

Revised

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, April 10, 2019 at 7:30 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, Durham, Connecticut.

Board members present: Mr. Augur (arrived late), Mrs. Caramanello (arrived late), Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella (arrived late) Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino.

Board members absent: Dr. Taylor

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Business Manager.

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hicks asked to delete item 13, Engagement Survey, and to add item 14, Possible executive session regarding discussion and strategy in negotiations with respect to pending litigation related to charge filed by the Regional District 13 Educators' Association, Middlesex County, with the State Board of Labor Relations.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, to amend the agenda as above.

Mr. Yamartino confirmed that the Board cannot take any action regarding the Executive Session as it wasn't noticed. Mr. Hicks felt that there may not be any action. It was also mentioned that a two-thirds vote is required to go into Executive Session.

In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Donia Viola, from Durham, was present because she was unaware that the bonding would be on the ballot along with the budget. She knows that teachers get increases each year, but asked that that be shared, either here or at the public hearing. Mrs. Viola hoped that there could be a compromise in the sense of spending without compromising the matter at hand, by holding off on certain things. She realizes that the board will deliberate after the public hearing on both the budget and the bonding and wanted to state her opinion about the bonding. While she realizes that the debt service may stay relatively flat, she is concerned that the bonding will be extended by eight years.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Regular Session Meeting - March 20, 2019

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve minutes of the March 20, 2019 regular session meeting.

In favor of approving the minutes of the March 20, 2019 minutes, as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Board of Education Regular Session Meeting - March 27, 2019

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to approve minutes of the March 27, 2019 regular session meeting.

In favor of approving the minutes of the March 20, 2019 minutes, as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed, with Mrs. Geraci abstaining.

Next Meetings

District Meeting - May 6, 2019 at 8:00 PM in the auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School

Board of Education meeting - May 15, 2019 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School

Teacher Non-Renewals

Mr. Moore and Mr. Hicks explained that this is typically done for the non-tenured teachers before the budget referendum each year. If everything goes well with the budget, it will have zero effect.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to not renew the following non-tenured teachers: Lisa Conant, Lindsay Galpin, Sarina Garofalo, Kenneth Holt, Kory Kevorkian, Nancy Kozlik, Jessica Kurapat-Koshi, Pamela Langley, Dana Markovitz, Danielle Miller, Lisa Mishriky, Brenda Parness, Ashley Rodrigues, Tara Salvadori, Michelle Schwartz, Nilani Shankar, Benjamin Shoudy, Joanna Schmidt, Amanda Torres and Dominique Watkins.

Mr. Yamartino asked that if the budget doesn't pass, would they really be looking to cut teachers or find savings elsewhere. Mr. Moore felt that the board would try to find savings. Mr. Yamartino felt that doing this type of thing creates a lot of angst for the teachers on this list. He felt that this adds a lot of undue stress that the board would never follow through on and he would not be in favor of this for that reason.

Mrs. Petrella noted that it was always upsetting to her as a teacher, but she understands the legal reason for doing it. Dr. Veronesi stated that they have to do this by May 1st, by state statute, and he explained that Craig Bradanini, the union president, and she co-wrote an email that each of the affected staff member gets to let them know that it is procedural and what happens from there. Mr. Yamartino felt that a very powerful message would be sent by not doing this. Dr. Veronesi felt that this should have been a conversation that happened earlier in the process, but she would welcome the conversation as would the non-tenured teachers.

In favor of not renewing the following non-tenured teachers: Lisa Conant, Lindsay Galpin, Sarina Garofalo, Kenneth Holt, Kory Kevorkian, Nancy Kozlik, Jessica Kurapat-Koshi, Pamela Langley, Dana Markovitz, Danielle Miller, Lisa Mishriky, Brenda Parness, Ashley Rodrigues, Tara Salvadori, Michelle Schwartz, Nilani Shankar, Benjamin Shoudy, Joanna Schmidt, Amanda Torres and Dominique Watkins: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion passed, with Mr. Yamartino voting in opposition.

