



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 7, 2015

7:00 p.m.

North Albany Academy

PRESENT: Ginnie Farrell, President
Sue Adler, Vice President
Dr. Rose Brandon
Anne Savage
Dr. Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard
Bill Hogan
Jeff Honeywell

ABSENT: C. Anthony Owens, Secretary

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

Spring concert season

Dr. V advised that as of 6 p.m. tonight, spring concert season is officially underway in the City School District of Albany. Talented musicians and singers in the District will be performing at all of our schools through June 11. That includes a new performance recently added to our spring music calendar – the May 19 performance of “Carmina Burana” at Hackett Middle School by Albany High’s Wind Ensemble and Select Choir.

Safety concerns, planning

Many events in our community over the past two weeks have provided us all – yet again – with stark and painful reminders of the challenges that our families and children encounter. A young father falls victim to gun violence. A teen-ager stands accused. An elementary student is a witness to another act of violence that takes the life of another member of our community. And these are just the headlines.

Our hearts and prayers go out to the families who have been touched by tragic events in our city in recent weeks. As superintendent, it is my role, in partnership with leaders throughout Albany, to help protect our students and families. As we grieve for those who have been lost, and for those who have suffered loss, please know that we do not view these as “their problems” or “my problems.”

These are our problems, all of us, together as one community. We are engaged in those conversations as leaders, and we ask that all members of our community think about how their words and their actions can assist in bringing calm and safety.

Teacher Appreciation Week

It is Teacher Appreciation Week this week. I would like to take a moment to recognize and thank the nearly 700 educators who work with our students each and every day.

And I think our teachers need and deserve a pat on the back these days. It's a hard and demanding job even under the best of circumstances, and teachers throughout New York State do not seem to be working in those conditions these days. Along with the challenges of preparing children to meet the ever-shifting goals that are set for them, teachers also must endure the pressures and perceptions that come from outside their classrooms, outside their schools – and even from outside our community.

Teaching also is one of the most rewarding and important professions a person can choose. I think it is important – this week and every week – to recognize our teachers for the outstanding service they provide to our young people, and for the dedication they display throughout the year.

Brighter Choice Middle-school Planning

Earlier this week, members of our staff accompanied representatives from the State Education Department on a tour of the Brighter Choice middle schools that will be closing at the end of this school year. This was an important step in our process of planning to welcome and serve the Brighter Choice students and families next school year. The District is evaluating all facilities options city-wide for this purpose. The District is also developing staffing and action plans around a variety of scenarios. Strong preference continues to be to find a suitable facility that will allow us to keep all of the Brighter Choice students who will be in grades 6-8 next year together. Board members will receive updated information in the near future.

Hackett Middle School Planning

As you know, this year's state budget includes dramatic changes for public education, including the notion of receivership for some identified schools throughout the state.

Hackett Middle School continues to be on that list of schools that have been given one year to improve dramatically. The state has outlined the process for the District to follow at this stage, including the formation of a group of community partners, a staffing team and a clearly articulated partnership with the teachers' union.

The District is initiating all of those steps and there is much more to follow. Our goal is to have a draft plan completed by June 30 in order to be prepared for dates and next steps still to be determined by State Ed.

Budget Vote

Finally, the District's annual budget vote will take place on Tuesday, May 19, 2015. This year there will be two facilities-related propositions on the ballot in addition to the 2015-16 school budget proposal. All of that information is detailed in our budget newsletter, which is available here tonight, and also being mailed to all city residents. You also can find detailed information at **albanyschools.org**.

Polls are open from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m. on May 19. If you need to find your voting location, there is a searchable directory on our website. Community presentations are scheduled next week about the budget and propositions, and the District is looking forward to hearing from our community on May 19.

BUDGET HEARING

Mr. Hogan noted as part of the budget process, the District is required to conduct a formal budget hearing. The Board of Education approved the \$223,971,782 budget on April 16, 2015. Mr. Hogan reviewed the 2015-2016 School Budget that will be presented to the voters for approval on May 19, 2015. Mr. Hogan advised all the financial resources are in line with the Mission of the District. The tax levy increase is below 1%. One of the reasons for the growth is the increased enrollment in the District. The District is planning on an additional 250 students as a result of the closing of charter schools. The District is also able to reduce dependency on fund balance.

