

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, October 28, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the music room at Korn Elementary School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara (7:40p.m.), Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Members absent: Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Hicks called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Public Comment: Donia Viola of Durham said the ESC funding to towns is being reduced by 14% because of the federal stimulus money. She asked how this was being handled with the towns. Mrs. Viola asked if administrators can take their vacation days during school vacations and during the summer months so that no one needs to be hired to replace them while they are out. She also asked why Brewster School has both an occupational therapist and a physical therapist on staff when the definition of the occupations is similar.

Regarding the ESC funding, Mr. Melnik said the federal stimulus money is 14.26% of the ESC money. The money will come as a grant from the federal government to the District and the District will be returning the money to the towns by reducing their monthly payments.

Mrs. Viccaro said by contract, the administrators are allowed to take their vacations whenever they want during the year. Most of them do not even use all of their days. They must get approval from her for the time off, but she has not found it to be a problem.

Mrs. Viccaro said the District has a part-time occupational therapist and a part-time physical therapist that service the District. The District has a full-time occupational therapist assistant that also services the entire District. The time they spend with students is mandated by Federal guidelines, State laws and the student's IEP.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be on Tuesday, November 17, 2009 at John Lyman School.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mrs. Boyle, the agenda was unanimously approved.

Dr. Ochterski made a motion, second Ms. Parsons to accept the minutes of the meeting of October 14, 2009 as amended. Mrs. Boyle, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons voted yes. Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Flanagan abstained.

Communications: Mrs. Boyle said she received an email today from a parent who was happy about the letter that went home today regarding the District's prudent response to H1N1.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro reported on the level of illnesses within the schools. She said that not everyone has H1N1, although there have been some confirmed cases. Schools are also seeing some cases of seasonal flu, stomach viruses and strep throat. A letter was sent home to all parents today as well as posted on the District website informing them of the decision to keep schools open. She has been in daily contact with the District Health Director, Dr. Brad Wilkinson and the administrators for reports on attendance. If absenteeism reaches 40% or if there is not enough staff to cover a school she may decide to close the individual school. If a school closes they will be required to make up all days lost. The staff at Cuginchaug and at Strong has been asked to be lenient regarding make-up work as it is the end of the marking period.

Mrs. Viccaro said the inspection from Homeland Security has been completed. They toured the high school and inspected all of the security improvements made. They had high praise for what was accomplished in a short period of time. All of their requirements were satisfied.

Mrs. Viccaro said there are changes coming from the legislature regarding new teacher training, professional development and CEU requirements. She will be updating the Board on the details at an upcoming meeting.

Mrs. Viccaro said she has done some research on the cost of printing the Annual Reports. One hundred copies of the document were printed last year at a cost of \$1295.00. If we use a lesser quality paper and one color the cost can be reduced to \$790.00. Mrs. Viccaro explained that the Annual Report is required and is used for a variety of purposes.

It was suggested that a statement be included in the book explaining that the quality of the book was reduced in an effort to cut costs by the Board.

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Mrs. Adams, the Board of Education unanimously approved to reduce the cost of printing the Annual Report to \$790.00 by changing the format to one color and by using a less quality paper. A statement will be included in the book explaining the reason for the change.

CRHS Ski Trip: Mr. Bajoros, a health teacher at Coginchaug, presented on a new field trip proposed to Salt Lake City, Utah from February 14 to February 19, 2010. This is a skiing trip that is being organized by the health and P.E. departments at the high school through Ski.com. They will be requiring personal medical insurance as well as trip insurance from all of the students attending. The trip insurance will cover cancellations as well as emergencies. A minimum of 8 students are needed for the trip and a maximum of 40 will be allowed. There will be an 8-1 chaperone ratio on the trip. Students will be required to be competent skiers, with a skill level of intermediate to advanced.

Will Conroy, a senior at Coginchaug shared more information about the trip, as it was his idea and he will be using it as a part of his WISE project. Will showed a video that he made about the trip with the Board.

Board Members were supportive of the trip but had concerns about the students' safety. It was the consensus of the Board that all skiers be expected to wear helmets. Mr. Hicks asked that Mr. Bajoros be sure that the trip insurance is a requirement for all students and he wanted him to know that if there are issues of homeland security the Board has the right to cancel the trip. Mr. Bajoros believes that the trip insurance will cover that type of issue but he will double check with the company and be sure to inform the students.

Mrs. Flanagan supports the efforts at student connectedness as this activity will reach students who do not do participate in other activities.

Mr. Hicks was concerned that the trip contained enough academics. He doesn't want to approve a vacation that is disguised as connectedness. Mr. Nemphos said he has been on several of the other overseas trips and he is always amazed at how kids connect with each other and with the staff. They make friends with many outside of their normal circle of friends. He is sure that this trip will provide the same opportunity.

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Mrs. Boyle, the CRHS ski trip to Salt Lake City, Utah from February 14, 2010 to February 19, 2010 was unanimously approved by the Board of Education.

Social Networking Issues: Mrs. Viccaro said that she attended a CABE workshop on Tweeting and Texting in Schools. She distributed handouts from the PowerPoint presentation. Another topic discussed was social media and the public school employee. The District Technology Committee will be addressing many of the issues discussed and the need to update our policies to reflect the constant changes in technology.

Mrs. Viccaro said a presentation was held last week in the District to educate parents on social networks and the technology their children are using. She distributed copies of the handouts that were given out at that meeting. The high school has received a grant from the State Police to train students to work with other students regarding Internet safety. They will be presenting to the lower grades and to other students at Cuginchaug.

Mrs. Boyle suggested that the handouts be made available to parents, either by email or by sending them home through the schools.

Impact of 2008-09 Budget Cuts: Mrs. Viccaro wanted to let the Board know that she is hearing from the schools about the impact of last year's budget cuts. Teacher planning time at the elementary schools has been cut because of the elimination of the health position. Elementary students are only receiving health instruction every other week and sometimes only every three weeks if there is a holiday on their scheduled day. The class sizes are up at Korn, Lyman, Memorial and Cuginchaug. Students are receiving less individualized support at Strong School.

Pupil Personnel Update: Mrs. Viccaro reviewed a handout sent to members on the increase in requirements from the State regarding Special Education. The State is conducting a data review of all disabled students; learning disability guidelines are in the process of being revised; there are new guidelines regarding seclusion and restraint of students; Birth to Three eligibilities have changed and evaluation timelines have been shortened.

Building Committee: Ms. Gara said the Committee had an upbeat meeting last week where they prepared to go out to bid. Now, a legal challenge has been filed against the project that may delay the project for six to twelve months. It is unknown what will happen with the football program during this time as they are expected to start here in the fall. The roofs are 95% complete and should be wrapped up soon. The wells at Brewster and Memorial are drilled and are producing a good yield. The wells drilled at Lyman did not produce a good yield and approval has now been asked of the State to continue use of the existing well with some modifications.

Personnel Policies: Mrs. Flanagan said the Committee is still negotiating with the Support Staff and hopes to be reaching an agreement soon. Negotiations are on-going with the administrators.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously approved to adjourn.