

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education held a regular session meeting at 7:30 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, Durham, Connecticut.

Board members present: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino  
Administration present: Dr. Serino, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance.

### **Approval of Agenda**

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

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

### **Public Comment**

Oanh Stephan thanked the board members for their hours of dedication. She has the confidence in the board to make their decisions. She also thanked the board for the District Connection, the mailings and all the public hearing events. The items being discussed have been communicated, shared on social media and Parent Square. Mrs. Stephan does not agree with the vocalization that this board has not been communicating.

### **CRHS Reporters - Ava Kowal, Joshua Mann and Nicholas Vestergaard**

Nick Vestergaard reported that the trip to Washington, DC was amazing. They toured the Capitol, saw the Lincoln, Jefferson and Korean War Memorials, spent the day in the National Mall and all of it helped the students connect to the nation's history. They also saw Arlington Cemetery and witnessed the Changing of the Guard, along with students participating in the wreath laying ceremony. He felt that spending the time with his fellow students and teachers created a greater connection for them all.

Josh Mann reported that the music department held their winter concert before Christmas break and the house was packed. The a capella, Show Choir and Jazz band concert will be held tomorrow. Rehearsals for the play, Mamma Mia, will be starting in January. The first semester of job shadowing is coming to an end. Every two to four weeks, there has been a snack and learn where a company comes in and provides information about the company and specific jobs. There will be a new pool of students taking the class in the next semester.

Ava Kowal reported that the robotics club is currently in their six-week building season. The club has about 25 students and is open to anyone. Adult mentors from Mercy help assist with the projects. The first competition is on March 6<sup>th</sup> in Waterbury, with the theme being Star Wars: Infinite Recharge. The club is building one robot with the task of collecting ping pong balls and launch them at three different targets by itself.

Mrs. Booth would like to see the concerts live-streamed, but it was explained that she can find all of the performances on CRHS POPs' Facebook page.

Mr. Hicks then asked to amend the agenda to add approval of the field trip to Washington, DC for 2020. Dr. Serino stated that the trip is set for November 17-20, 2020.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to add that to the agenda as item 9 and to move the following numbers down.*

*In favor of approving the amendment to the agenda: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

### **Approval of Minutes**

#### **A. Board of Education regular session meeting - December 10, 2019**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2019 meeting, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the December 10, 2019 meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Mrs. Geraci and Mr. Yamartino abstained. Motion carried.*

#### **Next Board Meeting - February 12, 2020 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School**

### **Plan of Regionalization Update**

#### **A. Vote to approve explanatory text**

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hicks, to approve the explanatory text that was prepared by Shipman and Goodwin.*

Mrs. Petrella wondered about the language stating that a school will remain in each town and asked exactly what would go into the document, if approved. Mr. Moore explained that the Regionalization Plan that was already approved included the language about a school in each town. That has been submitted to the State and will be finalized after the referendum.

Attorney Ritter explained that there would be no way to write the referendum question to include all of the information and the question is a summary. Explanatory text is separate from the actual amendment and is more of an explanation to the voters. He reminded everyone that a referendum is now pending and that board members and staff cannot spend any district funds to advocate for or against the referendum.

*In favor of adopting the explanatory text, as presented by Shipman and Goodwin: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Geraci, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **B. Vote to set referendum date**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to set the referendum date for Tuesday, February 11, 2020.*

*In favor of setting the referendum date for Tuesday, February 11, 2020: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Geraci, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Progress Toward Strategic Coherence Goals**

Dr. Serino noted that the information that the board members receive from the principals about what's happening in school buildings is in alignment with the district's Strategic Coherence Plan. She highlighted the examination and implementation of best practices in supporting students with dyslexia. Dr. Serino reported that the district has Kristin Allen, a staff member who is a trained trainer, and she is doing a remarkable job working at Lyman, Brewster and Strong schools. She has offered sessions for teachers to become certified to teach using the Orton-Gillingham method and teachers are doing this on their own time. Screening methods have also been improved and more students are being identified.

Dr. Serino also reported that they continue to look at the gifted and talented identification protocol and enrichment design. She will propose a staff person who will be charged with the enrichment programming and direct service of students in the budget. The gifted identification process has been developed and implemented, using three different data sets. Identified students will be given the OLSAT test hopefully in the next month. They will give an update on the process at the Student Achievement committee meeting.