Mr. Hogan reviewed the listing of additional personnel. This year the District is actually able to provide additional programming including the JROTC Program. Support services for student in need of additional help has also been increased. The District will also be able to continue offering special programs i.e. IB, Music, Career Exploration, full-day Pre-K and Kindergarten, and the themed Magnet School and the Dual Language Program, afterschool programs, athletic opportunities.

The average tax increase, based on a home valued at \$150,000 would be \$18.00. This figure is reduced with the STAR and Enhanced STAR programs. Through the past years, the average tax increase in taxes is 1.26%, which is very good. In addition to voting on the budget there are also two facility projects that will be presented to the voters in May. The Athletic field project will be funded through state-aid and \$141 from the general fund. The other proposition is \$13.9 million of projects for renovations in 14 different buildings in the District. This project will be funded with Capital Reserve Funds and state-aid generated by the project.

- Will the repairs on the pool at the high school will be usable in the potential new high school?

That is correct. The money being spent on the pool is an investment that will continue through the new high school project.

- Is the architectural fees included in the proposition figures?

The costs include those fees.

- The cost of artificial turf fields priced on the internet indicate lower numbers than what is being proposed for Albany.

New York State has special rules and mandates in terms of hiring contractors. Construction cost in this state cost more than other states. The condition of the ground surface also needs to be a consideration in the cost. The proportional cost of architectural fees and other fees included in the project. Initial costs have a 20% additional cost. Every turf field is different depending on the drainage of the site.

1. Noelene Smith addressed the board regarding the Athletic Field and the number of unanswered questions and the fact that this is being funded with excess monies the District has not spent.
2. Mark Bobb Semple addressed the Board regarding the Athletic Field, noting that he is trustful of the District. Mr. Semple advised he is willing to work on getting this project approved. The students in the District deserve every cent the District spends.
3. Natalie Criscone addressed the Board regarding the Athletic Field. Ms. Criscone noted that the varsity games have been played. The statement to the public needs to be re-phrased.
4. Samuel Carrera addressed the Board regarding the Athletic Field. Mr. Carrera asked for clarification of the excess funds that are being used for the field. Mr. Carrera also spoke about the importance of student learning, rather than exercise. Considering the possibility of receivership in the District, he is concerned about these projects going forward.

Mr. Hogan noted that by law, the District cannot overspend. It is possible for the District to have a variance of \$1 million. Typically, school districts under-spend. These under-spent monies go into fund balance, and with voter authorization, the District is planning to spend this \$840,000 money from the fund balance. It cannot be spent without voter approval.

Additionally, the District is also spending Capital Reserve Funds set up with funds from the sale of two district buildings. These funds were intentionally placed into a Capital Reserve Fund to be used to renovate buildings. The use of these funds also requires voter authorization.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Student representatives, Cori Dobbs and Fiona Leary spoke about their positive experience serving as Student Representatives to the Board this past school year. Ms. Dobbs thanked the public for their support in fund raising, allowing prom tickets to be made available for \$6 per ticket. Both students are graduating this year and plan to attend college, and in addition, they both have been awarded scholarships. Board members expressed their appreciation for their contribution and wished each of them much success.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Kathryn Malle Sipos addressed the Board regarding the possibility of Receivership in the District at Hackett Middle School. Albany High School and Schuyler Achievement are on a focus list. Receivership will mean that the Board is no longer in charge. The Receiver will be the Superintendent. Ms. Sipos spoke about the risks associated with this situation in the District. If academic progress is not achieved for Hackett, the school will face a take-over. Ms. Sipos advised the public and teachers should have received information relative to this situation. Transparency builds trust and unites. The District should start working no.
2. Edith Leet addressed the Board regarding the Board vacancy. Regulations are designed to have a full-Board as quickly as possible. Without a full Board, Albany citizens will be deprived of full representation on the Board. We don't want to see important actions deadlocked by three to three voters.
3. Noelene Smith addressed the Board regarding the inability of the District to serve black boys. Ms. Smith spoke about a special education student who is not being provided proper services in the District. Student rights are being violated around the services they need, the District needs to spend time looking at students, taking care of their needs at the first opportunity. Too many of our children are being left behind.
4. Kate Russell addressed the Board regarding the perception people have with the District of Albany. Students need to have a positive influence in their lives. The District needs to focus on the elementary grades. Ms. Russell spoke about the scenario of the District schools in receivership. There are many staggering questions.

