

**Albany Unified School District  
Board of Education**

**Cornell Elementary School – Multi-Purpose Room  
901 Cornell Avenue  
Albany, California 94706**

**MINUTES OF:**

Special Meeting – Study Session  
February 23, 2009

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

President Calloway called the Special Meeting-Study Session of February 23, 2009 to order at 5:39 pm.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President Calloway, Member Rosenbaum, Member Walden, Member Low, Member Glasser

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** none

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** Superintendent Stephenson, Assistant Superintendent Harden, Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Director Special Education Diane Marie

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** none

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

The Board of Education & audience joined in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

With respect to the Agenda, no action was taken or conducted.

**STUDY SESSION:**

- A. 2008-09 Anticipated Mid-Year Cuts to District Budget
- B. 2009-10 Anticipated District Budget

Superintendent Stephenson reported that we do have a state budget. The good news is we have a glimmer of understanding about next year's budget – have more knowledge than we had a couple weeks ago

Assistant Superintendent Harden reported that the top thing everyone is excited about. State has allowed extensive flexibility with class size reduction. We will be able to maintain class size reduction in our district. We will have more unrestricted dollars, which also gives District flexibility.

Superintendent Stephenson reported a 13% reduction in the revenue limit over the next eighteen months. This will cause us to continue to look at up to \$2.2 million in reductions over next 18 months. She stated that the Board needs to look at the 2005 parcel tax and look at 2<sup>nd</sup> interim. We need to make cuts on today's knowledge not on

what we may think will happen in the future. The district has been able to remove class size reduction for grades K-3 from the reduction list.

Member Glasser stated it was somewhat good news. He asked for Board comments.

Member Rosenbaum stated that he went to the Alameda County Schools Association. It was incredibly frightening. Fremont is cutting \$25 million. Everyone is talking about similar to heavier cuts than AUSD. He will keep in touch with this group.

Member Walden presented her proposed budget cut list. She divided cuts into two groups, saving some cuts for next year. It is somewhat irrelevant as CSR is now off the table. There may be a possibility of holding some cuts to 2<sup>nd</sup> year of 3 year horizon and maintain required the reserve. District office/maintenance/secondary services-these are things that were added while Ms. Walden was on Board. Supplies and Instructional materials is the only thing not in that category. She said that 2<sup>nd</sup> priority are things we should not do but probably need to do. Let's look at 2005 parcel tax program then make decisions. We should lay off all FTE being supported by the 20065 parcel tax. The 3<sup>rd</sup> priority things we save until the second year. She Proposes to "Bite the Bullet – ASAP" 2<sup>nd</sup> would all be lay offs and make substitution in March. 3<sup>rd</sup> agree to cuts but only make them if we cannot come up with the money. This would set up a clear, thoughtful picture for voters.

Assistant Superintendent Harden reported that if all cuts are not made up front and the budget is redone in May, the District could be in a difficult position. It is better to be aggressive then rescind.

Superintendent Stephenson commented that class size reduction being off the table means that we will load at 21 or 22, which results in losing a number of teachers at elementary. This will allow us to break even and not contribute from the general fund.

Member Walden stated that there is a risk to the District. The State created a program that is killing us. If we load classes at 22, and a student comes in October we would be in trouble. Board should not toy with the state and should use class size reduction as intended.

Member Rosenbaum said we would not lose funding if extra students enrolled, that there are graduated penalties.

Member Low said it was nice to have good news for once. She thanked Member Walden for setting up a chart for everyone. She wants to hold quality of education in Albany. Given that we are in a recession and that there are a lot of unknowns, she feels that Miriam's suggestions are sound. Has a couple questions about safety issues and for the athletic director. She knows less about the high school schedule... if a student needs to fulfill their university credits and they have a period cut, how difficult will it be for the students to fulfill their requirements and will they be able to take visual and performing arts?

Superintendent Stephenson responded that it would be possible. Member Rosenbaum and Member Walden agreed. The Superintendent stated that Principal Barone feels that 240 graduation units could be fulfilled in 6 period day. The difficulty would be making up failed classes. Electives, mostly art/music/foreign language/psychology would be less available. It would still be student driven, but it would be based on number of requests.

Member Rosenbaum stated he would like to save as many course offerings as we can. He acknowledges the recession and not knowing where to come up with \$2.2 million dollars.

Member Walden said we need to keep in mind we are spending about \$2 million in parcel tax funding. We need to start a line by line comparison. It's easier to make decisions this way. The other thing is to put another parcel tax out there. The 2005 parcel tax passed by 116 votes out of nearly 9000. The previous parcel tax was passed by 30-60 votes. It is very difficult to pass a parcel tax.

Member Rosenbaum asked about the district obligation for maintaining what voters voted on.

Superintendent Stephenson discussed rebasing the 1987 parcel tax; going out in November by rebasing the parcel tax puts us in a position to have to go out the following year to renew the 2005 parcel tax. Perhaps we could expand and extend the 2005 parcel tax without having to go out to vote in 2011.

