The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, November 16, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut. Board members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Administration present: Mr. Melnik, Business Manager, and Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Administrator Welcome

Scott Sadinsky, principal at Strong School, reported on the professional development that was held on November 8, 2016. PLC teams are meeting on a weekly basis and assessing and evaluating student data. From a well-being standpoint, there will be an internet safety presentation held tomorrow and a high-school theater group will visit on December 1st and will focus on team development, decision-making, core ethical values, bullying and substance use. Strong School also had a Veteran’s Day assembly at the end of the day on November 10th.

Mr. Sadinsky also commented that he has been working with the staff on the 4Cs and one of their focus areas is how the classrooms are set up. Student collaboration is being stressed. He also distributed a handout about the new STEM lab at Strong School.

Strong School EDGE Group

Kirsten Deitz, health teacher and EDGE co-adviser at Strong School, reviewed what the EDGE program is about. Ms. Deitz thanked Dr. Veronesi for inviting them to attend the meeting and Mr. Sadinsky for his continued support. Ms. Deitz introduced Rhea Patel, Felipe Perez, Lilly French and Madison Burt to the Board.

The students presented information on youth gambling to the Board and explained that they are involved so that they can educate the school about the dangers of gambling. Problem gambling is when gambling starts getting in the way of daily life. The program has three points: gambling is not a risk-free activity, how to keep the problem out of gambling and that help is available. The students have partnered with the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling, the Durham-Middlefield Youth and Family Services, Capital Region Education Council and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

EDGE strives to promote a drug-free community which also includes alcohol and smoking. Students have signed pledges and then this same group formed the Gambling Awareness Group. Ms. Deitz obtained a $750 grant to create a public service announcement.
The students feel that the project is important as it brings awareness to the schools and towns. In school, the students learn about drugs, alcohol and smoking through DARE and health classes but very little about problems with gambling.

The overall goal of the program is to spread awareness and teach the school and town communities about the risks of problem gambling. A public service announcement is being created and will be 15 to 30 seconds long, talking about the effects of gambling. This will be done with Brian MacDuff, a Coginchaug graduate and Durham resident, who has a lot of experience making PSAs.

First draft of the conversation cards have been completed and on October 25th, the students attended a conference in Rocky Hill where they presented in front of over 200 adults who work in the problem gambling industry. On November 1st, they attended CREC in Hartford and did training with four other groups who are working to bring awareness to problem gambling. They have also attended a luncheon with Mr. Sadinsky and Dr. Veronesi.

One of the students reviewed the conversation cards that have been drafted. These include facts and statistics about gambling as well as some fun questions. He stressed that it is important for kids to learn early so they don’t have a problem in the future. The cards will be distributed at local restaurants, including Lyman Orchards, Time Out Taverne and Perk on Main. The group is still working on the PSA and is also planning to keep the momentum up to see what else can be done to promote awareness. The students thanked the Board for inviting them to attend.

Mrs. Boyle asked how the group felt speaking in front of 250 adults and the students felt it was nerve-wracking because they didn’t know what 200 adults looked like in one group. Mr. Moore asked if they have spoken with the other 7th and 8th grade students and they explained that they definitely talk to their friends, but they haven’t gone into classrooms at this point. They have had discussion about doing that during a flex period, but it’s not definite yet. The Board thanked the students for coming and encouraged them to keep up the good work.

**Public Comment**

Joyce Kellish mentioned that Etzie Heyl and Chet Raczka were also in attendance and explained that they are part of the committee that wrote the letter asking for something to be dedicated to the Benchwarmers. Mrs. Kellish wanted to thank the Board for considering the request. Mrs. Hellish explained that her husband had been a member of the Benchwarmers and they have raised a lot of money and have been very good to the District and still are. It is the 50th anniversary of the Benchwarmers and this will be very important to them.

Richard Kellish commented that he was in the Benchwarmers for 16 to 20 years and explained that they support all high school athletics. They have provided jackets for championship teams. The Benchwarmers raise about $35,000 to $40,000 at the Durham Fair and have contributed close to $1.5 million to the school system.
Rob Bajoros, Health teacher at the high school, explained that he also runs unified sports, the bicycle club and ski club. He reviewed what the bicycle club has been doing and explained that over the past two years, they have raised over $5,000 for charity, most of which went to the American Diabetes Association and asthma awareness. Mr. Bajoros thanked the Benchwarmers and the Special Ed department for their support of the unified sports program. He also thanked the Board for approving a budget for unified sports. Three Shoreline tournaments are being hosted this year. Mr. Bajoros also commented on the impact this program has had in the school and explained that the program is being recognized by Special Olympics International. To be recognized, it had to be proven that the program was sustainable, inclusive and focused on youth leadership. Mr. Bajoros again thanked the Board for their support.

