

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a District Meeting on Monday, May 7, 2012 at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Fulton, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Renninghoff. Also present: Mrs. Viccaro, Mrs. Mangini.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 8:02 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Hicks read the call of the meeting and the return of the call.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Parmelee, Maryann Boord was elected as the moderator.

Mr. Hennick explained that there would be a brief presentation but that the Board had no power or authority to change anything tonight.

Mr. Hennick explained that the proposed gross budget is increasing by 3.43% and the net increase is 3.27%. He showed what the assessments will be for the two towns and explained that Durham's proportionate share will be increasing by .45%. Mr. Hennick reviewed the budget summary and also showed the percentage of expenses by category. The salaries and benefits categories account for 57% and 18% respectively. Finally, Mr. Hennick discussed the major initiatives for the 2012-2013 school year; they include emphasis on the common core standards, implementation of all day kindergarten, the addition of literacy and math tutors, further implementation of the technology plan and a new District website.

Mrs. Boord opened the floor to questions.

Debbie Golschneider, a Durham resident and past Board of Education member thanked the Board for their work on this budget. She supports all day kindergarten and said the Board has wanted to implement it for a long time. She feels it is wise to implement it on our own terms before the State mandates it. It is not glorified daycare; the kids have to know an amazing amount of information by the time they leave kindergarten. Mrs. Golschneider questioned new Board member Jeremy Renninghoff as to whether he has found the millions of dollars that the Board has been hiding.

Mr. Renninghoff said he doesn't owe an apology for scrutinizing the budget. He still feels there are things there (in the budget) and money that does not need to be spent. Just because he is on the Board, it doesn't mean he doesn't still have reservations.

Rick Parmelee of Durham is still concerned about the number of four wheel drive vehicles that the District owns. We should not be competing with the private sector. Mr. Parmelee asked why the Devil's Advocate is not labeled as paid for by the school district. Mr. Hennick said he will look into it. Mr. Hennick asked if there are any changes in the terms for the use of school facilities. Mrs. Viccaro said there have been no changes. Mr. Parmelee questioned whether the District is expecting anything from the town in terms of snow removal or sanding. Mrs. Viccaro said we have our own contractors. Mr. Parmelee continues to voice his opposition to activity fees. Mr. Hennick said the Board has struggled with these fees since they were implemented in 2003. They are being discussed further by the Finance Sub-Committee at their meeting this week. Mr. Parmelee is glad to hear that more information will be available to the public on the new website. He felt the public hearing was very informative. It is important to go over the budget in depth with the public. It is their only chance to participate in the process. Mr. Parmelee said the money being used to fund all-day kindergarten could have been used to pay for the facility that the Board has committed to build. There is not enough scrutiny.

Teresa Opalacz of Durham thanked the Board for this budget. She thinks they have been very proactive in developing this budget. She disagrees with Mr. Parmelee regarding the funding of activity fees. They came about when programs were being considered as potential cuts. Parents were ok with the idea of saving taxpayers money as long as their children can still participate in the activities. She feels most parents view it as a privilege and are willing to pay for it.

Dave Montgomery of Durham is concerned about support for CABE because of some of the things that they support. Regarding the Common Core, he asked how much of the budget is going directly into the classroom for the students benefit. Mr. Hennick said the Board is not a member of CABE. Mr. Hennick said there have been many presentations and conversations regarding the Common Core. Mrs. Viccaro said the math and literacy tutors will be providing direct student contact. Mrs. Adams said our professional development activities also have a direct student benefit by giving the teachers time to learn and understand the topics. Mr. Montgomery feels that educators want to take over our kids. The value system concerns him and other parents. Kids learn by watching what adults do. He feels there is a misunderstanding in the community about the cost of all day kindergarten. Just because the money was found in this budget to fund the program, it does not make it free money. The ongoing costs will be about \$150,000 per year based on this budget but that amount will continue to increase. He is concerned about the true cost of this decision. He does not want to give CABE money; they are not unbiased. Mr. Hennick repeated that the Board is not a member of CABE and there is no money in this budget for CABE.

Mr. Palmieri, a resident, asked for a clarification on the cost allocation between Durham and Middlefield and the impact to the mil rate. Mr. Renninghoff explained that even though the enrollments have gone down in both towns from 2010 to 2011, the percentage drop is more significant in Middlefield and that has shifted the proportionate share to a slight increase for Durham.

Kevin Bjarnason, a student at Coginchaug is concerned about the cuts to the special education budget and asked why it was cut so much. Mrs. Viccaro said a substantial cut was made for tuition for out of district placements as we have been able to service more special education students in-house.

On a motion by Mrs. Golschneider, second Mr. Montgomery, the District Meeting adjourned at 8:48pm.

Susan Gaudreau