

Revised

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Finance Committee met on Tuesday, April 3, 2018 at 6:30 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Mr. Augur, Mr. Booth, Mrs. Geraci, Mrs. Opalacz, Mrs. Patel, Mr. Stengel and Mrs. Neubig

Committee members absent: Mrs. Benedetto and Mr. Irish

Mr. Augur called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Geraci made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stengel, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda: Mr. Augur, Mr. Booth, Mrs. Geraci, Mrs. Opalacz, Mrs. Patel and Mr. Stengel. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes - February 21, 2018

Mrs. Geraci made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stengel, to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2018 meeting, as presented.

There was some discussion that motions need to be out within 48 hours of the meeting and minutes should be out within 72 hours of the meeting, as per FOI.

In favor of approving the minutes from the February 21, 2018 meeting: Mr. Augur, Mr. Booth, Mrs. Geraci, Mrs. Opalacz, Mrs. Patel and Mr. Stengel. Motion passed unanimously.

Debt/Debt Service Discussion

Mr. Augur explained that the Board wanted the Finance Committee to discuss this issue again because they are talking about security options and \$400,000 has been earmarked in the current budget for safety. Mrs. Neubig reviewed the adjusted budget that shows an additional 5 percent reduction in the salary line to account for vacancies at \$119,000, capital was reduced by \$181,000 and debt service was reduced by \$100,000.

Mr. Augur mentioned that vestibules were estimated at \$583,000 which is the low end of the estimate because it doesn't include any office alterations and that is after state reimbursement. Mrs. Neubig stated that they would not need to include Korn School when the question was asked and stated that the project

is not a priority list project and does not have to follow that timeline; the projects can be approved as they are applied for.

Mr. Augur also explained that any issues related to building utilization was two years out and would not have been included in the current budget, though there were amounts for a consultant on the visioning and architectural services under purchased services.

Mr. Stengel reviewed that the Town of Durham has no debt at the current time, but does have several significant projects in the planning phase as well as a capital plan. The RSD13 allocation of \$23 million represents 77 percent of Durham's grand total expenditure budget or 78 percent of the net to be raised by taxes. That number will go up as ECS drops. Both Durham and Middlefield are significantly affected by swings in enrollment.

Mr. Augur mentioned that someone was looking at legislation to average that out and Mrs. Neubig reported that she thought CCM was discussing using a five-year average, but has not been a part of any discussions.

Mr. Stengel went on to explain that Durham's ECS funding will be reduced by approximately \$342,000 from 2018 to 2019. Over the period from 2017 to 2028, Durham expects to see ECS decline from approximately \$3.9 million to \$1.7 million. For Durham, a \$680,000 loss in ECS results in a 1 mill increase and will produce a 3.3 mill increase over that time period. Mr. Stengel also reported that Durham's Grand List grew by only 1.4 percent last year, mostly due to personal property and motor vehicles. The Board of Finance proposed their budget last night which will decrease the mill rate from 37.58 to 37.07, by increasing the motor vehicle mill rate and using debt financing for several projects.

Mr. Stengel also reviewed Durham's capital plan, which includes fire trucks, public works vehicles, ambulances and building maintenance. They also include road improvements and guard rail improvements. These projects have all been funded with reserves. In the current budget, Durham is setting aside \$745,000 in reserves and \$228,000 in capital.

For the Korn Activity Center, they won't have exact values until the engineering and code compliance study is complete but Mr. Stengel's expectation is that Durham will debt-finance this project. The operation of the activity center will also result in significant increases in the budget and operational costs. Mr. Stengel reported that Laura Francis has talked about a roughly 1 mill increase for the Korn Activity Center, primarily due to heat, maintenance and staffing. Mr. Stengel thought that there would be some potential for revenue.

Mr. Stengel reviewed that there are several major culverts that need repair and he expects that this will also have to be debt-financed over several years. The rough estimate for this is \$4.3 million.

Mr. Augur asked if Durham would want to tie all of these projects into one debt package and Mr. Stengel felt that he, personally, would want to tie them together if the timing worked out but the Board of Finance has made no decisions on this. He went on to review the Public Safety Complex and explained that the properties on either side of the fire house are probably going to fall down. The plan for the Public Safety Complex is not currently active, but the need still exists. Rough estimates for this complex run between \$6 and \$8 million, but there is no debt plan at this time. Mr. Stengel did not know if, and when, this project will become active.

Regarding communications, Mr. Stengel explained that both the radios and network equipment require updates and will probably require at least \$1 to \$2 million. This would include the fire department, ambulance corps and emergency management. This could be funded with undesignated reserve or through debt funding. Mr. Augur also felt that the District needed to have radios to be in touch with both towns as well.

Mr. Stengel explained that Durham's capital plan lays out timing for purchases of equipment, but did not have that with him tonight.

Mrs. Neubig reviewed the District's existing debt as well as the capital fund. She would like to see the Board continue with level funding of \$400,000 for capital and she is working with Mr. Yamartino on finalizing the District's capital plan spreadsheet. She also explained the graph shows a potential for a proposed bonding of \$1.5 million. The debt service line item has been reduced by an additional \$100,000 to fund security, which could result in reducing the District's borrowing power. Mr. Augur reviewed that a building change in 2020-2021 would also coincide with a large reduction in debt and Mrs. Neubig explained that that is true. Middlefield's debt service would also be dropping at the same time. Mrs. Neubig will create a graph showing the debt service for all three entities.