In well-being, the work has been focused on Strong School and the partnership with CCSU as well as working on restorative practices. An ambassador group has been formed, including Mr. Sadinsky, school counselors and teachers, and they are working with representatives from CCSU on the PAUSE (pausing, awareness, understanding, search and experimentation) method. Steve Fitzgerald and Katy Reddick are the two proponents of using restorative practice and Dr. Serino is extraordinarily proud of them taking this initiative and working with the staff.

Dr. Serino also mentioned the snack and learn program in the Career Center and added that there is also a mock interview process. They are receiving good feedback on these programs. Mr. Moore added that Matt Thompson has done a tremendous job with the students and they are very well-prepared for the interview process.

The proactive parenting series has continued and there was a presentation on December 12, 2019 by a therapist talking about the pressure to be perfect and its unintended consequences. This is a partnership with the Independent Day School.

Wellness programming through the partnership with Connecticare continues. Several staff members earned gift cards. The next focus area is to encourage people to get preventative check-ups.

The climate survey has been distributed and feedback has been received. It will be discussed at the Well-Being committee meeting tomorrow. People generally felt that the district has a safe, welcoming environment and there is family involvement. Some high school students mentioned that their working parents just can't make school events at 3:00 PM. The more negative comments included students who see other students being picked on and treated in an unkind way. They also feel that teachers may be addressing students in an inconsistent manner. Students are saying homework is just too much and they feel crushed, with no time. Students also say they'd like to be more engaged in more authentic learning, that what they're doing makes a difference in their lives and interests them. Some high school students had a hard time having a sense that there are staff members who are really there for them. Some students felt there was some disparities in terms of gender equity, some teachers were biased towards one gender and a lack of sensitivity for ethnic diversity. There were some concerns that not all students were respectful of teachers.

The first phase of the Portrait of the Citizen process was completed and shared. The final draft will go out through Thought Exchange this week to staff, students and parents and a link will be in the Town Times for community members. The next phase is to work in school-based design teams and there will be a community conversation in March with administrators and some teachers. Dr. Serino explained that much of the feedback was very characteristic of what exists in a HOT approach/integrated day program, so they have begun to work with the State Department on different programming and training for staff.

MTA marketing is being expanded and they have begun to explore summer school programming as well. Looking at grade transitioning, the administrative staff has finalized staffing across the district. Dr. Serino also noted that she will be proposing several new positions this year that she feels will be filled by current staff. She confirmed that the board has approved the Brewster third grade moving to Memorial and sixth grade moving to Strong. Dr. Serino stated that they will look at the entire bus schedule to see what start times will be.

The district's partnership with Ningbo continues and 22 students, four faculty members and one administrator will travel to China on March 8, 2020.

Mrs. Booth asked if the teachers were asked if they would like to move or if they were going to be told that they had to. Dr. Serino explained that there was a little bit of both and explained that they take feedback from the staff very seriously. They have had to think hard about the staffing at the high school with the significant drop in enrollment expected in three years.

Mr. Moore noted that he met with the Memorial PTO and the teachers there are closely engaged in the curriculum. They appear to have ownership of the curriculum and he hopes that they will have ownership of the change that is coming as well. He felt that the team there is ready.

### **Approval of Field Trip**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the field trip to Washington, DC on November 17-20, 2020, with the understanding that this trip may be withdrawn at any time by actions of Homeland Security or other law enforcement agencies and that parents or guardians will be apprised of this action.*

*In favor of approving the field trip request to Washington, DC on November 17-20, 2020: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

Dr. Taylor asked what field trips need to be approved and Dr. Serino explained that overnight field trips need to be approved by the board.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **A. Policy Committee Meeting - December 9, 2019**

Mr. Hicks explained that this could be a first read of these policies or, because five or six board members approved them in committee, they could be approved tonight. Dr. Friedrich admitted that he had not read through all of them and would like to read them more thoroughly.

Mr. Yamartino asked about requiring parents to supply an EpiPen for their student and wondered if the board could, in fact, buy a set number of pens. He felt that there is probably an abundance of EpiPens in

each school that expire in a year and Dr. Taylor wasn't sure about the legalities of administering pens to students that don't have their name on it.