Communications

Mr. Moore reported that he received a letter from Samantha Turley about Latin. Several board members mentioned how great the production of Beauty and the Beast was. Mr. Hicks sent Mr. Fisher a note and he said it was one of the hardest plays he has worked on. Mr. Hicks was just blown away and felt that all did a magnificent job. Mrs. Geraci echoed Mr. Hicks' comments. Mrs. Petrella also felt it was phenomenal. Mr. Moore will write a resolution about the great performance for the board to approve next month.

Mr. Hicks also reported that he attended the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce Durham/Middlefield Division meeting this morning and received their public policy agenda. He will forward that to the other board members.

Mr. Moore stated that he and Bruce Schmotlach judged the band performance yesterday before they go to Disney tomorrow and felt that they were unbelievable. He noted that 150 students will be going on the trip.

Mrs. Geraci invited the board to attend the second annual Differences Day at Brewster School on Thursday, April 25th and she believes it will also be at Lyman on the 24th. She explained that stations will be set up to teach kids about the differences between one another in terms of speech impairments, hearing impairments, physical impairments, fine motor skills, etc. The teachers then expand it back into the classroom, working on empathy and understanding. The Unified Sports Team also participates in a basketball game and has lunch with the students.

Business Manager's Report

Mrs. Neubig reported that 75 percent of the budgeted revenue has been received and 71 percent of budgeted expenditures have been expended to date. She is not forecasting a large fund balance carryover this year. Certified salaries were budgeted at 98 percent and they are running very close to that. Non-certified salaries could see a slight surplus. There is a slight surplus in workers' comp insurance. There is a small surplus in the legal fees for Korn School. There is a deficit in tuition of about \$26,000 with an increase enrollment in magnet schools of 3 FTEs, 2 part-time and 2 full-time students that were not budgeted for. There is also a deficit in outplacement for students with special needs. There is a small deficit in the oil account, due to still owning Korn when it was not budgeted for. Building repairs also has a deficit of \$33,000. In total, Mrs. Neubig does anticipate a surplus, however not a quarter of what was seen last year.

The requests for proposal for transportation have gone out and one bidder attended the mandatory meeting on March 28th. One vendor called after the meeting, but missed the meeting so she is not able to accept the bid. We will only get one bid and that is due on May 2nd.

The requests for proposal for audit services has also gone out and are due back on April 26th. No meeting is necessary for that.

Mrs. Neubig has still not heard anything on the school security grant. She suspects that the funds that were earmarked for vestibules and other security upgrades may have to be moved to capital reserves before June 30th. Once the EdSpecs are approved for the vestibule project and school construction, she will then apply to the state for the grant.

The district has received 90.1 percent of the revenue from MTA and has expended 70 percent of expenditures. A health insurance transfer will happen in May and will increase the expenditures.

Mrs. Neubig also noted that they have only take half of the general fund transfer that was budgeted and, if there are enough funds, they will take the second half of that in May.

Mr. Moore then recessed the meeting to the public hearing in the auditorium.

2019-2020 Budget

A. Discussion on Public Hearing

Mr. Moore reviewed the proposal that he made for the additional savings that were found on Friday. Mrs. Geraci confirmed that these savings did not have too much of an impact on the insurance benefits and Dr. Veronesi stated that, contractually, the benefits have to be equal to or better and they meet with the unions.

B. Finalize Budget for District Meeting

Mr. Augur made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to send the budget to District meeting on May 6, 2019, followed by a referendum on May 7, 2019, with the 2019-2020 Regional School District 13 gross education budget of \$36,819,319.

Mr. Yamartino distributed his thoughts on the budget to the board members and explained his reasons for wanting to get as close as possible to the MBR and for anything below that number, the district loses \$2.00 of ECS funding for every dollar gained. He recalled that when Korn School was closed, the district was not able to claim all of the savings and he does not want to be put in that situation again. On May 7, 2019, both the budget and the \$6.9 million bond question is on the referendum and he believes that the \$6.9 million is critical. The district is also asking for \$400,000 in capital, some of which is not necessary for another year or two. Mr. Yamartino is a full believer in funding a capital budget, however he felt it would be a very powerful statement if the district could come in with a budget at the statutory minimum amount. If the ECS is restored to the towns, the district would have to go back to the towns for more money or there would be a penalty. If that happens, the discussions at the town meetings would be about either giving the money to the district to go to the capital fund or paying the \$40,000 penalty. Because TRB is budgeted as an expense, if that doesn't get passed the money stays in the budget.

