

DATE: March 9, 2010
WHERE HELD: Stevens

KIND OF MEETING: Regular
PRESIDING OFFICER: Joe Pericone

**MARGINAL
NOTATIONS**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

John Blowers
Tim Kelliher
Elizabeth Herkenham
Patre Kuziak
James Maughan
Joe Pericone
Robert Speck

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jim Schultz, Jacqueline St.Onge, Rick Evans, Christy Multer, and 40 others.

President Joe Pericone called the Board meeting to order at 7:35 PM.

Reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the approval of the consent agenda, which included the minutes of the February 23, 2010 regular meeting of the Board of Education.

Motion carried 5-0

John Blowers arrived.

Privilege of the Floor

Charlton Heights parent Charles Nelson addressed the Board regarding his six year old daughter being on the wrong bus and then being dropped off to an empty house. His daughter currently alternates being dropped off at home or at a babysitter's address. Mr. Nelson is looking for corrective actions to ensure this doesn't happen again or to any other students. He would like the Board to consider changing current policy to expand the ages for students to be received by an adult. Superintendent Jim Schultz said that he has already taken action and will be working with staff on further procedural changes. Students are dismissed from the classroom with their teachers to the gym where they line up by their assigned bus. He is looking for changes to be made to school policy that respond to the situation with Mr. Nelson's daughter. Mr. Nelson cited practices used by other schools that require a visual contact for students when they are dropped off. He would like the teachers to take responsibility for getting the students on the correct bus. He realizes this may not be the solution that the district pursues but he wants changes to be made and he wants staff to be accountable. Reminders are not effective and he feels the District should take a look at their policies.

District resident Richard Evans presented a written statement to the Board outlining his concerns about the proposed school budget. He indicates that a zero tax increase is the only acceptable answer. A copy is available at the District office. Mr. Evans expressed his concerns with the unions regarding contractual issues and automatic step increases and asked what is being done by the District. He referenced a report on student outcomes that disputes more spending produces better educated students.

John Blowers left the room.

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the acceptance of the Financials.

Motion carried 5-0

John Blowers returned.

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the approval of the temporary appointment of Caitlin Monast, .6 Gifted & Talented Coordinator & .4 Gifted & Talented Teacher/AIS Math, effective 3/2/10-6/30/10; approval of the leave of absence of Jennifer Bennice, Grade 2 teacher at Stevens, effective 5/17/10-6/30/10; Catherine Mele, Music teacher at Stevens, effective 4/9/10-6/30/10; and Sarah White, Music teacher at Pashley, effective 5/14/10-6/30/10; the acceptance of the retirements of Charles Button, Special Education teacher at the High School, effective 6/30/10; Carol Hobday, Special Education teacher at the High School, effective 7/1/10; George Nevulis, Psychologist at the Middle School, effective 6/30/10; Barbara Reeves, Music teacher at the Middle School, effective 7/1/10; Richard Reynolds, Social Studies teacher at the Middle School, effective 6/30/10; Susan Schultz, Librarian at the High School, effective 7/1/10; Karen Wang, .6 Social Studies teacher at the High School, effective 6/30/10; and William York, Math teacher at the Middle School, effective 6/30/10; the approval of the Tenure appointment of Kristine Gregory & Michelle Martin; the approval of the substitute teacher recommendations of Andrew Lancaster, Christopher Reach & Margaret Gilgallon; the approval of the substitute teacher appointments of Amanda Bassett, Sheena Caddell, Rachele Catalano, Nicole DiVeglia, Joshua Fisher, Rebecca Krohmal, Michael LaMastra, Valerie Peretin, Patrick Quirk, Christina Rau, Patricia Taber, Megan Cross, Mary Starring; the approval of the Spring coaching assignment of Nicholas Schultz, Assistant Boys Track & the acceptance of the resignation of Matt Shell, Assistant Boys Track.

Motion carried 6-0

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the approval of the civil service personnel action as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Motion carried 6-0

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the approval of the Notice of Annual Budget Vote.

Motion carried 6-0

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the approval of the School Calendar for 2010-2011.

Motion carried 6-0

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the approval of the Special Athletic Competition Request for the Boys Varsity Baseball Team.

Motion carried 6-0

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the acceptance of the gifts to the High School of:

- a. \$1,000 from the BH-BL Community Follies to purchase wireless body microphones
- b. \$500 from the Schenectady County Embraces Diversity Association for a Study Circles High School Program.

Motion carried 6-0

Mr. Blowers moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the acceptance of the gift of a Classroom Wall Clock from our 1st District School from Chuck Fetter.

Motion carried 6-0

James Maughan arrived at 8:00 PM.

Mr. Kelliher moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded the approval of the appointment of Theresa Barclay to the Participant-Directed 403B Retirement Plan Committee.

Motion carried 7-0

Mr. Speck moved and Mr. Blowers seconded the approval of the recommendations from the Committee on Special Education.

