

A Special Meeting of the Albemarle County School Board was held on September 8, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. in the Monticello High School Forum, 1400 Independence Way, Charlottesville, VA 22902.

PRESENT: Mrs. Diantha McKeel; Mr. Ronnie Price; Mr. Steve Koleszar; Mrs. Barbara Massie Mouly; Mr. Eric Strucko; and Mrs. Pamela Moynihan.

ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Mrs. Jennifer Johnston, Clerk.

Call to Order

At 5:06 p.m., Mr. Price called the meeting to order.

School Board Applicant Presentations

Jim Stern said that a tax increase is unlikely and the division needs to prepare for less revenue and stagnant budgets for 5 years. The school division is still meeting challenges even with decreased funding. "Future budgets will be tight and we have a flourishing school system that cannot be allowed to enter a period of decline." Professional development must stay a priority. Communication must improve. The division must continue to meet mandates and fulfill requirements. He spoke to the Board about the volunteering that he does within the division. He also spoke about his work experience at Bed, Bath and Beyond, and how it has prepared him to be a Board member. He said that the At-Large position needs to be filled with someone that is able to demonstrate stewardship of our students and of other people's money. He then indicated that he will be running for the school board in the next election cycle. Full presentation is on file in the School Board Office.

Maurice Lipper believes that we must close the achievement gap to improve the education of students in Albemarle County. There needs to be district and local collaboration to develop understanding of challenges and to develop a set of goals to work towards. There needs to be district and school collaboration to increase the capacity to ensure school level success. Family and community partnerships are important. The division should look to create schedules that allow students to thrive in higher level courses. Discipline is an issue in the division. He spoke about how many teachers say that they spend a lot of time disciplining students. He noted that he had considered running for the school board in the past but did not have the time. He now has the time to do the work. He spoke about the local boards that he has served on in the past. He feels that his experience in his professional life would be beneficial to the Board. He noted that he would visit each school at least once a week as the At-Large Board member. He noted that budgeting should be a year round activity with scheduled meetings held throughout the year. Priorities need to be established and funded. He noted that the division and its staff need to work apply for grants to allow for additional funding. Full presentation is on file in the School Board Office.

Carmen Garcia said that she is an active volunteer in the schools. She is able to help forge new alliances and compromises to move issues forward and leave differences aside without losing sight of the goal. She was motivated to apply to serve because she feels that it is her responsibility to society. Society is only as strong as its public schools. Our schools need to raise the bar in order to be competitive in a global economy – establishing higher curriculum standards, creating a consistent and reliable teacher evaluation and support system, improving parental involvement, and increasing the quality of communication between parents, teachers, students, and administrators. We need to have good, skilled and passionate teachers but also a fair evaluation system. She feels that the division needs to use resources where they mean the most. She noted that her decisions if placed in the At-Large position will "always be informed by the aspects that I think provide the best academic and social experience for the children, and therefore the rest of the community." Full presentation is on file in the School Board Office.

Harley Miles said that one of the biggest challenges before the division is preparing students for jobs that have not been imagined yet. He noted that school divisions do not need to sacrifice one set on needs to acquire the latest technologies and equipment. "An effective teacher will be effective whether she uses a chalkboard or a smart-board. It does mean however that teachers should be well versed in approaches to pedagogy to enable them to

address the learning needs of the students they serve today and the students they will serve tomorrow. ” The most valuable resources are our teachers. Thoughtful, focused, and directed professional development is key to having quality teachers. He feels that there is never enough funding for public education. He noted that the budget has three areas of demand – requirements, needs, and desires. He also noted that he believes in the election process. He does not plan on running for this seat in the election but is willing to serve in the interim.

Martha Redinger said that she sees a decline in mutual respect and civility across society. Focus on respect is the most important key to success and motivation. She spoke to the Board about school climate. She is interested in maintaining the best public schools in the state. Funding for schools is a local issue. We must drive the point that most funding is spent on salaries and benefits and teachers are not paid enough. She also spoke about areas to look for cost savings – student transfers to City Schools; privatizing transportation; high school libraries; technology (do we really need all that we have). She indicated that we need to better lobby our state and federal legislators as well as to think outside the box. Full presentation is on file in the School Board Office.

John Dawson said that the key to student performance is retaining and hiring top quality teachers. We do that by making sure that to the largest extent possible resources are directed to the classroom both in teacher salaries and support. He was motivated to apply for the school board because he was raised to contribute back to the community and has served as Chairman of the Children and Youth Commission, YMCA treasurer, Key West Club board of directors, Albemarle County Republican Committee Chairman, 58th Republican legislative district chairman, and Charlottesville Rotary Club whose motto is “service above self”. He believes there is a balance between giving the schools a blank check (1:1 is not going to happen) and draconian cuts. There is also a balance between a reasonable tax rate and how much funds are allocated to the division. Both a quality educational system and reasonable tax rates are necessary for a healthy business environment. He believes that when both groups are convinced that we have trimmed all the fat and are now cutting meat and bone, both the Board of Supervisors and the public will step forward to make sure we continue to provide a top quality education for our children.