### **Communications**

Mr. Moore received communication from Nick Faiella about the field house and the building committee will come back with a number. He also received an email from Ashley McDowell about the drop-off at Brewster and the issue has been addressed. He also received an email from Kelly Lynch about why Brewster families have to make all the changes.

Mr. Moore attended the Memorial PTO meeting on Monday and will attend the Brewster meeting next Monday and the Strong meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Mrs. Geraci asked if the district has Narcan at the high school and Dr. Serino explained that the SRO has Narcan. Mr. Yamartino mentioned that Narcan should probably be at all of the schools.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Serino reminded the board that there is a retreat scheduled for Saturday, January 25<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 AM to 11:30 AM. It will be held in the Middlefield Community Center. The agenda includes an overview of the budget and a review of the board's and superintendent's goals and progress to date. Dr. Serino asked the board members to send her any suggestions, comments or questions they may have about the budget process prior to the retreat.

Dr. Serino also mentioned the consideration of fifth grade staying at Lyman School and reported that they had surveyed the parents. There are 49 fourth graders at John Lyman and received 35 responses. Of those 35 responses, some people duplicated responses and the result was 20 people who said that they would be interested in having their child stay at Lyman. The main reasons were their love for John Lyman and not wanting their child to have another transition. Nine parents stated that their child could go to Memorial, with the main reasons being having had another child at Memorial and being ready to move on.

The administrative group reviewed the curriculum and logistics. Because there will be no looping option for fifth grade at Memorial, all the students will be taught together. All of the teachers will teach English language arts, but then individual teachers will teach all the math, science and social studies.

Dr. Serino reviewed that there is a problem with the portable at John Lyman and she has been told that it will be about \$10,000 to repair it. Their recommendation is for the students to be taken out of the front portables and move them into two classrooms in the school building. That would mean relocating some resource room/special education staff. Because of the space constraints, capital needs and potential improvements, Dr. Serino would recommend having the fifth graders move forward to Memorial School. She stressed that she has heard the parents' concerns, but feels that this is best for the students.

Mrs. Petrella added that this is a good example of the administration listening to parents, but the circumstances dictated otherwise.

**Director of Finance's Report**

Mrs. Neubig reported that the district is halfway through the fiscal year and revenue is at 52 percent received and expenses are at 44 percent. MTA revenue is at 52 percent and expenditures are at 31 percent.

Mrs. Neubig distributed the 2018-2019 audit for the board members' review. Blum Shapiro will attend the February ERC meeting to review it in detail. The general fund balance closed out the year at \$2.3 million which was an increase of \$850,000 primarily due to salaries and benefits. The sole remaining item on the management letter is in the area of cyber security. They are hoping to budget cyber security training for employees.

**Vote to approve financing for energy project**

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that the total value of the equipment that the district will receive is \$4.1 million. At the end of the 16-year lease, there will be a \$1.00 purchase price. Guaranteed savings over the 16 years is \$4.7 million. The total lease and verification payments over the 16 years is \$4.5 million, which leaves a positive cash flow of \$193,000. This will all be a net zero to the budget. This project removes approximately \$1 million out of the bonding proposal.

The low bidder in the RFP for the energy retrofit project financing was TD Equipment Finance and Mrs. Neubig asked the board to authorize the financing and award the RFP to TD Equipment. The interest rate is 2.18 percent. Mr. Yamartino reviewed that if the district went with the original company, the interest rate would have been 4 percent.

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to authorize the execution of a lease purchase agreement with respect to the acquisition, purchase, financing and leasing of equipment, authorizing the execution and delivery of documents required in connection therewith and authorizing all other actions necessary to the consummation of the transaction.*

*In favor of authorizing the execution of a lease purchase agreement with respect to the acquisition, purchase, financing and leasing of equipment, authorizing the execution and delivery of documents required in connection therewith and authorizing all other actions necessary to the consummation of the transaction: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to award the RFP 2019-006 Energy Retrofit Project Financing to TD Equipment Finance, the lowest bidder.*

*In favor of awarding the RFP 2019-006 Energy Retrofit Project Financing to TD Equipment Finance, the lowest bidder: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

**New Business****A. Vote to approve 2020-2021 Board of Education and committee meeting schedules**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the 2020-2021 Board of Education and committee meeting schedules, as amended.*

Mrs. Booth noted that she has a problem getting to meetings on Wednesdays before 6:00 PM and would either not be able to be on some committees or would miss a lot of meetings. She is particularly interested in Student Achievement. She would be willing to phone in to the meetings.

