

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, August 20, 2019 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, Durham, Connecticut.

Board members present: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich (by telephone), Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore (by telephone), Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino

Board members absent: Mrs. Geraci

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

Mr. Hicks called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the agenda, as presented.

Dr. Taylor asked to swap items 4 and 6 on the agenda and Mr. Hicks said that they had a discussion this afternoon on the order of things.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Bonding for Memorial and Brewster Building Alterations

- A. To consider and act upon a resolution with respect to recommendations for an appropriation and borrowing authorization for costs related to the design, construction and implementation of alterations and improvements to Memorial Middle School and Frederick F. Brewster Elementary School, the setting of a public hearing with respect to such recommendations and related matters.**

Mrs. Neubig reviewed a quick summary of the projects at Brewster to include addition of six classrooms, classroom expansions and modifications, demolition of portables and installation of security vestibule. At Memorial, conversion of locker room to classroom, demolition of portables and installation of security vestibule. The cost of the Brewster projects is \$3.8 million (before state reimbursement) and Memorial is at \$527,000. Estimated financing costs are \$77,000, with the total bond authorization needing approval at \$4.475 million. Mrs. Neubig did note that the estimated state reimbursement is 52.5 percent (\$2.3 million) and the district's share would be \$2.166 million. The district can also ask for reimbursement of the financing costs as well.

The proposed bond would be a 20-year bond with 19 level principle payments of \$114,000 beginning in 2021. The first year principle payment would be deferred and the projected interest rate is 2.4092, with total interest over the life of the bond at \$867,000.

As far as the individual towns' mill rate, Mrs. Neubig worked with Bill Lindsay, the bond advisor, as well as Beth Moncata in Durham and Al Rusilowicz in Middlefield. The average assessment on a house in Durham is \$100,000. The increase in taxes for taxpayers in Durham would be \$8.00 in 2021, then rising to \$19.00 for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, and falls down for the total of 20 years. The current mill rate in Durham is 36.32. For Middlefield, the current mill rate is 32.47 and the average assessment is \$161,341. The increase in taxes for taxpayers in Middlefield would be \$11.34 in 2021, then rising to \$26.08 and falls down for the total of 20 years.

The operating budget percent impact for this proposed debt service would be .24 percent, going up to .55 and then declining. Mrs. Neubig mentioned that 2.38 to 2.51 percent of the budget would be saved by closing Lyman School. Mr. Yamartino asked for those numbers to be converted to dollars per household as well. He felt it was important that the public realized that they would not be voting to raise their taxes if they voted in favor of this bonding.

Dr. Taylor felt they should just show the overall impact and Mr. Yamartino felt it was worth showing the project costs, with the savings and the net result, with the split by town.

Mrs. Booth was concerned about going to referendum for further stages of the project that the taxpayers will eventually say no more. She wondered why they just don't do the whole thing. Dr. Taylor had those same concerns about it not including the gymnasium and cafeteria at Brewster. Mrs. Booth would not be happy with six more classrooms and the other spaces remaining the same. Dr. Taylor asked when the decision was made to break the project into two phases.

Dr. Veronesi felt that the decision was made to not have a timeline associated with the gymnasium and it was scaled back to the bare minimum. Dr. Taylor wondered if the cafeteria component should be a bare minimum because of the changes in numbers of students. Mr. Yamartino added that it would deleterious to nickel and dime the taxpayers.

Mrs. Caramanello stated that when she was at Brewster, they only used half of the space for each lunch wave. Dr. Veronesi reviewed that they had gone from not having a "cafeteria/gymnasium/auditorium" to what they believed would be bare minimum to satisfy the public. Mr. Yamartino asked what the cost of that piece of the project would be, but Dr. Veronesi did not have that information with her, but indicated she would ask Silver Petrucelli for that amount.

Mr. Yamartino asked about the state reimbursement rate being based on the size of the facility and Mrs. Neubig stated that they do have space standards. Mr. Yamartino suggested that this may require some more homework. Dr. Taylor asked if the administration feels comfortable moving forward and Dr. Veronesi felt that the decision was based on what she felt was the Board's perception of what the community would support.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that they had just bonded \$6 million for renovations on existing structures and will now come for another \$2 million and then ask for another million two years from now. He felt that the taxpayers would wonder when it will end. Dr. Taylor agreed and felt that if phase 2 was necessary, it should be included in this part with no second phase. Mr. Yamartino asked if there was enough space for an all-school assembly and Dr. Veronesi felt that that could be done as it is now, however she felt there were restrictions with the gym being the cafeteria and the auditorium.

Mr. Moore added that this project was designed to get the implementation going and no more than that. Dr. Veronesi agreed that this is the least possible financial impact in order to accommodate the change in programming.

Mrs. Petrella felt that there were initially more improvements being made to Memorial and asked if that had been scaled down. Mr. Moore stated that there had been talks about everything, but it was decided to present a project that would work to accommodate the programming. Mrs. Petrella asked if any improvements to Memorial would be made as part of phase 2. Dr. Veronesi stated that there was no phase 2 discussed for Memorial.

Mrs. Petrella noted that this leaves Middlefield with just one school and asked if that would be sufficient for future community uses. She thought that there had been discussions about making Memorial more of a center for the town's use since it will be the only school left in town. Mr. Moore suggested that they could look at additional capital improvements through the capital budget. Dr. Taylor felt that the best way to get this bonding passed is to pass it as it is presented.

Anticipated Executive Session

A. Executive session anticipated for the purpose of discussing written confidential legal advice regarding the Memorial and Brewster building alterations project.

The Board moved into Executive Session at this time.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:34 PM. Mr. Hicks stated that regarding item 4 of the agenda, based on the advice from bond counsel, the Board of Education has elected to delay the referendum on the current bonding proposal.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to adjourn the special meeting of the Board of Education.

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

Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First