Next Board Meeting - December 14, 2016 in the CRHS Library

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Moore asked to move number 12, item 3, after approval of the minutes, becoming item number 8. He also explained that both Anticipated Executive Sessions are not needed tonight. He also mentioned that a senior field trip needs to be added under item 13. Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Flanagan, to approve the agenda, as amended.
In favor of approving the agenda as amended: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes B October 5, 2016

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mr. Renninghoff, to approve the minutes of October 5, 2016. Mr. Moore commented that he appreciates the level of detail in the minutes.

In favor of approving the minutes of October 5, 2016: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Committee Reports

A. Naming Committee

Mr. Renninghoff reported on behalf of the committee which included Dr. Friedrich, Lindsey Herzig and Merrill Adams. The committee would like to propose to the Board to name the gymnasium at Strong Middle School, which was formerly Durham High School and the school that the Benchwarmers originated from, in honor of the Benchwarmers on the occasion of their 50th anniversary next month. The actual name has not been firmed up yet, but an event will be held in December to dedicate the gymnasium. Mr. Moore explained that the committee will work with the Benchwarmers and Strong School on a logo and name. Dr. Veronesi reported that she had reached out to the Athletic Director and a tournament is being held at Coginchaug over winter break and they would like to acknowledge the Benchwarmers during a game then also. Dr. Veronesi also commented that they would like to hold some type of reception at Strong School and everyone who signed the letter will be contacted.
Mr. Renninghoff made a motion, seconded by Dr. Freidrich, to name the gymnasium at Strong Middle School in honor of the Benchwarmers.

In favor of naming the gymnasium at Strong Middle School in honor of the Benchwarmers: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Communications

Mr. Moore reported that Francis Willett has resigned from the Board and thanked him for all the work he has done over the last year including his efforts to bring safety into the school system. Mrs. Flanagan stated that Mr. Willett had been a huge contributor to the Board in many ways and also brought the element of safety to the forefront. Mrs. Flanagan extended her sincere thanks and tremendous respect for what Mr. Willett brought to the Board. Mrs. Boyle was sad to see Mr. Willett leave and wished them both all the best. Dr. Veronesi commented that Mr. Willett has been absolutely invaluable as someone she could reach out to during some challenging situations. She also commented that he always acknowledged that his appreciation as to what it means to deliver a high-class, high-quality education. Dr. Veronesi wished Mr. Willett and his family all the best. Mr. Moore also commented that the Town of Durham has noticed a special town meeting to replace Mr. Willett for next Monday at 7:00 pm at the high school.

Mr. Moore also acknowledged the staff that worked on the tag sale that was held. About 300 local families attended as well as the towns and other offices. Mr. Moore especially thanked Rob Francis, Ron Melnik, Jim Croteau, Kathy Veronesi, Sue Gaudreau, Tippy Popp, Cam Pollitt, Tyler Dougherty and Mike McShane for all of their work.

Mr. Melnik also mentioned that they had asked Brian Falcone for some student help with the tag sale and the Bike Club and the Honor Society both helped on the day of the sale and prior. $10,178 was raised at the tag sale and they would like to make a donation of $500 to the Bike Club, $300 to the Honor Society and, at Mr. Falcone’s request, $2,000 to the Drama Club for the play. Along with that, $2,191 was spent on part-time and full-time people working to prepare for the tag sale. He also reported that the silent auction went very well and everything was sold.

Mr. Renninghoff made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to make the donations of $500 to the bike club, $300 to the Honor Society and $2,000 to the Drama Club.

In favor of making the above donations: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Business Manager’s Report

Mr. Melnik reported that every November, the district participates in the Healthy Food Certification and have to get an exception for items that do not comply. Four events will be held
that will be exceptions: all of the athletic events, John Lyman’s Drama Club Play, Brewster PTO’s food trucks and the Ice Cream Social that the Brewster PTO will be hosting. Food at these events does not meet the criteria for the Healthy Food Certification and must be granted an exemption.

Mr. Renninghoff made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the food and beverage fundraisers for the Connecticut State Department Healthy Food Certification compliance form for 2016-2017.

In favor of the motion: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Mr. Melnik went on to explain that Hooker & Holcombe, actuaries, and Morgan Stanley, investment firm, held an information session this afternoon with staff that do not participate in the Teachers Retirement Board. He felt it was a very successful event.

