

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a public hearing on Wednesday, April 7, 2010 at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Member absent: Ms. Gara. Also present: Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Melnik.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Hicks read the call of the meeting.

Mr. Hennick explained to the audience that the budget process begins in October. It is a very long process and everything is scrutinized.

Mrs. Viccaro read the Mission Statement of the District and explained that the budget was built on the needs of six buildings within the District and that these buildings and the grounds need to be maintained each year.

Mrs. Flanagan said the Board was asked to develop a capital plan to anticipate any major projects and needs, and to help develop a long range plan. She discussed the handout that was distributed and said the goal was to develop a timely and accurate schedule for managing projects while maintaining security, technology, the infrastructure and the athletic facilities. The funding plan is the way to pay for these investments without having any major impacts on the budget. The Board looked at other towns to determine what percentage was appropriate for the capital reserve account and they are within the proper range.

Mrs. Viccaro discussed the new Strategic Plan that will be approved by the Board at their next meeting. The committee was mindful to select initiatives that have low costs associated with them for the coming year. Mrs. Viccaro said the high school will be beginning their NEASC accreditation process next year and new standards will be implemented in 2011. She shared a listing of college acceptances for the Class of 2009 showing that students are getting into many difficult colleges. She also discussed enrollment projections for next year that shows a decline at some of the schools. Mrs. Viccaro discussed how the stimulus money that the District received from the federal government has been spent.

Ms. Parsons discussed the budget summary and the pie chart, pointing out that the greatest share of the expenses is for salaries and benefits. She explained that they are anticipating being able to carryover a fund balance of \$600,000 from the 09-10 budget year along with the current fund balance carry-over of 1,189,348.

Public Comment: Donia Viola of Durham is upset that the District continues to ask for more money even when enrollments are declining. The students don't reap the benefits of these increases. The teachers and administrators get the increases by their contracts. She doesn't feel the Board is working with the community. She would like for the teachers to be asked to open up their contract and to make a sacrifice. She asked what the mil rate will be based on this budget.

Rick Parmelee of Durham thanked the Board for choosing to go to referendum. He has seen improvements in the Board this year, communication has been better and the Board has opened up. He is glad to see the handout on the capital plan. It has been a long time in coming. The budget is still not reflective of the times. Nationally income is down by 3% and the State is still in trouble. The cost of the football program is high and he doesn't support it. He is still opposed to activity fees of any kind. It is the District's responsibility to fund the activities and to provide equal access to all students. The fund balance is too large and there is

too little oversight over the management of the District money. The money is never going back to the town treasury.

David Montgomery of Durham asked if the money in future years of the capital plan are based on current dollars figures or if inflation has been figured into the estimates. Mr. Melnik said it is based on current costs, but interest on the money has not been figured in either, so they hope that it will equal out. Mr. Montgomery commented on the enrollment decline and said that the towns are paying large amounts of money to keep families from developing land in our towns. He is not sure where this is going. He congratulated the Board for the progress they have made this year.

Joan Zito of Durham thanked the panel of speakers and said they know what they are talking about and she has felt like they have listened to what people are saying to them. She is concerned that people may have to move out of town because they can't afford to live here. She asked the teachers to forget about the unions and to think about the people who have supported them. They should be willing to give something back.

Kristen Prout of Durham supports the proposed budget

Oanh Stephan of Durham thanked the Board for her first experience through the budget process. She asked that they continue to be mindful to maintain the quality of education.

Elaine Fough of Durham reminded people that things have changed in schools. Teachers are doing far more than any teacher she ever had and they deserve 100% of our support.

Kathleen Koskoska of Middlefield doesn't agree that we can't have quality without continuing to have increases. No one should have to be sacrificed for others. She believes that more can be done than use the \$600,000. She would like the Board to meet again with the Middlefield Board of Finance to come up with more ideas. You can't get blood from a stone.

Janice Keeman of Durham commended the Board for their work. It is a very difficult time and the mandates have made this time even more difficult for teachers. Teachers are spending much more of their own time and money meeting the mandates. If you factor this in, the increases they are getting are negligible.

Roger Kleeman of Durham thanked the Board but condemned the townspeople for not caring enough to show up at this meeting. It is a \$33,000,000 budget and there are very few people here. He suggested making cuts and then seeing if the parents care enough to come out.

Rick Hanley said that a 2 ½ % increase is one of the smaller budgets that he has seen the first time around. He supports the teachers. Collective bargaining is the mechanism for looking at the contracts. Connecticut is one of the last states that funds education through property taxes. He wants people to talk to their legislatures. He thanked the board for listening and for conducting a civil process.

Tina Levine of Durham supports the teachers. They work in a complex environment and this budget is reasonable. She asked the Board to continue to think outside of the box.

Bob Yamartino of Middlefield thanked the Board for their work. He is impressed with the capital plan as it funds the future. He is still concerned that there is additional surplus money and fund balance money that can be used in this budget. He does not want to see the large surplus continued. Mr. Melnik said he respectfully disagrees with the idea that additional money can be added to this budget. Mr. Melnik offered to meet with Mr. Yamartino to better explain his reasons.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.