Member Walden explained that merging parcel taxes together would be good as payment is made per parcel tax. She said rebasing is a tax increase; voters are asked to bring parcel tax up to what it would be based on inflation. Merging the three and restructuring would bring seniors taxes down; everyone else's would go up. The problem is that it is big and complicated and puts all the apples in one basket.

Member Low asked that the public to have a chance to speak but would like athletic director to come up first as she has received emails in regard to student safety.

Member Glasser reminded the public that we need to make cuts as a Board or they will be made at county level and they will not be as thoughtful.

Member of the Public, Robert Rishe said we have an economy 15 trillion dollars at full tilt – now are 1.5 trillion below this. Even with Obama's stimulus package, we will only be half there. The assessment of where the economy was going is that it would bottom out in 2010. The State receives revenue from personal income taxes and sales tax. Both continue to decline. He thanked public for that support and for additional support such as SchoolCare. If measure passes in November when does the District receive the revenue?

Assistant Superintendent Harden stated it would be in January.

Member Low said she had questions about student safety. She said that she received email about supervision on fields that affected student safety.

Superintendent Stephenson said that the Board asked for the athletic budget. The Athletic Director is here to respond to questions that the Board may have.

Athletic Director Wanlin said she did not come prepared to speak but is happy to answer questions. She did not have the budget in front of her but she did put a lot of thought into it before she sent the email to all Board members.

Member Low stated that the AD is responsible for insuring that athletes are cleared by doctors. In past it was done by the secretary at HS but there were a lot problems. The AD also is responsible for assuring that all coaches are certified. Wanlin explained that the Personnel office is busy and overwhelmed so that job has fallen on her desk. She makes sure coaches and volunteer coaches are certified. She also makes sure fields and gyms are safe.

Member Low asked for an estimate of AHS students that participate in athletics. Wanlin stated 500.

Member Walden asked for clarification about Athletic budget. She asked about other ways to cut the budget without cutting the athletic director's salary. She stated that they might talk about cutting teams based on participation rates and asked for specifics for what the AD would prefer being cut.

Wanlin said she would never like to see sport programs cut. She said some programs have few students, but the program may be inexpensive to run. She stated that coaches said they would rather have a knowledgeable AD and do away with supply budget. They want to keep the transportation and tournament budget and officials. This year Wanlin said she worked under a slightly reduced budget.

Member Walden congratulated Kermit Bankston for reaching 400 dual meet wins as a coach. Mr. Glasser stated, "And you did not use steroids, right?"

Member Rosenbaum asked about safety regarding doing away with supplies. Wanlin said that would be covered under parcel tax money. Member Rosenbaum asked what would not be purchased.

Coach Bankston stated that valuable dollars are spent for students to learn athletics. Kids have opportunities to learn values in life. He feels that coaches have sucked it up and raised money in the past. He feels the logical thing is to get rid of the equipment budget. The program is going well and kids are benefiting.

Member Walden invited public comment.

Member of the public, Sara Leon, noticed that Richmond came forward and helped their District. Could we go to the city and ask for funds to tide us over? She suggested that this is the reason that people move to Albany; because of the schools.

Superintendent Stephenson said the city is very involved. The City is also experiencing severe cuts.

Member Walden said that we need to remember the school budget is 10 times the city budget, that they are generous, and that they are in budget difficulty.

Ms. Leon stated she is pleased to hear we are working with the city. What about out of district students. They do bring in money, but that is all we get out of them. Can they contribute in a way other than coming to the school?

Member Walden said she tells her students if you have to preface it "with it is not very nice" than you probably should not ask it. Money we get from the revenue limit is quite a bit larger than money we get from parcel taxes.

Leon said that she asked because she is tired about hearing about people giving false addresses.

Member of the public, Elizabeth Allen, said the community value is shown in money put into music program. She would like to focus on the 7 period day cut and what it would do to program. It would devastate art and music. The music program at the high school has been one of the things that has kept property taxes high. Albany Music Fund is here to support music and cannot support it if it not there. She does not know of other things to cut.

Member Walden said the priority is maintaining the feeder program in music. If music is cut for a few years, it can return to a great program fairly directly if we keep the feeder system open. The programs will flourish again, albeit with suffering. She asked for input as what would give less impact as cuts do need to be made.

Ms. Allen said that she wants to be clear that cutting seventh period would be harmful to music. The impact would happen almost immediately.

Member Rosenbaum said he has watched music program. The top performers motivate the young students to become involved.

Ms. Allen asked what would be cut. Mr. Rosenbaum mentioned the AP program. Ms. Allen said that district owes it the high school students to get them into college.

Member Rosenbaum said that we need to ask for input on what can be cut in its place.

Teacher Robin Blum said that she has written a letter to clarify where the funding for the reading specialists come from. Reading specialist is first line of defense. Cornell and OV receive Title I funding but Marin does not qualify though they have equal students with needs. There has been push for equal access for student support. She does not have ideas for cuts but knows reading is an important program.

Member Walden stated that she has heard the equity issue and is a separate issue. She said "Where is first line of defense?" She would have thought it was para-educator support. Should reading specialists be favored over para-educators?

Ms. Blum said that is a question she would like to ask her staff about. Teachers can take groups of kids outside the classroom and really make gains; however paras only provide in-class support. Ms. Blum will email Board with her response.

