

CITY OF ALBANY
JOINT MEETING OF ALBANY CITY COUNCIL
and
GREATER ALBANY PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD
Council Chambers
Monday, February 16, 2009
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sharon Konopa called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Councilors present: Councilors Ralph Reid Jr., Bill Coburn, Jeff Christman, Bessie Johnson, Dick Olsen, and Floyd Collins

School Board members present: Superintendent Maria Delapoer, Director Liisa Reid, Director Frank Bricker, Chair Don Bacher, Director Tom Sramek, and Vice Chair Sandi Gordon

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INTRODUCTIONS

Konopa asked members of the Albany City Council to introduce themselves.

Chair Don Bacher asked members of the Greater Albany Public Schools (GAPS) Board to introduce themselves.

City Manager Wes Hare introduced Public Information Officer/Management Assistant Marilyn Smith, Community Development Director Greg Byrne, City Attorney Jim Delapoer, and Deputy City Clerk Mary Dibble.

Assistant Superintendent Steve Kunke, Human Resources Director Randy Lary, Director of Business and Operations Russ Allen, and Student Services Coordinator Wayne Goates were in the audience.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no business from the public.

REPORTS

Urban Renewal

Hare said that urban renewal districts (URDs) are used in areas where there is little annual tax increase. URDs cure blight and accelerate the rate of revenues. Albany is seeing an increase in assessed value with their URD. The rate within the district over the last five years has increased three times the rate outside of the district. Albany's URD has been assisting businesses and homeowners with improvements and new construction and is functioning at a high level. Hare described some current projects.

Hare said the Central Albany Revitalization Agency (CARA) has recently focused on rehab housing, particularly in historical areas such as the Hackleman District. When the area is returned to the tax rolls, they will have realized a higher return on our investment compared to having done nothing. The debt will be retired after about 20 years following the inception of CARA.

Vice Chair Sandi Gordon asked, how does CARA determine how much each project receives? Hare said there is a set of criteria for participation in the project. For example, the amount the property owner already has personally invested is evaluated because a goal of CARA funds is to be the "missing piece." This policy minimizes the public investment and maximizes the private investment. The amount granted or loaned varies from project to project. The property owner makes the request, and the final amount is often adjusted from that, based on how much funding is available or how much the CARA Board feels is appropriate for the particular project.

Konopa said the CARA Board also considers how many years before Albany would see a return on the investment. Konopa said that Urban Renewal Manager Kate Porsche works very well with the applicants.

Hare said Oregon communities that do not have URDs subsidize those that do. The dollars the School District loses is made up by the state. Some argue that the amount the state uses to subsidize diminishes the schools, but a compelling argument is that it is money the School District probably wouldn't have received anyway if the area remained blighted.

Student enrollment

Goates gave a Power Point presentation titled “Enrollment Overview” (see agenda file).
Byrne gave a Power Point presentation regarding building permit activity (see agenda file).

Byrne distributed a map titled “Subdivision Activity” (see agenda file) and a document titled “SB 336 Coordination Responsibilities (see agenda file).

Councilor Bessie Johnson asked for an update on the boundary changes. Goates said currently West Albany has more students than South Albany, but in about five years the two high schools should be about equal. However, both high schools will soon exceed capacity. Both North Albany Elementary and Middle School, as well as Fairmount School, do have space so there is future capacity for elementary and middle schools.

Councilor Floyd Collins asked, when is it decided there is a need for a third high school? Goates said a high school would cost a minimum of \$40 million. There hasn’t been much discussion about it because there just isn’t any money available now. The capacity is 29 students per classroom and we will exceed that capacity. Director Liisa Reid said both high schools are undersized by today’s standards.

Collins suggested that the School District at least purchase a piece of land for a future high school so the City can support the infrastructure.

Gordon said an option is to have more online classes for students. The District hopes to adopt distance learning centers, similar to what is available in a college setting. Director Reid cautioned that online classes will not negate the need for new facilities. Online classes only reach a segment of the population and the classes that can be delivered effectively online are limited.

Councilor Dick Olsen asked, when does the sports program move from 5A to 6A in the league? Goates said the threshold is 1,500 students.

Safe Routes to School

Hare said he was in New Mexico last month to talk about school districts and city partnerships. He gave a Power Point presentation titled “School District & City Partnerships” (see agenda file).

Hare described the Gibson Hill path, which is included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). There is a meeting tomorrow at 4:00 p.m., at Oak School, to discuss the elements of the Safe Routes to School program. Safe Routes is also a response to the epidemic of childhood obesity.

Hare said, it is gratifying to work with the School Board staff. He considers them friends and colleagues and is encouraged that the City and the School Board has been able to work through issues. Not all school districts and cities have such a cooperative relationships; so he is grateful.

Superintendent Maria Delapoer said the School District has many partnerships that are beneficial to students and expand opportunities outside of the classroom. Examples are community service projects, park cleanups, natural resources, environmental and water conservation education, business-school partnerships, career development, school resource officers from the Albany Police Department and the Albany Fire Department, DARE, gun and internet safety programs, afterschool clubs, sharing buildings and fields with the City Parks & Recreation activities, sharing the pools, Super Science Saturdays, Summer Reading programs, and other Library activities such as the penny drive and shared meeting and tutoring spaces. All provide opportunities that GAPS cannot provide on their own. These opportunities develop students as future citizens and caretakers of our community.