Robert “Bob” Beard feels that to improve education/student performance in the division we need to retain and attract the most qualified, compassionate and effective teachers - teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Teachers who care, matter. He would like to find a way once the economy recovers to reward teachers and classified staff with raises. Parental involvement is important. He wants to ensure that all kids are not short changed by public schools. He would like to keep academic standards high and teachers/staff motivated to be the best. He supports fully funding public education, and cuts should stay as far away from the classroom as possible. He said that we need to better educate the Board of Supervisors on the division. Full presentation on file in the School Board Office.

Ned Gallaway said that the key to improving student achievement is staying true to the vision and mission of the division – which this board is doing. He provided some examples from previous board members. He loves learning and that is why he applied for the position. He also loves helping others learn. He could provide some recommendations for improving communications regarding the budget. He said that he has some suggestions for doing some things we currently do but for less. It is the Board’s responsibility to effectively, proactively, and transparently communicate to the community and the Board of Supervisors how funds have been spent and why funds are being requested for future spending in order to accomplish the division’s goals. Full presentation is on file in the School Board Office.

Steve Norum graduated from Monticello High School and is currently a fourth-year student at the University of Virginia. He thinks that his experience as a student in Albemarle County Schools and his work as an educator since provide him with a unique perspective on the school system. Schools alone do not create successful students. Successful students are the products of environments that value learning. In order to improve student achievement we need to engage all parts of the community. We need to make the teaching environment as welcoming as possible. We need to work with parents to help them support their children. We need to show people that greater success in education will lead to greater success for the county and country. Taxpayers need to see the good that comes from the education they are funding. We need to work with the Board of Supervisors to increase the funding coming from the County. He also spoke about the revenue sharing agreement with the City. He said that we need to find ways to lower costs without hurting the learning environment. Full presentation is on file in the School Board Office.

Jason Buyaki has attended various meetings in the past year. He wanted to be involved in his children's education so he became an active member of the Stony Point PTO and now serves as the Parent Council representative for Stony Point. He has a wider understanding of the challenges that are facing the division. Good teachers challenge students. Education is freedom. We need to retain good educators in the classroom. We need to reward them when we can and remove bad teachers immediately. One challenge in funding for schools is communication with the Board of Supervisors. There should be constant dialogue about the challenges the division is facing and the decisions that are going to have to be made. We need to show the Board of Supervisors the good that the division is doing.

Patrick Wood is a teacher in Fluvanna and a graduate of Albemarle High School. One-on-one remediation is important in K-2 in reading and mathematics that are below grade level; 3 – 5 grade students in reading and mathematics whose scores fall below 400. He spoke to the Board about the research of Dr. Marzano. He was motivated to apply because: 1) he has a great passion for learning and the facilitation of instruction, 2) to be in a position to help others aspire, seek and attain through great perseverance and tenacity in making student's dreams come to fruition, 3) to equitably fund the school system's programs, new initiatives, and help create a new pay scale commensurate to the work performed to the community; 4) to have a teacher on the board who actually works in the threshold of a classroom on a daily basis, someone who understands all facets of the educational process and can commiserate with colleagues; 5) so he can work with the community in bringing greater understanding of their role in "being the change they wish to see". He said that he is in favor of school boards having the right to tax its constituency for the purpose of creating sustainable programs, curricula, new technology and education in its broadest spectrum that promotes 21st century skills. He would like to work with the Board of Supervisors to cultivate an environment of educational enlightenment where the funding of our schools is brought to the forefront of our budgetary concerns. Full presentation is on file in the School Board Office.

Richard Goodin thinks the key to improving education is by providing a knowledgeable and skilled workforce who can actively engage all students. We need to establish learning objectives and makes plans to meet objectives. We need to identify those who are struggling. He supports the direction of current administration and Board. We need to support the efforts of educators. Positive schools should exist throughout the county. Good education is good foundation for having choice. We need to engage all aspects of the community to make sure children do not fall behind in reading. He has a general appreciation for various points of view. It is the obligation of the school board to prepare a funding request that represents the needs to the division. We must be good stewards while maintaining quality education.

Tom Hecmanczuk said that the vision and goals are critical in improving education. He could bring energy to those goals and the vision. He believes in checking on progress towards meeting our goals. His interaction with Dr. Moran last year brought him to apply. Funding is a challenge but it is not the only answer. Budget challenges have cause for re-evaluation of many things. We need to make sure we spend each dollar efficiently and challenge and check on what we are currently doing. We should compare the per pupil expenditures against other systems in the state – and that should help form our funding. We need to continue to innovate ways for parents to be involved and take ownership in the educational process. Sharing best practices is important and effective – should continue to support these efforts. He feels that the individual selected should have children in the division.

Adjournment.

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Strucko offered a **motion** to adjourn the meeting of the Albemarle County School Board. Mrs. McKeel **seconded** the motion, **and the motion passed.**

Chairman

Clerk