

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, August 9, 2017 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut. Board members present: Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Mrs. Boyle arrived at 7:20 pm.

Board members absent: Mr. Augur, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Roraback.

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

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

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Next Board Meeting - September 13, 2017 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School****Approval of Agenda**

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the agenda as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.*

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Moore explained that the two proclamations in the June 21, 2017 minutes were motions made by Mr. Hicks, seconded and voted on and that the motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Renninghoff and seconded by Mrs. Flanagan, as a symbolic last official act.

*Dr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the proposed changes to the minutes of June 21, 2017.*

*In favor of approving the changes to the minutes of June 21, 2017: Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of June 21, 2017, as amended.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of June 21, 2017, as amended: Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to approve the minutes of July 5, 2017, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of July 5, 2017, as presented: Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Mrs. Petrella abstained.*

**Anticipated Executive Session****A. Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Interview**

The Board met in Executive Session at this point. Mrs. Boyle arrived at the meeting during this time.

*Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to appoint Cori DiMaggio as Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.*

*In favor of appointing Cori DiMaggio as Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

**Communications**

Mr. Moore mentioned that he had received a note from Madison Terrill. Ms. Terrill wrote: "Thank you for selecting me as the recipient of your scholarship this past school year. I am honored to know that my accomplishments, both in and out of the classroom, were impactful enough to qualify me for this scholarship, and humbled that you selected me. Without your dedication to RSD13, I would not be the student, and young woman, I am today. Thank you for being role models to me, so I may be role models to others. Sincerely, Madison Terrill, CRHS Class of 2017."

Mrs. Boyle stated that she spoke to a parent who was concerned about the amount of early dismissal days on the calendar and that it is very cumbersome to parents who work. Mrs. Boyle had promised she would bring it up even though she knew the calendar could not be changed at this point. She also suggested doing a survey to see how many parents in the District actually both work full-time. Mr. Moore stated that he had received the same comment, probably from a different parent.

**Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Veronesi reported that this has been a very busy summer and she publicly thanked the custodial crew for their hard work, under the guidance of Rob Francis. A lot of curriculum work has been happening as well as a lot of hiring. Dr. Veronesi distributed a copy of the staffing changes that had happened in the 2016-2017 school year and pointed out the amount of movement that goes on. She also included a document showing the new hires for this school year.

Dr. Veronesi mentioned that there is a new athletic director and that the athletic director position is in the teachers' union again with a salary differential of about \$25,000. The supervision and evaluation of the health and physical education teachers has been removed from the position and will now be the responsibility of the school principals. Korey Kevorkian has been hired as the new athletic director and had previously worked in North Branford. A new football coach has also been hired. The hiring of a tech integration/STEAM specialist is being finalized as Bill Kurtz returned to a position in the English department at the high school.

Dr. Veronesi also reminded everyone that there is a Board retreat on September 6, 2017 from 6:00 to 8:00. This will be a dinner meeting and the location will be shared with the Board once it has been determined. She also asked the Board to let her know if they are interested in attending any of the workshops or conferences that are available through CABE.

Dr. Veronesi also asked the Board to authorize her as a signer for the Charles Schwab pension fund.

*Dr. Taylor read a letter to give permission for Superintendent of Schools Kathryn Veronesi and so designate her to be an authorized signer for the Regional School District 13 Board of Education with respect to its pension plan account. In addition, to give permission to Superintendent of Schools Kathryn*

*Veronesi for her to designate, by her signature, business office members, Eileen Popp and Kim Neubig And other members of the business office staff Superintendent of Schools Kathryn Veronesi so designates to access monthly pension statements through the Charles Schwab website. Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to approve the above-stated letter.*

*In favor of approving the above-stated letter: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

Ms. Neubig commented that they would like to hold a meeting on August 24, 2017 of the Pension Committee and still need one representative from Middlefield for that committee. Jim Irish volunteered to serve on the committee.

### **Business Manager's Report**

Ms. Neubig reviewed that she has been part of the District for about a month now and explained that she has overlapped with Phil Russell and he has shared his information with her.

Ms. Neubig is impressed with the District's ultimate goal to provide the best education services for its students, while keeping a lean budget in mind. She is keeping a cumulative spreadsheet of any items impacting next year's budget and is looking forward to touring the inside of all of the District's buildings. She has met with town leaders, insurance brokers and fund managers as well as people within the district.

Ms. Neubig reviewed the financial information that was provided to the Board members. She has proposed a new format that includes object codes for the Board members. The audit process is underway and will likely be completed in December. The estimated ending fund balance is \$1.5 million, of which \$884,000 has been encumbered to balance the 2017-2018 budget. Ms. Neubig does not anticipate any cash flow problems. If the fund balance does remain as projected, the District will be a half percentage behind on the budget from last year.