FACILITIES

Information

Albany High School Indoor Athletic Facilities

Mr. Hogan introduced Rich Peckham of CSArch, who presented a review of the athletic space in the redesign of the high school. Mr. Peckham advised some spaces will be expanded and there will be additional spaces for this use. The chart illustrated the current athletic spaces, along with the redesigned spaces. The current main gym will be expanded, the rubber gym will be split for full utilization, and the wrestling/multipurpose room will also be expanded, along with the fitness room, and the exercise room. An additional multipurpose room will be added, and an indoor walking/jogging track around the main gymnasium.

Based on the overall planning, we have reviewed this with the physical education staff and they felt this is adequate to accommodate the expanded school. The majority of the spaces will be on the main gym level. The lower level will have the exercise room and the walking/jogging track with the fitness center on the upper level. The total physical education space is increasing significantly.

The District Athletic Director, Kathy Ryan advised she met with the physical education staff. Everyone is very excited about these plans. There will be 80% more square footage in physical education space.

INFORMATION

Student Achievement Services Presentation

Tonda Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, gave a presentation from the Office of Student Achievement Services, designed in July 2014 and implemented in September 2014. Ms. Dunbar noted this item was on the agenda calendar as a Teaching & Learning Presentation. Ms. Dunbar explained how the Office of Student Achievement Services came to be. Ms. Dunbar spoke about how the system worked in the past. Administrators and Directors came together and redesigned the offices so that they could work more efficiently. Ms. Bechdol, Mr. Lein and Ms. Dunbar believed the District wore in silos, which was not an effective way of working. As a result, the central office was broken down. Mr. Lein explained the process utilized in the redesign of the process. The impact of this is that the District is now moving in the same direction in terms of support and communication.

Ms. Dunbar advised the group has met on a weekly, working on a work plan designed around the Strategic Operational Plan. Reviser schedule to include face to face meetings with proximate clients (Principals and Cabinet). Reflect on this year's meetings and communications norms and revise as necessary. Develop work plan for 2015-2016 school year against the Strategic Operational Plan and assign tasks and use this year's data as a baseline data to design a progress monitoring tool and process and implement it for 2015-2016.

- Concern was noted by a Board member relative to the clarification of a connection to the actual academic progress of student achievement. How does this impact the students?

That is the purpose of the report.

- What is the OCIA.

That is the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

- Ms. Adler expressed her frustration relative to the lack of progress in developing curriculum in the District. This has been an issue for the last 2 to 3 years. Both the District and Board need to be held accountable for this lack of progress. This is unacceptable. Curriculum has not been done. The charts and process are worthless. No one is doing the work! Ms. Adler also spoke about the Special Education Report provided by Dr. Rita LeVay, who made several recommendations for change that have not been addressed by the District.

Dr. V advised the traditional means of writing curriculum cannot be done in the District. The District cannot keep going down this same path in the same way. The process internally is not the problem. This group is trying to desperately provide unified services to the student. The dilemma is that there resources are going differently for different kids. The curriculum has to be done.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Proceedings of Meeting (April 16, 2015); Human Resource Items; 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 Trips (Arbor Hill Elementary School – Lyndhurst, New Jersey, Hackett Middle School – Jersey City, New Jersey); Health Services Contracts; Disposal of Textbooks; Vendor Name Change (My Learning Plan, Inc. to Frontline Technologies Group, LLC); Resolution to Appoint Inspectors; Recommendations of the Committee on Special Education of March 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, April 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, and 29, 2015, Recommendations of the Subcommittee on Special Education of March 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 17, 23, 24, 26, April 14, 16, 20, 23, and 27, 2015, and Recommendations of the Committee on Pre-School Special Education finalized at meetings of March 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 31, April 1, 2, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 28, and 30, 2015. Mr. Bruce made a motion to approve Routine Consent. Ms. Adler seconded the motion.