Motion carried 7-0

Budget

– Superintendent Jim Schultz discussed his recommendations for the 2010-11 budget. He asked budget managers to attend the meeting to respond to Board members' questions about the impact of the proposed cuts. Jim also shared the results of the questions posed at the forum about the level of budget cuts that voters would support. The discussion was opened up for questions from the Board. Tim Kelliher asked what groups of students were used in determining the impact of the cuts. He would like to see some of the analysis about how cuts were determined. Were there objective measures used to arrive at these cuts – for example the student newspaper? Which of these cuts if any were made because of knowledge of pending retirements in the positions? Our first duty is to serve the students and looking at the easy way does not always get the desired result. Jim Schultz responded that we look at the retirements and replace those positions where student needs must be met. A question was asked about the SASI coordinator who will not be replaced and how will the duties be handled. The SASI duties will still be performed however they will be distributed among existing staff. Bob Speck is concerned about reductions in security positions due to recent events. He remarked about the wonderful job being done by our School Resource Officer and how much his presence has been felt. He has developed important relations with the students. High School Principal Maryellen Symer talked about how the program had been threatened in the past and the students responded by writing letters to have the SRO reinstated. Currently a proposal to locate the SRO's office at the high school and work from there is being explored. Mrs. Symer told Board members that teachers have been assigned to cover and security will continue to be a priority. They will continue to do everything to maintain a safe environment for the students. Elizabeth Herkenham recognized the effectiveness of the current K-12 alignment for curriculum and asked what will be the impact of losing one of the K-12 administrators? Jim Schultz described the K-12 and department head model with multiple departments as similar to Fine Arts /Music and CTE. What about the continuity with the loss of Teacher leaders? All pieces are being looked at – K-12, teacher leaders, curriculum representatives. Some will require bargaining. In this fiscal environment, how can we maintain the strength of this structure? Social Studies K-12 John Antoski offered his perspective about the loss of the teacher leader position, giving examples of the additional types of duties that he had to pick up. Eventually it impacts the amount of time that can be devoted to curriculum. English K-12 Lori Maloney spoke to how her role will change when she loses her teacher leader. The elimination of these positions will have a greater impact on the Middle School because they will no longer be represented as in the past. Math K-12 Bill McQuay assumed the role of the math teacher leader this year and he talked about the impact on the parent piece. Teacher leader duties include administrative duties, data analysis, student activities, and parent interaction. John Blowers wanted to know how many responses did we get back from the forum about the recommended cuts. He

wondered if field trips are eliminated, are there virtual field trips that we can substitute. Do these items go away or do we substitute another experience. There was some discussion about funding field trips, Middle School is self funded currently so they will not feel the impact of eliminating funds for field trips. James Maughan asked a question about the PACE program given that there is only one individual in that role, will this still be a viable program or will there be another way to address the needs of these students? PACE coordinator Carrie Sunkes responded that last year PACE took a .2 reduction and this cut is basically cutting her summer days in half. Summer days have been used to do the new entrant testing and students may not be placed at the start of school. Lori Maloney spoke to the Tier 3 cut to PACE 8 ELA and Carrie spoke to the Tier 4 cut which would require taking a whole new look at how the elementary PACE program would be delivered. We would not be able to have the delineated programs as we do currently. Patre Kuziak asked how many High School Math TA's are there and if they are eliminated how would students get that support? Math teachers will have to provide the additional support. Maryellen Symer has received student petitions in support of keeping this position. Patre asked about the cut to the Student Support TA and Middle School Principal Don Germain explained that in order for these students to receive support there would need to be some restructuring and ultimately less structured time for students. Elizabeth Herkenham asked staff to speak to concerns about increased class sizes. Ralph spoke to the challenge of capping class sizes at Kindergarten. Generally more influx occurs at Grade 1 because some students may attend full day kindergarten some other place and then come in at first grade. There was also some discussion about the impact of putting young students on transfer buses. Director of Special Services Sharon McTygue addressed questions pertaining to the needs of the students in the CDS program. It was split into two classes due to the number of students in K-2 and 3-5 programs. The numbers are down slightly for next year, thus the reduction. If we are relying on a variance from State Education Department, what's our fall back? Sharon believes that we will be able to meet the requirements of the variance with the way that we will address specific student needs. A limited number of students can be accommodated in the library labs and proposed reductions to staffing will severely limit accessibility for students. A concern expressed was that the library program will not be able to address 21st century skills as they do currently. John Capano reinforced that the library cuts will further impact computer labs. Tim Kelliher asked about the impact of frozen budget codes in the CTE and other programs and what are the capital assets being affected. Mike Danis responded that funding has been an issue due to frozen budgets for several years and how sustainable is this level? Repairs are being made now, however things are breaking and need to be addressed. Rie Posillico spoke to the student impact of having to replace very expensive equipment. They were hoping for high tech equipment and instead are buying replacement parts from ebay because the parts are so old. James Maughan asked if we know which courses will not be offered for next year. Maryellen said we will know student selections in mid to late March. They are exploring ideas to offer some electives every other year and not offer certain electives after looking at student course request numbers. They will concentrate first on what courses are needed for graduation. If an elective is cut, there is a ripple effect on staff that will need to be shifted into other areas. If students don't have a full schedule more students may have learning labs. Art program took a .4 cut last year and with this year's cuts it will total 2 positions and certain courses will not be offered. It would be difficult to shift a choral teacher to teach instrumental lessons. None of the CTE courses are mandated however Rie Posillico is concerned about a potential increase in dropouts for students that come to school just to take a particular course. She indicated that 87% of honors award recipients took at least one CTE course. Bill McQuay talked about the fact that not offering a fourth level math course puts students at a disadvantage when entering college. Athletic Director Bob McGuire spoke about the limited number of physical education staff having to reach all students. A question was raised about the safety of student supervision as we decrease staff. Currently we receive a large amount of alternative means of funding for athletics. Don Germain responded to a question about average class size in 6th grade which is about 22 currently and would likely increase 24 and require some restructuring. Reductions will impact teaming that is so effective now particularly in 6th grade. Much success is attributed to the transition programs that 6th graders experience and that structure may be impacted. High school cuts are across the board in various subject areas and adjustments to scheduling will be necessary. First they will be looking at the courses that are not required for graduation recognizing there will be an impact on the comprehensive program. The current proposal to reduce activity period is that just the transportation would be cut. This means fewer kids will be able to participate without transportation and that's the time when kids are able to get academic help. This will impact graduation as well as students who are staying after school for disciplinary reasons. Some of our neediest students will lose service. Will we still have non league competitions? Different funding may need to be explored. The .4 reduction in world language would put class size to 35 for 4th level of German which is a regents class. One of the proposals would eliminate the dean of student position entirely and questions were raised about its impact. Student intervention and prevention, and supervisory duties are all done by the dean position and would need to be picked up by others. A major role of the position is to take care of 504 students and that takes a lot of time to manage. Don Germain spoke about some other Tier IV cuts that would require major restructuring of master schedules, require more student supervision, and will result in an increase in shared teachers between buildings. This would create significant scheduling difficulties, increase travel time, and erode the program to a level that becomes compensatory instruction only. They worry that discipline issues will increase. At the high school level, Maryellen feels that Tier 4 cuts resulting in upper level language course reductions would negatively impact exchange programs and the elimination of the GED program would increase drop out numbers since it is an important option for special education students. It was recognized that Tier 4 offers a glimpse into next year's proposed reductions.