She also explained that there is a revenue report that includes a little bit more detail than prior reports. There are also reports on MTA and the capital reserve fund. Paving at the high school is scheduled to be complete by Thursday of next week. A bid has been issued for a generator at Strong School and a letter of intent has been issued to the lowest bidder. The bid did come in substantially lower than was planned because the size of the generator was reduced with the idea to have a diesel fire pump instead of an electric fire pump. This was budgeted at \$111,000 and the bid is for \$47,000 and the Board can decide what to do with the difference.

Mrs. Boyle was frustrated by this since there was always a Building, Grounds and Transportation committee in the past that would deal with these issues. She did not like the idea of saving on the generator but having to spend more on a diesel fire pump. Ms. Neubig will follow up with Rob Francis when he returns from vacation. Mr. Moore commented that the committee will look at the infrastructure program as part of the Capital program whereas Utilization will look at more long-term items. Mr. Yamartino asked for a list of all upcoming projects in an Excel spreadsheet.

### **New Business**

#### **A. Vote on Food Service and Custodial Contracts Age and Insurance Re-openers**

Dr. Veronesi reviewed that documents were sent to the Board with information on the two contracts. Food Service and Custodians both had scheduled re-openers for wages and benefits. Both unions negotiated a 2.75 increase over the course of the next two years with 10 and 11 percent cost share respectively over the next two years. Everyone in the District is now on a high-deductible health plan.

The estimated Board cost for salary increases for custodians for year one is \$23,772 and \$22,897 in year two. For Food Service, the increase for year one is \$8,743 and \$6,455 in year two. Savings from the PPO to the high-deductible health plan is approximately \$70,000.

*Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the agreement between Regional School District 13 Board of Education and the Food Service Employees Local 1303-438 of Council 4 AFSCME/AFL-CIO for July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019, including wage and insurance reopeners for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, dated August 3, 2017.*

*In favor of approving the agreement for Food Service Employees: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

*Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the agreement between Regional School District 13 Board of Education and Local 1303-069 of Council 4 AFSCME/AFL-CIO Custodians for July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019, including wage and insurance reopeners for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, dated August 3, 2017.*

*In favor of approving the agreement for Custodial Employees: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

Mrs. Boyle publicly thanked both unions for their continued cooperation. Ms. Neubig also explained that an individual will have a \$2,000 deductible and the Board will fund \$1,000 of that. For families, it is a \$4,000 deductible and the Board funds \$2,000.

Dr. Veronesi explained that Ms. Neubig and Mr. Russell had also suggested that new employee benefits begin on the first date of work, rather than the date of hire, which will also produce a cost savings for the District. Dr. Veronesi also reiterated that the last three negotiations have been done without an attorney.

Ms. Neubig will also look at creative ways that other districts have packaged proposals to the administrators which will be coming up in October. Mrs. Boyle would like to be part of the process with the administrators.

## **B. Review of Committee Assignments and Meeting Schedule**

Mr. Moore stated that he assigned the committees based on the individual board members' interests. He also reminded everyone that they are welcome at every committee meeting, but the quorums are based on the list of members.

Mr. Yamartino asked about the Policy committee meeting on an as-needed basis and noted his disappointment in not bringing the policy forward about having townspeople on the committees. He reviewed his feelings about why he'd like to see townspeople serving on the various committees. Mr. Moore stated that he will ask Mr. Hicks to set up a Policy committee meeting for September. There was a general feeling to schedule Policy committee meetings on a regular basis and cancel if necessary.

Mrs. Boyle also commented that people in the towns have expertise that can be utilized by the various committees. There was then discussion about whether townspeople would have an actual vote on the committees. Mr. Yamartino recalled that Mr. Hicks had stated that none of the other school boards have the policy with the exception of Middletown.

Dr. Taylor asked if there were other mechanisms in place for community outreach meetings or coffee hours. Mr. Moore stated that subcommittee meetings can be held anywhere and do not need to be recorded. Dr. Veronesi explained that the District is examining their entire communication plan and

approach. She also mentioned the concept of “fishbowl” meetings; meetings that are held and parents and community members can observe and give feedback, when the discussion about the potential move of sixth grade to Strong School begin in the Fall.

Mrs. Petrella commented that reports from the Boards and Commissions in both towns used to be in the Town Times and there doesn't seem to be anything anymore. Mr. Yamartino suggested that advertising can be bought to communicate a message, but Mrs. Petrella felt that not many people even read the Town Times anymore.