Konopa commented that when school boundaries are changed it can impact safe routes to school, such as what happened with the Periwinkle Creek path.

Collins said he and Johnson are in Kiwanis, and have seen leadership groups coming out of West Albany and South Albany High School. The students have taken the club to heart and over 50 kids attend routinely, in all kinds of community activities. He suggested that recognition should be given to the students and the teachers. They are future leaders. This second group was formed because the Leadership Group had already reached capacity.

Director Reid said, Key Club mentors deserve recognition as well. Her Key Club mentor was an important person in her life.

Bond projects

Allen gave a Power Point presentation titled “GAPS Construction Update” (see agenda file). He noted that the new Timber Ridge School includes a partnership with the Albany Boys & Girls Club (Club). The Club was looking for a satellite location, and made a \$1 million donation to increase their 7,000 square foot gym to 8,800 square feet, in exchange for space reserved for the Club in the school.

Konopa asked, with possible cuts to GAPS staff, what will happen to the new Timber Ridge School? Allen said schools are funded on a per student basis. The new facility will bring challenges, but due more so to the facility and

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grounds than students. They will need to add some additional classified staff such as secretaries, aides, and custodians, but the teachers will simply be reassigned. The ratio for students to teachers will have to increase to react to reduced state school funding.

Konopa asked, does the new school implement “green” energy? Allen said the budget drove the decisions. It was decided not to try to get LEEDS certification, but they also wanted to be as energy efficient and as low maintenance as they could afford. They will be providing information in the future about how close they would have been to the LEEDS certification, had money not been an issue.

Director Tom Sramek said students will be phased in; for example, the seventh and eighth grade classrooms will not be used in the 2009-10 school year.

BUSINESS FROM THE COUNCIL AND THE BOARD

Director Reid distributed a letter to the Mayor and Council members (see agenda file). She described dramatic budget cuts and the urgent need for additional funding, as explained in the letter. The legislature will be making a decision regarding the use of the Oregon Education Stability Fund in the next few days. She asked the Council to lend their voice to this issue. She provided testimony at the Joint Ways and Means Committee and was advised that the Council should contact the leadership on the Committee before Friday of this week. Reid said GAPS needs to know if they will get those funds or not, because it is hurting their ability to budget for next year. The contact information is in the letter. Reid said, cities bear the cost by police and other services when kids are out of school extra weeks. She appreciates the Council’s help.

Delapoer said on Friday, GAPS sent out 206 potential layoff notices to staff. The funding issue is critical.

MOTION: Olsen moved to have Konopa prepare a letter to the Governor, Senate President, House Speaker, and Committee Chairs for Education, Revenue, and Joint Ways and Means Committees, on behalf of the Albany City Council in support of using the Education Stability Fund to fill the gap for the current biennium. Councilor Bill Coburn seconded the motion and it passed 6-0.

Olsen distributed an article from the National Trust for Historic Preservation from www.PreservationNation.org (see agenda file). Page 2 shows the environmental cost of destroying a building and constructing a new one. Construction of a 50,000 square foot building is comparable to driving a car 112 times around the earth. Restoration rather than new construction is encouraged. Olsen feels good about what CARA is doing.

Olsen said, replacing windows in older buildings is not always efficient. He said that four summers ago, Central School’s windows at the basement level were painted and Olsen was told they would be doing the other floors the next summer. It hasn’t happened, and he heard a rumor that GAPS is waiting for the windows to fall apart and replace them with energy efficient windows. He is glad to hear there is some extra money from the bond, and asked if GAPS plans to finish the paint job at Central School. Allen is not sure, though he did not hear the rumor that they are waiting for the windows to fail. He will get more information to Olsen. Director Reid noted that there are restrictions on what the bond money can be spent for, and this may not qualify. Sramek said, considering \$500,000 was used from bond proceeds for a seismic analysis of Central School, allowing the windows to simply fail is not likely. So far 75% of the bond has been spent, and 25% has been earmarked for future projects.

Gordon said it was brought to her attention that students who do not live in the City boundaries have to pay a considerable fee for a Library card. She would like the City to consider giving GAPS students that live outside the limits the same privileges as those in the City limits. There are many young families that cannot afford the \$60 fee. Hare said there is a scholarship program for Library cards and they have given cards out liberally. If Gordon knows of families that have been turned down for the scholarship, Hare asked her to let him know. Olsen added that he sees such requests at the Carnegie Library on a regular basis and cards are granted if the requestor can show need.

Sramek said that he and Bacher will not be running again for the School Board. Their term ends in June. They appreciate the opportunity to have served and the unique partnership the Board has with the City. Gordon agreed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the Work Session adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary A. Dibble, MMC
Deputy City Clerk

Reviewed by,

Stewart Taylor
Finance Director