Mr. Stengel reviewed that they are now looking at bids for the studies of Korn School and are hoping to do that by this fall. Mr. Stoup commented that they should be deciding on the bids in the next two to three weeks and then the timeline for the study is eight weeks. Mrs. Neubig commented that if Durham doesn't vote until November, that would delay a state application for Brewster renovations. Mr. Augur noted that it would cost approximately \$1 million to demolish Korn School. Mr. Augur is just looking for certainty. He stated that the Board has worked on this for two years with no outcome as of yet.

School Budget Discussion and Impact on Towns

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that the Board removed \$181,000 from the capital plan to fund security and she has identified the items to be delayed. All of the priority items will be funded with the remaining money. Items that will be potentially delayed include paving the driveway, track maintenance, turf replacement and a generator.

Mr. Augur reviewed the security items that are possibilities for the \$400,000 set-aside, including \$225,000 for window film and hiring a Student Resource Officer at approximately \$140,000. There is also \$30,000 from the IT budget for updating cameras and monitors. Mrs. Neubig reviewed what would be involved in the vestibule projects at all the schools and explained that the state will only reimburse if the work is done to their bullet and ballistic proof specifications. There was also some discussion about food service deliveries and whether they would have to come to the vestibule first.

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that the quotes received for kiosks were \$53,500 for the first year and \$13,500 subsequent years. These kiosks scan people's licenses and print a badge with a picture. Mr. Booth commented that he has seen these systems down more than they are working in the healthcare industry and related a story about the systems at airports as well. He generally feels that they may be a waste of money.

Mr. Augur stated that he spoke with a police officer who lives in town and they suggested hardening the buildings before bringing in an SRO. Mrs. Opalacz agreed that the priorities should be identified by talking with other Districts and with the state. Bricks and mortar will outlast technology. She struggles with how many people come in and out of the buildings that aren't recognized and agreed that it must be better to secure the buildings. Mrs. Opalacz felt that the biggest problem will be people holding the door for other people.

Mr. Augur reported that the Board did agree to prioritize some safety items, but wanted to keep the zero percent increase budget. Mr. Booth commented that he has heard people complain that the \$400,000 was not for any specific items and that made them uncomfortable voting for the budget. People would like to know exactly what the money is going to be spent on. Mr. Augur stated that there will be a Utilization meeting on Thursday and he encouraged Mr. Booth to have people email either him or Dr. Taylor. Mr. Booth also felt that people would vote no for armed guards. Mrs. Neubig commented that the Board had asked for a presentation about the SRO and for more information on the window film.

Mr. Stengel commented about how the conversation at the Board meeting went from an SRO to having armed guards at every building. It was generally agreed that things can happen at every school as well as many other places. Mr. Booth hoped that the Board would look at security in all the schools, not just the high school. It was also mentioned that any spending on personnel is a recurring expense for years to come.

Mr. Augur had done some research and found teepee-type structures that are used in classrooms that are bulletproof and can be locked. There was also discussion about the portables and how they can be protected. Mr. Augur did mention that portables would be removed with building renovations.

Mrs. Opalacz does not want to see the Board rush into anything on security and feels that the research should be done before money is wasted. She feels that the Superintendent is pushing for an SRO because she feels comfortable with it because the principal had one at his prior school and really liked it. Mrs. Opalacz would like the Board to talk to other districts to make sure they really do work well. She felt that mental health is the biggest problem.

Mr. Booth felt that the SRO would be a bathroom and speed monitor and that if the school feels a student drives too fast, he should no longer be allowed to park on campus. Mr. Augur reiterated that Mr. Falcone had stated that the SRO would be ticketing students who are vaping and when he brought it up at the last meeting, that was not the case. The girls' bathroom was also brought up and they wondered why female teachers aren't monitoring that. Discussion continued about vaping and how it's even being done in classrooms. Mr. Augur agreed that the SRO is probably not the best way to spend \$140,000 and that more physical things could be done. He is much more in favor of window film now that he has done more research.

Mr. Augur asked about the change in ECS formula and Mr. Stengel explained that the main change was it went from average value of the house to household income. Mr. Augur brought up that the funding does not include anything for mandated programs, such as special education. Mr. Stengel stated that the only thing he is aware of that is being pushed for is to get the MBR to recognize hold-backs. Mr. Augur just wanted everyone to consider the idea of funding for state-mandated programs. Mrs. Neubig explained that there is an excess cost grant for special education spending over the per pupil expenditure, but the state has historically not fully funded it. The District receives over \$300,000 to help reimburse for the

excess special education costs. Mrs. Opalacz feels that the state should fund every bit of that through a voucher system. Mr. Stengel stated that the state took money away from Durham in every area except one. Mrs. Opalacz suggested Mr. Augur speak with Senator Kennedy before he leaves office.

Public Comment

Mr. Stoup questioned prioritizing furniture over a generator.

Mrs. Opalacz asked if the Board had made the decision to keep the elementary schools as HOT schools, then why couldn't Memorial and Brewster both be K-5 and the school you attend is based on geography. That would help save on transportation and still close a school. Mr. Augur explained that Coginchaug is the most underutilized building, with Strong being the next and that split would overcrowd Brewster and Memorial. Mrs. Neubig noted that that would also necessitate renovations at two schools because Memorial would need further renovations to accommodate that age level. Mr. Augur explained that classrooms are different sizes for kindergarten.

Adjournment

Mr. Stengel made a motion, seconded by Mr. Booth, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mr. Booth, Mrs. Geraci, Mrs. Opalacz, Mrs. Patel and Mr. Stengel. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First