Mr. Yamartino felt that if the board could go to the towns with a budget that is at the state minimum, absorbs the ECS cuts and the TRB contribution, maintains the educational programs, expanded the library media specialists, expanded special education teachers, added math interventionists, he believes it would be an extremely powerful statement to get the budget passed on the first ballot. He also mentioned that later this year, the board will be asking for more bond money to close a school and save money.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed his numbers and the fact that there are two components to the MBR, totaling \$1,186,000 in cuts. The budget at the public hearing showed the district at \$500,000 above the MBR, under the Governor's current proposed budget and the FRLP provision. That means the lowest possible budget would be \$32,799,657. Looking at the most recent budget, there was an estimated savings of \$618,000 in benefits, of which \$503,032 was reduced from the budget line item for benefits. That leaves a residual of \$114,968 in identified savings that were not claimed in the budget and \$99,340 was allocated to capital, leaving \$15,000 held back.

Of the new savings of \$303,733 that were just identified, \$191,000 has been proposed to be adopted in the budget, with \$112,473 being held in the benefits line item. Mr. Yamartino felt that there was still \$128,101 currently held in the benefits line item.

Mrs. Neubig noted that the \$114,968 is actually the TRB contribution and not in benefits.

Mr. Yamartino felt that this proposed budget left the district \$308,793 away from the MBR. He proposed to withdraw the \$99,340 allocated to the capital (particularly from the turf and the track which don't need to be replaced until 2023) and to take out the remaining \$15,628 from the benefits line from the original savings as well as the \$112,473 from the newly-identified savings. He would propose to remove the capital funding with the intention of refunding it when, and if, the ECS gets restored or in next year's budget.

Dr. Veronesi explained that there is more money required for the turf replacement than what is budgeted and it has been put off before.

In summary, Mr. Yamartino would like to take the full \$303,000 in savings from the budget. Dr. Friedrich asked about the timing and cost of the turf replacement. Mrs. Neubig explained that the turf is expected to cost \$550,000 and there is \$125,000 in the account. Dr. Friedrich summarized that the district would then have to make up the \$425,000 in as little as two years. Mr. Augur mentioned that the debt service is going down and the Finance Committee was comfortable with the \$6.9 million because a decent amount can still get done by the active capital rather than debt.

Dr. Friedrich felt that the board was getting close to a cliff and decided to back away and that Mr. Yamartino is now suggesting this would be a good reason to go closer to the cliff. Mr. Yamartino does not see it as a cliff, but sees the district closing a school soon and losing as many as 20 staff members and the state would not allow that kind of budget cut. There have been a number of hearings in Hartford about softening the MBR, but Mr. Yamartino doesn't believe there will be any substantial changes to the rules based on what he's heard. He reiterated that if the ECS cuts were not made, the money would be restored to the capital fund.

Dr. Friedrich understands how important it is to get close to the MBR, but is nervous about the debt service table and that, in 2021, the total combined debt service is only \$73,000 different and doesn't really open up until 2023. Mr. Yamartino also reviewed that capital historically runs around \$400,000 and this year \$753,000 is proposed. He doesn't feel that this is the year to increase it that much because of the MBR, but does understand that the money is needed in the long term.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed his projected numbers with Mrs. Neubig, resulting in an MBR of zero. He did agree that it is awfully tight. Mrs. Neubig stated that this would be a gross budget of \$36,510,526, an 8.4 percent decrease. The net budget would be \$34,293,414, a 3.34 percent decrease.

Dr. Veronesi felt that the discussion the board was having involved the consideration of the board's agreement that because they can, they should get closer to the MBR, rather than about capital. Mrs. Geraci would normally not think about that, but felt that it might be something to entertain because of the savings that were found. Dr. Friedrich does not see the MBR as a goal, per se, but understands the logic behind this to obtain the maximal benefit with the closure of Lyman.

