Bawling also thanked the Board for keeping the tax increase below 1%.
2. Edith Leet addressed the Board regarding the resources into the District volunteer infrastructure so that additional volunteers can be used for tutoring throughout the District.
3. Anna Marie Lippitt addressed the Board regarding transportation, reserve funds, and a program recruit students.
4. Kathryn Malle Sipos addressed the Board regarding a problem with accountability. Ms. Malle Sipos also spoke about NWEA information. Ms. Malle Sipos noted the Special Education system in Albany is broken. There is not response to intervention. She advocates for her daughter and others. The public needs to demand accountability. People can go on line to see NWEA test scores.

### **Board Committee Reports**

No reports.

**Board Member Items**

None

**Other Business**

Dr. Brandon noted the Sage School of Education College, Academy for Character Education recently honored Dawn Castle, an employees of the District as “Champion of Character” for her contribution in fostering character traits of responsibility, civility, respect, honesty, fairness trustworthiness and citizenship in students throughout the educational spectrum.

Ms. Farrell noted the Board has considered information provided from the public regarding the vacancy on the Board. The next step is a request to the public to have interested candidates submit a letter of interest and a short bio to the Clerk of the Board. Ms. Farrell noted that while the regulations indicates the Board “shall’ appoint, it does not provide a timeline. Four members of the Board were in favor of appointing the person who receives the second highest voters in November to fill the position vacated by Mr. Egan. Ms. Farrell will confirm this process with Mr. Honeywell.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Adler made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Owens seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 11:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cutting  
District Clerk