The Superintendent reminded the Board that the general fund does not support reading specialists. SchoolCare provides .4 FTE at each school. Title 1 provides .3 at Cornell and .7 at OceanView.

Network Administrator Steven Piercy stated he empathized with everyone having to make budget cuts. He is concerned that technology and computing systems will suffer greatly without a skilled and knowledgeable computer persons. He is concerned that the district would put itself back nine years. He stated that he is not fighting for his job. He said his salary looks huge – great amount is cost to district. He is looking at the numbers and where we are as a technology department and how far we have come in last three years He feels there is possibility to make different cuts.

Member Walden said that these are really good thoughts but they seem personal Bring a proposal to Marla and she could bring it to closed session. If she wants to bring it to the Board and recommend parts of it, he could be asked to closed session. In view of the law, we cannot negotiate in public and the administration cannot respond.

Liz Avery, Marin teacher asked how does cutting the 7<sup>th</sup> period at the middle school affect things.

Superintendent Stephenson said that the middle school is not credit based so a seven period day is a luxury that will be difficult to give up but will not affect the core program quality.

Member of the public, Dave Rider, thanked the Board for service to the community. He Encouraged employees to seek benefits through spouses/partners. In an environment where a lot of people are being laid off, reach out in a concerted and focused way for volunteers. What can we do that we have not tried to increase the revenue? As parent, he donates time. What are the best practices in fund raising? What makes Albany unique? Is there relationship between UC and the district? Some districts have addressed financial issues by expanding use of facilities during in the summer. Rent to others or offer classes that cannot be offered during school year.

Assistant Superintendent Harden explained the county office does not recognize fund raising as on-going revenue. We cannot use it as solid dollars for budgeting purposes.

Member of the Public, Barbara Gradear, would be in favor of a parcel tax but it would not save things this year. SchoolCare has helped. It might be able to help not cut the 7<sup>th</sup> period.

Carol Myer, Marin parent, stated that the parcel tax – besides being difficult to get it into a special election, would it not increase the funding sooner.

Member Walden said the cost is between \$50-70,000 for a special election even if we lose. It could not be well written in a week.

Ms. Myer asked what about outreach to alums? Could we tap into folks who have gone onto college and what about their parents? Could Albany open schools up to summer camp programs?

Member Low referred to a social networking seminar that is upcoming. It might be a venue for reaching out to alums.

Ms. Myer asked about school lunches. As it is not a profit maker, should price be raised or should lunches be offered on fewer days? It is the districts' responsibility to educate her student and her responsibility to feed them.

Member Walden said the district needed to offer school lunches 5 days a week under federal law.

Gabriella Kramer, Marin parent had a fundraising idea. She said to connect with folks who do the Solano Stroll. There are a huge number of people there.

Belinda Lesser, Marin parent, seconded Mr. Rider's comments regarding parent volunteers. She has three teaching credentials but is a single parent. If there was a barter system, she could help. She has background in non-profits. A lot of parents have fundraising/grant writing experience

Member Walden said the number one best fund raising thing in the state is the state. They have not increased taxes for the top income earners or increased the car tax, or cut business loopholes. The state government refuses to do it. She said to write the governor to increase taxes and taxes to rich people.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

With no objections from the Board, President Calloway adjourned the meeting at 7:33 P.M.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

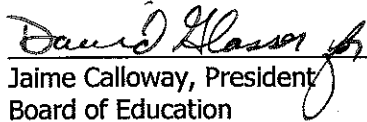
- A. Enrichment Task Force
- B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Interim Report

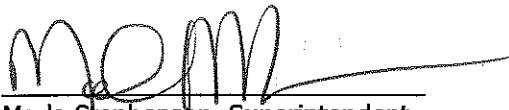
March  
March

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| C. Parks & Recreation Report  | March |
| D. Reallocation of 2005 Parcel Tax                                  | April |
| E. Albany Children's Center Report                                  | April |
| F. Increase of 1987,1999, 2005 parcel Tax Rate                      | June  |
| G. Consolidated Application Part I for Funding Categorical Programs | June  |

**FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS**

- A. Tuesday, February 24, 2009 7:30 p.m., Regular Meeting, *Cornell Elementary School, 901 Cornell Elementary School,*
- B. Tuesday, March 3, 2009 7:30 p.m., Regular Meeting, Albany Community Center, 1249 Marin Avenue, Albany
- C. Tuesday, March 10, 2009 7:30 p.m., Regular Meeting, *Cornell Elementary School, 901 Cornell Elementary School,*
- D. Tuesday, March 17, 2009 7:30 p.m., Regular Meeting, Albany Community Center, 1249 Marin Avenue, Albany
- E. Tuesday, April 14, 2009 7:30 p.m., Regular Meeting, *Cornell Elementary School, 901 Cornell Elementary School,*
- F. Tuesday, April 28, 2009 7:30 p.m., Regular Meeting, *Cornell Elementary School, 901 Cornell Elementary School,*

  
 Jaime Calloway, President  
 Board of Education

  
 Marla Stephenson, Superintendent  
 Secretary, Board of Education