Mr. Augur also mentioned the referendum that is scheduled for later this year and felt that Mr. Yamartino's proposal would set the board up well to talk about the responsible nature that the board has taken from a fiscal standpoint and that the district would be set up to fully benefit from the gains of the close of Lyman. Mr. Moore wasn't sure that the general public would understand the strategy and reminded everyone that after tonight, the board members can no longer advocate for the budget. Mr. Augur mentioned that they would be able to talk about it in the Fall when the additional referendum is approaching. Mr. Moore also mentioned that the board had cut four positions out of the budget and added that this budget season started with the threat of ECS cuts and the TRB. Mr. Augur also mentioned that the Boards of Finance can still talk about the educational budget after tonight. Mr. Yamartino added that he is also allowed to speak as a member of the Board of Selectmen.

Mrs. Petrella did not feel that MBR is the goal, but she was also upset about not getting the full savings from closing Korn School. She did worry about the ECS funding as well and thought maybe the board should not go all the way down to zero. Dr. Friedrich mentioned that this is the same electorate that refused to save \$500,000 in electricity costs by installing solar panels. He also asked what happens if benefits costs go up next year. Mr. Moore also mentioned the fund balance carryover that the district had this year and that it will not be there next. He, too, was concerned about any increases in the benefits line next year.

Dr. Veronesi felt that the board would put pressure on the administration next year to cut the budget if those increases were seen and not bring that to the voters.

Mr. Moore summarized that he felt this would be a strategy with a decent amount of risk and he would not tend to budget toward the MBR, but would budget toward the district's needs. He felt that this is a very unique budget year, with both savings and carryover. Mr. Moore could not vote to budget to the MBR.

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to amend the motion to reduce the total budget by \$308,793, to a gross budget of \$36,510,526.

Mrs. Geraci asked if there was a way to do maybe half the reductions and it was explained that they have to vote on this or she can make an amendment to the motion.

In favor of amending the motion to set the Regional School District 13 gross education budget to \$36,510,526: Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. In opposition: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore and Mrs. Petrella. Motion failed.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Caramanello, to amend the motion to reduce the total budget by \$154,397, to a gross budget of \$36,664,922.

In favor of amending the motion to set the Regional School District 13 gross education budget to \$36,664,922: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. In opposition: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Moore. Motion failed.

Mr. Hicks moved the question on the main motion.

In favor of moving the question: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

In favor of approving the motion to send the budget to District meeting on May 6, 2019, followed by a referendum on May 7, 2019, with the 2019-2020 Regional School District 13 gross education budget of \$36,819,319: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. In opposition: Mrs. Petrella. Motion passed.

Korn School Status

Mr. Moore reported there has been no change and both selectmen will meet with the Utilization committee on April 25, 2019.

Vote on Ed Specs

A. Vestibules

Dr. Veronesi stated that there has been a change on page 4 of the Strong Middle School, exterior accessibility modifications to the main entrance, to add a ramp, which can be taken out. A few typos and spelling errors will also be corrected.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, to approve the EdSpecs for the vestibules at Coginchaug High School.

In favor of approving the EdSpecs for the vestibules at Coginchaug High School: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, to approve the EdSpecs for the vestibules at Strong School.

In favor of approving the EdSpecs for the vestibules at Strong School: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Schools

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, to approve the EdSpecs for alteration and extension to Brewster School.

In favor of approving the EdSpecs for the alteration and extension to Brewster School: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, to approve the EdSpecs for alterations to Memorial School.

In favor of approving the EdSpecs for the alterations to Memorial School: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Melissa Booth, from Durham, didn't quite understand all of the numbers in the discussion the board had, but she gets nervous about cutting capital. She asked if there was a plan for what would happen if the \$6.9 million bonding proposal doesn't pass. Mrs. Booth also feels like it is a conflict of interest that Mr. Yamartino is on the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen.

Executive Session

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy in negotiations with respect to pending litigation related to charge filed by Regional School District 13 Education Association, Middlesex County, with the State Board of Labor Relations.

In favor of entering into Executive Sessions: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
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