### **C. Methods of Communication to Parents Regarding School Activities**

Dr. Taylor has heard from a lot of parents that they need to seek information instead of it being readily communicated. Parents have recommended a weekly email updating them on what programs are coming available. Dr. Veronesi stated that the Facebook notice page is updated bi-weekly, but Dr. Taylor stated that people still need to seek out that information rather than receiving it. Mrs. Boyle reminded everyone that paper used to be sent home every day and were then reduced to weekly folders that needed to be returned empty. She suggested that an email be sent out every Wednesday with all important information.

Dr. Veronesi stated that she's had comments from parents thanking the District for not using paper for every communication, but she did feel that they should gather ideas from a group of parents. They did just have a call with School Messenger this past week where they talked about various methods of communication.

Mr. Yamartino felt that possibly publishing specific meetings as a public hearing (when there are important issues) may get more people to attend the meetings. Mrs. Boyle also suggested a sandwich board in front of Strong School advertising the Board of Ed meetings and Mr. Yamartino thought that there could be other locations for signs as well.

Dr. Taylor again asked what mechanism is in place to have more informal, unscheduled meetings at alternate locations. Dr. Veronesi explained that Utilization had reached out to the various PTOs and attended their meetings. Mrs. Boyle also suggested asking a representative of the various PTOs to attend Board of Ed meetings. Mrs. Geraci stated that she is a member of the PTO at Brewster and the administrator of Brewster does a good job of reporting back to the PTO. Mr. Moore felt that the Board could have PTO reports as an agenda item, maybe every other month.

### **D. Review of Concussion Policy and Safety Protocols**

Mr. Moore reviewed that the current Concussion Policy relates more to reaction than prevention. Dr. Veronesi explained that there is a Concussion Management Team and invited the Board of Ed members to be part of that team. She suggested that the Board members meet the trainer, the athletic director, the football coach and the school nurse to become more familiar with the precautions that are being used and the training the coaches receive as well as the protocols. Dr. Veronesi will forward minutes from the previous Concussion Management Team meetings to the Board.

Dr. Taylor explained a report that was published in a high-end medical journal looked at approximately 112 professional football players' brains and 111 of them had evidence of CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy). The report also stated that a little over 1,000 professional football players had died over the same time period. More startling was the data that showed it was also prevalent in college football players and some high school football players as well. He also stated that the Ivy League has gone to no-tackling practices. Linemen also have the highest prevalence of CTE. Dr. Taylor felt that, as a Board of Ed member, a physician and a father, he would never let his son play football, given the information that is out there.

Dr. Taylor felt that the Board needs to be very proactive with the kids and to increase safety. He volunteered to meet with the athletic director and the football coach, but he will ultimately recommend a change in the policy statement that would move towards having no-tackling practices.

Mrs. Boyle commented that concussions happen outside of football and she did not like the conversation being just about football. She felt that this should be discussed an all-around athletic issue. Dr. Friedrich commented that he thought the rate of concussions in women's soccer is equivalent to that of football.

#### **E. Korn School Disposition Update**

Mr. Moore had received a letter from the Town of Durham reminding the Board of Mr. Szewczyk's request to have the Board reconsider its support of an MOU between the Town of Durham and the Town of Middlefield to have the Town of Durham assume Middlefield's share of the remaining debt of Korn School.

Mr. Moore explained that, in a conversation with Laura Francis, she is looking for the Board to vote on whether they would want to change the recommendation from Durham assuming Middlefield's portion of the remaining debt service on Korn. The MOU leaves that to the two towns and keeps the District out of it, but is contingent upon that agreement.

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, that the Board does not revise the original proposal.*

Dr. Friedrich asked if there had been any change in the situation that would warrant a change in the analysis. Mr. Yamartino stated that he has had discussions with various boards in Middlefield and that there was no basis to do that. Mr. Moore commented that no figures, no finances and no debt has changed.

*In favor of approving the motion that the Board does not revise the original proposal: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Mrs. Geraci abstained.*

Mr. Moore will send a note back to Laura Francis that there has been no change in the Board's position. Mrs. Boyle stated that the Board has done its due diligence and this was a very well-vetted decision by the subcommittee and the Board.

#### **F. State Budget Implications**

Mr. Moore reported that they have met with Laura Francis, Chuck Stengel, Ed Bailey and the two Finance Directors regarding the current State budget implications. Middlefield got a reduction based on the latest Governor's proposal of about \$1.5 million and Durham has about a \$3.5 million reduction in their ECS formula. There have been discussions about sales tax, but nothing has been decided.

Mr. Moore stated that they will continue to meet with both towns and also reported that both have towns have held back on some expenditures. Dr. Veronesi has looked at the budget and has basically done the same to delay anything that is possible and look for savings wherever possible. No drastic cuts in the budget are being proposed at this time though that is being analyzed.