Mr. Melnik also reported that the preliminary audit was received from Blum Shapiro yesterday, but he has not read through it yet. Representatives will join ERC on December 7th to go over the audit and the draft form will be distributed to Board members next week. Mr. Melnik stated that the fund balance was $1,196,000 this year and the report indicates that next year will be $884,000.

Mr. Yamartino asked about the oil and diesel pricing that was discussed at last meeting and Mr. Melnik stated that they have not locked the price yet but it will be within the guidelines that were specified. It should be locked in next week.

Superintendent’s Report

Dr. Veronesi commented that the Strong School students presented this evening while the high school reporters were in Washington, DC for their senior trip and reminded the Board that their support gives the district’s kids opportunities to do what they’re doing. Dr. Veronesi hopes that the Board feels as proud as she does about the students’ presentations.

Dr. Veronesi also wanted to recognize the national award that Unified Sports received and the outstanding job they do. She also commented on the Veteran’s Day concert which was exceptional. Mr. Moore commented on the clothing that the students wore that night and how professional they looked. The holiday concert will be held on December 21st.

Dr. Veronesi also wanted to update the Board on Silver Petrucelli’s work and that step two has been completed with a school program proposal and is just about a month behind the original time line. She reminded everyone that the Board had decided that focus groups be held. The report looked at the viability of two K-5 schools, a 6-8 middle school and a high school. They also included some specs on what it would look like if there were two K-6 schools and also one elementary school. Part of the report looks at reimbursement amounts with renovations as opposed to new construction. One of the points that has been brought up is enrollment is about
60 students higher than had been projected, bringing total enrollment to 1,720 rather than 1,660. Milone and MacBroom had stated that this seemed to be a bit of a trend, but not anything that would be so significant that it would require big changes. A Utilization Committee meeting will be held on November 30th and Silver Petrucci will attend that meeting.

Dr. Veronesi mentioned that about 40 parents were involved in the focus groups and both schools and programs were well-represented. The primary concerns of the parents had to do with buildings under construction, maintaining the two programs that the District has supported for so many years, holding on to the things that are kind of near and dear to people’s expectations, class size, program integrity, impact of instruction and fluctuations of enrollment projections. Milone and MacBroom will do an update on enrollment and, for an additional $1,000, will prepare a report that could be used if the District was to go to referendum.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that there had been a plan to have a Board of Finance/Board of Education budget retreat in the month of November, but the meeting will be held in the Coginchaug Regional High School library on December 1st at 5:30 pm. Dinner will be served, followed by a budget retreat.

Dr. Veronesi had intended to discuss priorities and parameters after having the budget retreat, but she would like to briefly review that tonight. Top on the list of priorities is the improvement of student learning in all schools through improved instruction, collaboration and data analysis, continuing with the PLC model and looking carefully at student achievement data. Expansion of high-quality professional learning and development will also be stressed. Continued use of 21st century 4Cs, communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity, to increase student engagement and learning is a priority. Further priorities will be expansion of the STEM programming as well as the expansion of the pre-K program. Other items will be the development of a career center as well as continued exploration and planning of future K-5 program configuration, including the maintenance of class sizes and including the physical, social and emotional safety of all of the students. Another issue would be maintaining sufficient funding to meet wage and benefit agreements. Lastly, to explore and plan for facilities changes that may be coming and continued response to capital improvement needs and a long-term budget approach. The debt schedule and state funding will likely change. Another priority that Dr. Veronesi feels is the foundation for the budget work is the collaboration that the administrative team has had with the Board of Education and the Boards of Finance.

Mr. Moore commented that the focus group was very helpful and positive, with comments based on the idea rather than an actual plan.

**Presentation of Regional School District 13 Professional Learning - Maryellen Manning**

Dr. Veronesi introduced Maryellen Manning, the Director of Organizational Development. Ms. Manning deals with personnel, human resources and professional learning and development of the teachers and staff. She will be sharing with the Board what’s happening in terms of professional development and learning.
Ms. Manning thanked the Board for their faith in her and her position. One of her responsibilities is professional learning and she and Dr. Veronesi coined the phrase, “professionalize professional learning” which reaffirmed the district’s commitment to the teachers and staff.

Three specific areas were identified to ground the work for this year and beyond which included aligning the district with the state Standards for Professional Learning, utilizing the PDEC committee which is professional development and teacher evaluation committee and making sure the district is committed to provide engaging professional learning opportunities.

Ms. Manning reviewed the district’s commitment to adult learners which includes empowering the teachers, making sure they have an opportunity to be creative and collaborate with one another. The second component is academic content that will affect student achievement. The idea of the 4Cs also has to be embedded into everything that is planned. Lastly is the art of teaching and the district does not want the teachers to lose sight of that.

