

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Finance Committee met in special session on Thursday, May 31, 2018 at 7:00 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 and Mr. Stengel

Committee members absent: Mrs. Benedetto, Mr. Irish

Additional Board members present: Dr. Friedrich, Dr. Taylor

Administration present: Mrs. Neubig, Business Manager

Mr. Augur called the meeting to order at 7:17 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

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

Mr. Stengel thought that item 6 should be removed from the agenda as the representatives from Middlefield were not present. Mr. Augur asked to leave it on the agenda as a reminder since he had received no response from his email that was sent to Ed Bailey.

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 - April 3, 2018

Mr. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2018 meeting, as presented.

Mr. Stengel asked to have the word “only” removed from the fourth paragraph on page 3 discussing bids for Korn School. Mrs. Opalacz asked to have her comments about eighth graders in the high school removed as she does not feel that they should be at the high school and it was decided to delete her last two sentences from the public comment.

In favor of approving the minutes from the April 3, 2018 meeting, as amended: Mr. Augur, Mr. Booth, Mrs. Geraci, Mrs. Opalacz, Mrs. Patel and Mr. Stengel. Motion passed unanimously.

Utilization Options: Towns and Taxpayer Responsibility

Mr. Augur explained that they are not yet at a point where there are final numbers, but they want to begin to discuss how the Board’s eventual decisions can be communicated to the towns. He reviewed that Mr. Moore had shown two slides at the District Hearing which broke down the taxes. Mr. Augur was hoping to be able to put those slides together, showing the utilization numbers as a subset of the education expenses.

Mr. Stengel explained that the most difficult part of that was coming up with the average assessment per household. They took the Grand List and divided it by the number of properties to come up with an average assessment, hopefully excluding commercial.

Mr. Augur explained that he would like to show the costs per option per household. Mr. Augur then asked Mr. Stengel what he thought would be most informative to the taxpayers. Mr. Stengel didn't feel that the average homeowner would want to know that an option would cost them \$150 a year, but Mrs. Geraci felt that that was more pertinent than hearing an option is \$2 million.

Mr. Stengel then stated that he would need to know the capital costs and the carrying costs associated with that as well. Mr. Augur agreed that it would be construction costs net of savings as well as bonding costs. Mr. Stengel asked if he could get the information by year. Mrs. Opalacz asked where the savings would be in the calculation. Mr. Augur explained that the calculation would include the construction, minus the savings from closing John Lyman School.

Mr. Booth asked what would happen if there is no savings and it would be almost less to leave things as they are. He felt that most people only care about when their kids are at a certain school. He felt that it would not be important to most people if the savings don't come into play for 20 years. Mr. Augur didn't believe that everyone would think that way. Mr. Booth stated that he has heard people say that it is not bothering their kids, so they don't care. He felt that most people want to know what the savings is now, not long-term.

Mr. Augur did state that the cost will be bigger than the savings. Mr. Booth felt that people will only hear that their taxes are going up. Mrs. Neubig stated that if it is bonded over a certain number of years, there will be a savings up-front. Dr. Taylor felt it would be two issues, what the cost of the bonding is and what would be saved by closing the school. Mrs. Geraci felt it would be important to explain the trade-offs.

Mrs. Neubig stated that there could be close to \$1 million saved in the first year. Mr. Booth felt it was important to sell that point and mentioned the solar panel project at Brewster that failed. Mrs. Opalacz summarized that Mr. Booth's point is that the cost per taxpayer may not be the way they want to approach it.

Mr. Stengel recalled that the town's project for the solar panels had been received very unfavorably and right after that, the Board of Education came in with a solar panel idea at Brewster and he felt that the bad blood from the first proposal caused the second one to fail. He felt that it was more a NIMBY issue for that. Mr. Stengel also mentioned that while this project may not be an NIMBY issue, the issue of protecting the program is there. Mrs. Opalacz felt that this was even stronger than NIMBY.

Mr. Stengel likes the idea of showing status quo, then the change from that to include the annual cost savings and carrying costs of the bond. He felt that it should be projected out for the life of the bond. Dr. Taylor also mentioned that Lyman has a \$4 or \$5 million capital expense budget for the next year or two which would be the status quo. Mrs. Neubig also explained that that would be cost avoidance as well. Dr. Taylor felt that the status quo would cost more and the options would be cheaper. Mrs. Neubig reminded everyone that the voters at referendum will vote on the cost, not the savings. Mr. Booth felt that if the voters understand what the costs will give them in return, you will get more yes

votes. He felt it was important that the Board explains to the voters why it will be better for them. Mrs. Neubig will draft the information up for each of the options and distribute that.

Utilization Potential Considerations - Town of Middlefield

Mr. Augur explained that they would like to give the Town of Middlefield the opportunity to contemplate and pursue what could be done with John Lyman School. If the District moves forward with the plan to close the school, they would need to dispose of it. The Board is aware that the Town of Middlefield is not interested in owning the building. Mr. Augur explained that Mr. Yamartino had commented that Middlefield has informally discussed forming a small committee to discuss possible uses for the building.

Mr. Augur had sent an email to Ed Bailey and he will follow up this week. There was discussion about a number of schools in the state that have been turned into apartments.

Future Meeting Schedule

Mr. Augur explained that this committee is only supposed to respond to specific requests or directions from the Board, with no regularly-scheduled meetings but he would be willing to create a schedule if the members preferred. Mrs. Opalacz felt it would be a good idea to have a regular schedule and, if there is nothing to discuss, the meeting can be cancelled. Mr. Augur will draft a schedule and circulate it to the members.

Public Comment

Carl Stoup understands the concerns about hardening the buildings for safety, but felt that there is only so much that can be done.

Adjournment

Mrs. Geraci 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 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz

Alwaz First