

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education held a District Meeting on May 1, 2017 at 8:00 PM in the Julian Thayer Auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut. Board members present: Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Renninghoff.

Board members absent: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools and Mr. Russell, Interim Business Manager.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

District Hearing

Mr. Hicks read the call to the meeting, warning of district meeting and return of the call into the record.

Dr. Veronesi gave a brief introduction of the budget.

Mr. Moore thanked Dr. Veronesi and the administrators of the schools for their help with the budget. He reviewed that the two biggest items in the budget are increases in salaries by \$465,000 and benefits by about \$60,000. Purchased services is down, buildings and grounds is up slightly and operating services is up.

Mr. Hicks reminded Mr. Moore that a moderator should be elected before going through the budget.

Mr. Hicks nominated Jim Finley to be the moderator. Nomination passed unanimously.

The moderator turned the meeting back to Mr. Moore to finish his presentation. Mr. Moore continued to go through the budget, pointing out that supplies is down. Capital costs are down as well. Dues and fees is up slightly. In summary, total expenditures are up \$432,000 or 1.18 percent.

Mr. Moore then showed a pie chart of the expenses. Moving to receipts, he reviewed the variety of income that the District receives. The biggest increase is in in-house tuition which is made up mostly by the pay-to-participate fees and the fund balance carryover. There has been a great debate over whether or not special education excess cost reimbursement from the State will continue. The Board of Ed has agreed, with both Boards of Finance, that any excess reimbursement would be distributed back to the towns. As of today, there has been no decision made on this issue. He summarized that estimated receipts look to be down about 10 percent.

Mr. Moore reviewed the final net budget of about \$35,479,694, which is a 1.82 percent increase over last year. He noted that Middlefield's school population has decreased a bit and the increases in the budget are primarily shared by Durham, with a net budget increase of \$776,000 and Middlefield's share went down by \$269,000.

Mr. Moore then summarized that the budget has stayed pretty much the same over the last four or five years and turned the meeting back over to Jim Finley.

Mary Ann O'Brien, from Durham, explained that she has lived in town since 1968. She wanted to know why this meeting wasn't more widely publicized with a sign on the town green. Mr. Moore did not know why there was no sign on the green, but explained that they had held a public hearing when it was announced. He also mentioned that the Board had separate meetings on different budget items this year that were very well-attended. Ms. O'Brien commented that, in the past, the auditorium was overflowing at this type of meeting and she wondered if people simply don't care, have given up making their opinions known or just decided that the budget is just going to go up. She recalled hearing that there may be a 5 mill increase in Durham's taxes this year and she doesn't understand why people aren't in up arms about that.

Mrs. Boyle also commented that the Board members do receive a lot of emails from people addressing their concerns and it may not mean that people don't care by not attending tonight's meeting.

Richard Parmelee, from Durham, feels that everyone should also identify themselves as a voter since there has been an influx of people into this country that don't belong here. He thanked the Board for bringing the budget to referendum. He feels that the problem with the budget every year is that the voters vote on a budget based on projected revenues from the State of Connecticut which may or may not be forthcoming. He mentioned that businesses are leaving the State and over 500 people a week are leaving as well. Mr. Parmelee feels that activity fees have no place in a public school system and all students should have an equal opportunity to participate. He also mentioned the football program and the co-op with Hale Ray. Mr. Parmelee feels that it's time to let the football program go. Mr. Parmelee stated that the District can't keep spending money that they don't have. He was not happy to read that the Board of Finance was pigeon-holed to a small spot on the agenda at the Board of Ed meeting. Mr. Parmelee feels that the school system consumes too much of the towns' resources and is not very accountable nor accessible. He also spoke about the availability of marijuana in Connecticut as well as manufacturing. He does not feel that the state needs more gambling or more drugs.

The moderator asked Mr. Parmelee to keep his comments or questions to the school budget and Mr. Parmelee explained that the school budget is based on revenue from the state and is particularly vulnerable this year and he considers his comments relevant.

There were no other questions or comments. Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to adjourn to the referendum for the people to have their say.

Board members in favor of adjourning to referendum: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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Alwaz First