The demand for professional learning is high. In the last five years, new standards were developed for Common Core, new national assessments were initiated, new evaluation standards for teachers were introduced and now new science standards and assessments are looming as well as the arts and social studies.

Ms. Manning explained that the district is committed to professional learning that is engaging and relevant. The plan is to not only adopt to the professional learning standards, but to really live them and embed them into the professional learning community. In 2015, the State Department adopted the Connecticut State Standards for Professional Learning which were designed to make sure there is a level playing field and allow the PDEC groups and Central Office administration to have something to plan with. Ms. Manning strongly believes in these standards which come from Learning Forward which is an adult think tank/research group on adult learning and professional development.

Ms. Manning reviewed the standards which are composed of seven domains, plus an additional one adopted by the State. The first is learning communities with the ability to talk with one another. Teacher leaders, resources, grounded in data, learning designs, implementation and outcome-driven are other domains. The last one, cultural competency, was added by the State and hopes to help teachers understand who their students are and where they come from.

District 13 has shared the standards with the Board and the PDEC committee. Looking at the definition of engagement, it means very attractive or pleasing in a way that holds your attention, drawing favorable attention or interest. The hope is to have learning become an unavoidable byproduct, that magical moment when everything aligns.

The district is also committed to building teacher leadership. There were over 40 professional learning sessions held on November 8th and many of them were facilitated and co-led by teacher leaders. Ms. Manning showed the board a gallery of pictures from the professional development day and described what was happening in each picture.
Information will be distributed to teachers at least a week in advance of professional development and many meetings are held with the groups of teachers who will be facilitating. Ms. Manning reviewed an example of what was distributed to the teachers which included expectations for the day. Teachers were able to register online for the sessions and complete session evaluations online as well. Data can then be shared with Central Office and administrators. Ms. Manning reviewed the evaluations from two sessions that were held.

Ms. Manning also reported that the district served as host for the first annual Consortium Mental Health Summit through the leadership of Amy Emory and approximately 70 colleagues from around the region attended. She also mentioned that experts are being brought in to help with professional learning as well as having some of the district’s people go out to conferences.

Ms. Manning then played a video about professional learning for the Board. She then explained that there are two more district-wide professional learning days planned for this year as well as a handful of early-release days.

Mr. Moore asked if she had been satisfied with the progress and Ms. Manning stated that she was very satisfied with the professionalism of the teachers and their willingness to step into leadership roles as well as their acceptance of greater expectations. Ms. Manning also commented that the response to the math standards was overwhelmingly positive.

Dr. Friedrich commented that the organization is very impressive and the choices, set-up and registration is a remarkable accomplishment. He then asked how the results were being evaluated and Ms. Manning explained that the data will be brought back to Central Office, the PDEC committee and the leadership to decide what comes next.

Dr. Friedrich also voiced concern about how the math standards have shifted and the teachers being uncertain about the material and asked if the problem that the Board had feared existed. Ms. Manning does feel that the profession is overwhelmed and that they should be supported, but they are working to make sure that the time and training is provided so they feel comfortable. Dr. Veronesi explained that that was in part why math coaches were increased. She also explained a very high-level consultant was brought in to work with the teachers and to help with the conceptual understanding of the shifts in mathematics. The teachers were asking for strategies and the consultant explained that this was more about a broader understanding than strategies. Ms. Manning also commented that there had been three or four planning sessions prior to the math session held on November 8th. Dr. Friedrich was very appreciative of the effort put into this issue.

The Board took a quick break at this point.

Committee Reports

A. Utilization Committee
Mrs. Flanagan reported that the Utilization Committee met on October 19th and discussed the request to the legislators to pursue leasing authority for the Board. The committee agreed to defer any discussion related to that as they understand that the Town of Durham is definitely interested in some kind of an agreement where title would transfer to Durham which would mean that the Board does not need leasing authority.

The committee also agreed that it would be appropriate to have the demographic study updated this year, given the uptick in enrollment. They also talked about the grant waiver related to Korn School and have confirmed that the language of the waiver would not present a problem in terms of transferring the school. The committee will pursue one more opinion on that from their legal firm.

The committee did receive some communication from the Town of Durham regarding ideas on how to pursue further transfer of Korn School and will continue those discussions. The committee will have their legal representation reach out to the Town’s legal representation. They also talked about Silver Petrucelli and the timeline of the report. Mrs. Flanagan also commented that she had attended the parent focus group and found the feedback to be very informative. Mrs. Flanagan also feels that continued communication with the community is very important to the success of the project.