Mrs. Petrella noted that committee meetings are held in different locations, with some at Lyman, Memorial and Cuginchaug. She encouraged the public to attend committee meetings. Dr. Taylor felt that Student Achievement seems to continually run over an hour. Dr. Serino suggested nine Student Achievement committee meetings from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, with the Policy committee to start at 6:00 PM.

*In favor of approving the 2020-2021 Board of Education and committee meeting schedules, as amended: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **B. Vote to approve 2020-2021 school calendar**

Dr. Serino reviewed that the board had approved two years of calendars, with the first day back for staff as August 21<sup>st</sup>. The union and some parents felt that was kind of early, so convocation for staff will be on Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, professional development on the 28<sup>th</sup>, the 31<sup>st</sup> will be a teacher workday with students coming back on Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>. The first two weeks of school will be a four-day week.

Mrs. Booth suggested that the district reach out to the park and rec departments to let them know the school start date so that they can extend camps, if they would like. Mrs. Geraci mentioned that it would be a long time for special ed kids not being in school and Dr. Serino will look at that.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, to approve the 2020-2021 school calendar, as amended.*

*In favor of approving the 2020-2021 school calendar, as amended: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **Public Comment**

Richard Parmelee would like to see an end to activity fees and would like the board to consider ending the football program. He felt that the public should be made aware of what it costs to run the football program and what the other school systems pay. He noted that football is dangerous and that head injuries are cumulative. As far as the trip to China, Mr. Parmelee did feel there was a definite value to travel, however some consideration should be given to putting everybody on equal footing. He considers it his obligation to pay for programs, whether he supports them or not.

Heather Parente, from Durham, reported that the kids in the Brewster concert did sign language for Jingle Bells. She also asked that the board make sure that the playground at Memorial be special needs because she wants to be sure all kids can play together. She also noted that there is a Special Ed PTO in the district, with their next meeting on February 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 at Brewster. She invited the board members to attend.

Anne Olszewski noted that the playground at John Lyman was paid for by fund raising and the parents actually built it. She was just made aware that that playground is gone and she would like to know why. Mrs. Neubig explained that the playground inspector deemed it unsafe for children and it had to be shut

down. Dr. Serino explained that some things have gone beyond their life expectancy. Repairs have been made to that playscape in the past, but they were told that certain areas are unsafe and cannot be used. The playscape would have had to be replaced in order to comply with code. They did look at a temporary playscape that could be moved to Memorial once John Lyman is closed, but it would be extraordinarily costly. Dr. Serino explained that the principal met with the student senators to discuss what they wanted and they will do the best they can.

Richard Parmelee is opposed to the transfer of Korn School to the Town of Durham because he feels it should stay in the school system to be used as a school, with the gas main and water coming through. He also wondered how transferring Korn School would affect anything the district wants to do in the future.

Danielle Traves, from Middlefield, asked what committees have space available for community members. Mr. Moore explained that one member from each town could join each committee except for Human Resources. He encouraged her to write him a letter, explaining why she would want to be on a committee, he will interview her and then bring the recommendation to the full board.

Rebekah Doweyko, psychotherapist specializing in the treatment of eating disorders asked if the health assessment and screening policy assesses for the presence of an eating disorder. One in 10 children and adolescents struggle with an eating disorder. Dr. Serino explained that the district does not do the health assessment and the policy has to do with staff and funding from Connecticare. Students would be assessed during their physicals and the information is forwarded to the district. The parent also explained that her third grade daughter came home telling her how important it is to read labels and she was concerned about that. She asked who reviews the health curriculum and how it is delivered. Dr. Serino suggested that they talk.

Carl Stoup thanked Mrs. Neubig and those involved with the energy project for their hard work. He hopes that this means that the district will borrow roughly \$1 million less in the bonding.

### **Adjournment**

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 9:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First