Dr. Veronesi stated that the superintendents are working through their organizations to get a pulse on what's happening in other communities. She stated that everyone feels that this is an incredible burden for school districts, but most are waiting to see the final budget before making decisions. Dr. Veronesi summarized that the Board of Ed's commitment to the two towns was that if there are cuts that the Board agrees will need to happen, that will be worked on. Dr. Veronesi is not prepared to make a hasty decision or a hasty recommendation to the Board after everyone has worked so hard to put together a budget to

continue to move the goals of the District forward. She feels that any decisions will need to be strategically thought out with personnel and the Board of Education. Dr. Veronesi would also like to continue to have the support of the two towns and hopes that those relationships are not fractured due to this situation.

Dr. Taylor did not feel that they had ever agreed to reduce the budget further to meet some particular town demand and felt that they had agreed to return any surplus money that was received. Mr. Yamartino recalled that the Governor's budget put the ECS in the hands of the towns and the Board of Ed had ECS in the budget. He also recalled that the agreement was that any access in ECS would be passed through to the towns.

Dr. Veronesi explained that there was another discussion about the State budget not being finalized and the allocation of the funding for the 2016-2017 was reduced by \$45,000 for Durham and \$26,000 for Middlefield.

Mr. Yamartino felt that the towns are legally obligated to pay the Board of Education what was passed in the referendum. Dr. Veronesi felt that the concern of the Selectmen was what was happening right now and what the District would be prepared to do.

Dr. Friedrich stated that this is not a nickel and dime issue, either in the short- or long-term, and is a matter of having or not having programs. He felt that the Board cannot begin to think about this until they have the information about expenditures broken down by program. He does feel that this information should be available and hard choices will have to be made going forward.

Mr. Moore summarized that the issue is a crisis to the towns and that the Board of Ed is part of the towns. Durham's town budget is short about \$4 million of state aid and the mill rate will need to be increased to cover that. Dr. Taylor was confused that the towns have preemptively asked for the Board to start cutting the budget because of that and felt that the towns should take the issue to the townspeople to vote on either tax increases or programmatic cuts in the schools.

Mr. Yamartino felt that it is still too early as the legislature has yet to weigh in and he mentioned that Buddy Altobello and Len Suzio are not in favor of the proposed cuts to ECS funding. He did report that the State has removed the cap on motor vehicle taxes and eliminated the funding for that to the towns. One concern that the towns have is that if supplemental bills are necessary, they would go out just before Christmas. Mrs. Petrella commented that Governor Malloy has stated that he will use executive order to distribute the ECS money.

Mrs. Boyle asked Dr. Veronesi if she thought that the Board would want to go to referendum to reduce the school budget for this year. Dr. Veronesi had a meeting with superintendents on Thursday and felt that they needed legal advice on what can be done in this current fiscal year. Dr. Friedrich felt that the Board could at least start to think about it. Mr. Moore also stated that some of the capital improvements could be delayed and other savings have been realized in union negotiations. Again, Mr. Yamartino suggested that the Board does not enter into those discussions until more definitive information is received from the State.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that there had been discussion about the two towns sharing services as well as both towns having shared services with the District.

Mr. Moore stated that once the State budget is passed, there may be a need for an emergency Board of Ed meeting to deal with any issues. Mr. Moore summarized that the Board's response to the two towns will be that they are avoiding any expenditure that is not necessary, the savings that have occurred and what can be done with those savings as well as waiting to see what the State budget will be. Mr. Yamartino

cautioned using the word “necessary,” because if it wasn’t necessary why was it in the budget and felt that it was more an issue of prioritizing.

Dr. Taylor felt that it was critical that the Board prepare a set of programs that will be on the chopping block so the public knows what will happen. Mr. Yamartino felt that the Board and the towns should present the information jointly. It was agreed that Dr. Veronesi would prepare the list of programs.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that there has been discussion about how payments are made to the District. Ms. Neubig explained that the payments are based on the needs of the month. Mr. Yamartino commented that the State has been delaying payments to the towns though Middlefield does have a fund balance of about 9 percent.

Mr. Moore also pointed out that the District has reduced staff in the last three years by 9 percent and has had only .3 percent increase in budget over the last four years. He summarized that the plan would be to wait and see and call an emergency meeting, if necessary.

### **Public Comment**

A member of the public commented that the Board should have a true cost of each of the individual programs.

Jim Irish thanked the Board for their open-minded discussion and explained how Middlefield had set their budget this year with an almost 4 mill increase and that if the Governor uses executive order as he has stated he would, Middlefield would see another 2 mill increase in a supplemental bill.

Mr. Yamartino explained that taxpayers in Middlefield with very large homes may see decreases this year while the smaller, less expensive homes will see an almost 20 percent tax increase. This was due to revaluation.

### **Adjournment**

*Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.*

*In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.*

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First