The next meeting will be held on November 30, 2016 at 4:00 pm when they hope to have some feedback from formal communications between the legal firms of the Town of Durham and the Board. Mr. Yamartino asked if Ed Bailey is involved in any of the discussions, and Mrs. Boyle stated that while Mr. Bailey may not be interested, she wondered how Middlefield will be brought into the conversation regarding the financial impact. Mrs. Flanagan thought that that would happen through the Board of Education once a proposal is received from Durham.

Mr. Moore commented that a letter has been received from Laura Francis on behalf of the Board of Selectmen asking that the issue be brought to them through executive session. Mrs. Flanagan felt that the negotiations are typical where they are kept confidential so that people have the ability to express and exchange ideas. Mr. Moore stated that they will check with the attorneys to see if the issue can be kept in executive session with this board as well. Mrs. Boyle felt that it is a publicly-owned building that was paid for by the taxpayers and yet the townspeople of Middlefield don’t know anything about their vested interest in that building. Mr. Moore and Mrs. Flanagan reiterated that there have been no discussions as of yet. Mr. Yamartino mentioned that Middlefield should also have a place at the table as well, either Ed Bailey or Middlefield's attorney, when it comes to the method used for valuation of the property. Middlefield may not have an interest in acquiring the property, but does still have an interest in the disposition of the property.

B. Student Achievement Committee

Mrs. Flanagan reported that the Student Achievement Committee met on October 26, 2016 with the primary agenda of a STEM presentation from Tina Hurlbert. There was also some discussion
with Dr. Berry about the five-year trends, both prior to and subsequent to the implementation of the SBAC. All of that information was on the Google drive for Board members to review.

The STEM presentation was fabulous and a great example of the 4Cs and how they come into the classroom. Mrs. Flanagan would encourage Board members to visit the STEM lab at Strong School and one of the concerns that came up is what happens once the students get to Coginchaug. Mrs. Hurlbert informed the committee that there is a 3D printer on the Space Station where they reproduce parts that are needed while they are in space. This just confirms the relevance of the STEM lab to career training.

Mrs. Flanagan also officially thanked the Merwin Foundation for their donation in helping the district to pursue STEM initiatives in our schools and encouraged Board members to come to SAC meetings if they can make it. Mrs. Flanagan also stated that Mrs. Hurlbert opens up the lab to students when they have a free period and makes herself available to guide them through the projects.

Mr. Yamartino asked if there might be companies in the area that might be willing to sponsor labs at the high school level through donations of equipment, money and/or expertise. Dr. Veronesi reported that she has charged Dr. Berry with examining what the learning outcomes would be. Mr. Moore commented that the Newington program is several years old and has made a partnership with a prosthetics firm in Cromwell and other organizations that help with other things. He felt it would be a good idea to attract local companies to provide assistance. Mr. Yamartino felt that there are a lot of experts throughout the community that could help.

C. Pension Committee

Ron Melnik reported that the Pension Committee held a meeting in October, as required by the pension document. There were no issues or concerns at the time of the meeting and they reviewed the performance of the plan. The next meeting is scheduled for May, 2017. The Pension Committee is looking for a new member from the community. Mr. Yamartino stated that he would step in if no one else was available.

D. Educational Resources Committee

Mr. Moore reported that the Educational Resources Committee met just prior to this meeting and voted to make a recommendation to change some of the bond managers and split the bond allocation 50/50.

New Business

A. Vote to Ratify Administrator’s Contract

Dr. Veronesi reviewed that a copy of the contract had been sent to the Board members. The contract was reopened for insurance and some slight changes were made to the administrators’ contribution for health care which was a 1 percent increase. An MOU was enacted when the
Director of Organizational Development position was added to the administrators and all of the Directors were put on one level. Mr. Moore stated that the administrators ratified the changes a few weeks ago.

Mr. Renninghoff made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to ratify the contract changes.
In favor of ratifying the contract changes: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

B. Field Trip Request - New Hampshire
C. Field Trip Request - Vermont
E. Field Trip Request - Senior Trip

Dr. Veronesi reviewed that the field trips requests for the Ski Club had been approved by the Board last year.

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve all three field trips.
In favor of approving the three field trips for the Ski Club: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

D. Confirm Dates for Budget Retreat, Utilization Committee and Student Achievement Committee meetings

Dr. Veronesi confirmed that the budget retreat with the Boards of Finance will be on December 1st, Utilization Committee on November 30th and Student Achievement Committee on January 4th at 6:30 pm.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mrs. Boyle made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Dr. Friedrich.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz
Alwaz First