

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met with the Middlefield and Durham Boards of Finance on December 1, 2016 at 6:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut. Board of Education members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Renninghoff, Dr. Taylor, and Mr. Yamartino (representing the Board of Education and Middlefield Board of Finance). Durham Board of Finance members present: Mr. Anderson, Ms. Coe, Ms. Naples, Mr. Stengel, and Ms. Tuttle. Middlefield Board of Finance members present: Mr. Irish, Mr. Nick, and Ms. Wolak.

Board of Education members absent: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich and Mrs. Petrella.

Durham Board of Finance members absent: Ms. Nolan

Middlefield Board of Finance members absent: Mr. Lowry and Ms. Malcolm.

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

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Welcome**

Mr. Moore, Chairman of the Board of Education introduced himself and thanked the Durham and Middlefield Boards of Finance for attending the meeting. He stated that he was glad to get together and welcomed input from each Board regarding the upcoming budget season.

Mr. Moore introduced Dr. Veronesi.

### **Superintendent and Business Manager Presentation**

Dr. Veronesi thanked the members of the Boards for coming. She explained that the budget process has begun and budgets are due from the administrator on Monday, December 5, 2016. In beginning the budget process the administrative team uses the District's Mission as a focal point. The primary concern is for the best education for the students in District 13. The budget will be presented at the Board of Education meeting on February 10, 2017. On March 9, 2017 the Boards of Finance will be invited to the BOE meeting to have dialogue regarding the proposed budget.

Dr. Veronesi reviewed priorities and parameters. Improving student achievement is the main concern of the Board. She would like to continue to expand high quality professional development focusing on the 21 century skill/4Cs. The STEM program was introduced this school year and Dr. Veronesi would like to see the program expand. Also, she would like to offer a comprehensive Pre-K program and create a high school career center. Dr. Veronesi would like to continue to explore future school design and implement a before and after care program. The

goal is to maintain class size within BOE guidelines, commit to capital improvement, adhere to a long-term strategic budget approach, and be aware of community priorities.

Mr. Melnik reviewed the historical data showing the enrollment over the past 5 years, allocation percentage for Durham and Middlefield, and the budget dollar amount including the gross and net percentage change.

Mr. Melnik discussed the budget drivers. He commended the Board for their proactive approach to close a school due to declining enrollment. He also stated that the BOE only has one insurance plan, there has been a decrease in headcount over the past 3 years, and a saving in salary associated with headcount decrease. Mr. Melnik also discussed the Board's plan to manage the debt process and on-going building maintenance.

Dr. Veronesi opened the floor discussion.

Mr. Moore stated the student achievement levels are lacking in Math and Language Arts. It is a challenge with fixed costs vs. outcomes for students.

Ms. Wolak referred to the STEM program and asked if math was addressed. Dr. Veronesi explained that most of the modules involve math skills.

Mr. Nick asked what our scores were based on and are we switching to SAT. Dr. Veronesi stated that scores are based on SBAC in our DRG and that the District uses SAT at the high school level.

Mr. Nick asked if STEM includes a certain population and Dr. Veronesi said the program is for all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Mr. Yamartino stated that we are trailing in our DRG and we need to fund appropriately.

Ms. Wolak asked if certain grade levels were behind. Dr. Veronesi said there were gaps in skills and standards in grades 3 – 12. There is a need for a strong curriculum and PD for teachers.

Mr. Anderson how are we addressing the loss of key people in the District. Dr. Veronesi stated that the District has the capacity to build leadership.

Mr. Irish thanked the BOE and administrators for keeping increases in control. Mr. Irish offered thought for consideration when starting the budget process. He suggested that the BOE think about the current budget, the number of students, and declining enrollment and take the budget down by a variable cost. He recommended to start with constant cost per student. He provided

the example of 5% student decrease = 5% reduction in variable costs = 3.3% overall budget target reduction. Mr. Irish explained that starting with a zero base you add incremental priority elements back to improve student achievement.

Dr. Veronesi thanked Mr. Irish for his presentation. The process Mr. Irish described is being used in preparing the Board of Education's budget.

Ms. Naples stated that the Board of Finance is looking for quality education but there is a need to be frugal.

Ms. Wolak asked if STEM was going to the high school and what are the BOE's priorities.

Dr. Veronesi stated that STEM going to the high school is not a priority in terms of building a STEM program at the high school and that there are ways to build STEM learning experiences and outcomes into existing elective courses. The focus on K- 12 math is a higher priority.

Ms. Wolak inquired about the proposed Before and After School care. Dr. Veronesi invited members of both Boards of Finance to attend the December 14, 2016 BOE meeting. Ms. Wolak also asked about the proposed career center at the high school. Dr. Veronesi stated that the subject will be addressed in a future presentation by the high school principal.

Mr. Yamartino addressed major drivers the Town of Middlefield is facing. He addressed the issue of state funding, He also spoke about increases in staffing, capital plans, a focus on road improvements and reserve fund account that can help BOE if additional fund are needed. Mr. Yamartino discussed salary increases that the Middlefield Board of Finance budgeted for town employees.

Ms. Coe discussed the Town of Durham's situation. This year's budget will be another challenge. The town wants to increase as little as possible.

Ms. Naples praised the BOE for educating the public during the past 3 budget seasons.

Mr. Stengel expressed his concern on education cost sharing, municipal spending cap and municipal revenue sharing.

Mr. Irish requested information from Milone & MacBroom regarding enrollment results. Dr. Veronesi stated that the report will be put the website.

Mr. Anderson thanked the BOE for pulling the retreat together. Mr. Yamartino requested that another meeting after the budget is set. Dr. Veronesi stated that the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting was set up for discussion with both Boards of Finance.

Mr. Moore thanked everyone for attending. Mr. Moore asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Hicks made a motion to adjourn at 7:35 p.m., seconded by Mrs. Flanagan.  
In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Anderson, Mr. Augur, Ms. Coe, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Irish, Mr. Moore, Ms. Naples, Mr. Nick, Mr. Renninghoff, Mr. Stengel, Dr. Taylor, Ms. Tuttle, Ms. Wolak, and Mr. Yamartino.  
Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Maureen Johnson