Ms. Adler asked that the Proceedings of 4/16/15, Human Resource Item, Budget Transfers Under \$10,000, Budget Transfers over 410,000, Authorization to Enter into Contracts, and Health Services Contracts be set aside.

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 Proceedings of April 16, 2015. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion. Ms. Adler request that the proceedings be revised to omit the sentence on page 4 stating that Ms. Adler would not support the budget based on the process. This is not accurate. The sentence will be removed from the proceedings.

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

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve Human Resource Items. Mr. Bruce seconded the motion. Ms. Adler noted she would not approve curriculum writing appointments (A.10). Secondly, Ms. Adler questioned the BLT doing summer work at TOAST (A.16). Dr. V clarified that this is the school plan or the 2015-2016 school year.

The Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve Human Resource Items absent item A. 10.
Motion passed

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve Human Resource Item A.10. Mr. Bruce seconded the motion.

The Board voted 2 ayes Mr. Bruce & Ms. Savage.
2 nays, Ms. Adler & Ms. Farrell.
Dr. Brandon abstained.
Motion failed.

Ms. Farrell made a motion to approve Budget Transfers Under \$10,000. Mr. Bruce seconded the motion. Ms. Adler asked if the textbooks for Pine Hills Elementary are for this current year. Mr. Hogan advised it is coming out of the current year budget.

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

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve Budget Transfers Over \$10,000. Mr. Bruce seconded the motion. Ms. Adler asked for clarification of professional development planned to be used for studio classroom through CEL, now being conducted independently. Dr. V advised this for professional development for in-staff. Following discussion the item will be pulled pending additional clarification.

The Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion,
absent the studio classroom item A2210.400-01.
Motion passed.

Ms. Savage made a motion to approve Authorization to Enter into Contracts. Mr. Bruce seconded the motion. Ms. Adler questioned Advanced Collaborative Solutions contracts \$7,910 and also \$11,090, both of those for professional development. Dr. V advised that Mr. Ventura has been in the District for several years, assisting Principals in reviewing data. This is a result of requests from the Principals of these buildings. This is a person needed District-wide. Data coaches will be involved in this training to improve their skills. Mr. Bruce asked for an explanation of the marketing contract. Mr. Hogan advised this is support for the Communications Office.

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

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve Health Services Contracts. Ms. Savage seconded the motion. Ms. Adler questioned the numbers are not all whole numbers. Mr. Hogan advised these fraction are for students who come in in the middle of the year.

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

Board Committees

Mr. Hogan advised the Audit Committee has met. There is actually an internal audit being conducted in the District at this time with Marvin & Co. There are currently reviewing the district policies procedures, and internal controls. They also provided an update of their activities, and a summary report.

The Audit Committee met with Bonadio Group, who focuses on the external audit, which primarily financial statements and report. Their audit starts this month through September. The Audit Committee was given a brief presentation on their activities and expectations. One area they will be focusing on is Technology, how it is supported and maintained.

The Facilities Committee met and reviewed items that were discussed earlier in this meeting. Discussion included the indoor/outdoor athletic spaces, and the outdoor athletic field. The work that will be conducted this summer at Hackett was also part of the discussion.

Board Member Items

Ms. Farrell spoke about the issue of voters providing identification at the polls when voting in the School Budget Vote. Ms. Cutting advised that the District discontinued this practice at last year's budget vote. Poll books include signatures that are used for identification.

Other Business

Dr. Brandon commented on the discussion earlier this evening, requesting that everyone remembers to treat each other with respect.

Ms. Adler noted the NWEA data is critical. This information needs to be studied. Also, there was an AIS re-design in 2012 that has never been implemented.

Ms. Savage noted as a new Board member, it appears that Board Member Items is just a list. How is the Board going to see these items on Board agendas? She would like to work to set an agenda over the course of an annual cycle. Clarify what the Board wants when they get information from staff. Ms. Farrell advised she is working with Mr. Dedrick of Capital Region BOCES to prepare an agenda for a Board Retreat that will include this issue. Ms. Adler also noted that Board support should also be part of the discussions.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Adler made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Savage seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.