Lobby Letter

John Blowers recapped discussions at the legislative task force meeting. There was agreement with the position paper with two exceptions – special education and Triborough reform. Concerns about relief from special education mandates having an adverse effect upon that population were expressed. Should they focus more on the administrative portion of the legislation & mandates? Some board members feel all aspects should be addressed in the position paper. There were some proposed changes to the wording to make it less negative. The other area of concern is the Triborough Amendment reform since it creates a divisive component within schools and the intent is to distribute lobbying letters to many audiences for support. It is recognized that not everyone will support the position paper in its entirety. There was discussion about whether to keep it in, modify the language, or remove it altogether. Christy will revise the wording for #3. The next forum was scheduled for the East Glenville Fire Station which may not be large enough. She will explore finding another location, possibly the Middle School.

Reports & Communications

- Bob Speck has filed his Board petition.
- Elizabeth Herkenham reminded Board members that the SGO meeting is tomorrow and will be in the Red room at the High School. She asked Board members how do they want to proceed with conversations with the students and should they do a brief presentation of the budget and then give kids a chance to react? They want to allow for more dialogue with the students, but also they need to provide students with a balanced perspective from both sides of the community input. At the PTA meeting they announced the upcoming Shellstrong fundraiser in May,
- Patre Kuziak has been receiving feedback from staff that indicates they are willing to offer givebacks. She is hearing more concern about the level of cuts than holding to a zero tax levy. Rick Evans talked about the cohort graduation rates compiled by Christy and reported that BHBL tied for first place with one other suburban council district with a rate of 92%.
- John Blowers attended a meeting with Ballston Town Supervisor Patti Southworth along with Elizabeth Herkenham and Jim Schultz. They discussed shared services with the town and have scheduled to attend their next meeting. NYSSBA had a call for presenters and the recent BHBL budget forum is a great example of an effective public forum. So there is a proposal to present in October at their annual conference. Upcoming legislative task force activities include meeting with our legislators, letter writing campaign and phone calls.
- Jim Schultz asked for Board member input about his recommended budget proposals and the tier level cuts. He reported that the OM high school team won and our basketball won. He briefly mentioned the regents exam cost cutting proposal and asked if any Board members wish to attend the Commissioners Task force on cost savings.
- Joe Pericone attended the Middle School PTA where they discussed a lack of volunteers and the upcoming play, Cinderella. He spoke to the real estate agent about the Mauet property located next to Stevens and they are still not interested in allowing the house to be torn down.
- James Maughan mentioned recent articles in the news about schools being cited for not correctly maintaining overtime records. Another article that he shared was that New York was selected as one of the finalists in the Race to the Top.

Mr. Blowers moved and Ms. Herkenham seconded a motion to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline St. Onge
Clerk of the Board