

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at 7:00 PM in the Auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut. Board members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Dr. Taylor.

Board members absent: Mr. Yamartino.

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Russell, Interim Business Manager.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Administrator Welcome - Nancy Heckler

Nancy Heckler spoke to the Board about the school-wide data team, or PLC, which she feels has a positive impact on student achievement, engagement and well-being. The district looks at data from kindergarten to 12th grade and focuses on how they are doing, what to do better in and how to make the change. Grade-level teams met every single week, looking at test scores, formative assessments and student work. They focus in on how instruction can be changed to help students that are struggling.

Brewster has implemented a school-wide team which looks at cumulative information from all students at the school. They look at what the data tells them and what it doesn't. They also celebrate the good things. The teachers then look at the data in their classroom as well as the school. The teachers like the data because it helps them inform instruction. The teachers always consider the engagement including communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. Kids love learning from each other.

Brewster School's goal is educate the whole child. When the teachers are planning lessons, they think about how to help the kids become confident learners. They emphasize stamina and perseverance and hope to keep up what's good. The STEM projects that are being done are amazing.

Public Comment

Sean Piscatelli spoke in support of the before- and after-school program and asked if that would be discussed at tonight's meeting and what the next steps will be. Mr. Moore explained that that issue will be discussed at next week's budget discussion.

Heather Parenti spoke in support of the full-day preschool program and had written a letter that was not read at the last meeting. Mrs. Parenti is a special education teacher and feels that there is not enough time at the preschool level. Mrs. Parenti's son has a rare genetic condition and she and her husband want him to be immersed in learning and supported by his service providers. She feels that her son needs the most time in preschool to achieve his success.

Matt Stopka asked if interscholastic sports would be on tonight's agenda and what the next steps are for considering that as part of the budget.

Christine Geraci reports that she has spoken with a lot of contacts at the state level, including Senator Kennedy, people on the Early Childhood Council, people on the American Disabilities Council, the Intellectual Disabilities Council and everyone was amazed that our wonderful school district would be considering a full-time preschool program. Everyone she spoke with is fully in support of it and felt it

was the direction that the state is heading. Mrs. Geraci also commented that Governor Malloy had not proposed cuts in these areas, showing his commitment to early childhood education. Mrs. Geraci feels that early intervention and prevention will equal less money down the road for an identified child in the district. Parents do not want to outsource their children. Mrs. Geraci also felt that in order to help increase enrollment, young families are needed. Mrs. Geraci has a special needs child and the Birth-to-Three program actually recommended they move to Durham for the school district. She feels that the District needs to offer things that other districts don't have or things that other districts do have, such as before- and after-care. It would help to attract families to the towns. Mrs. Geraci reiterated her support for full-day preschool and before- and after-care.

Donia Viola, from Durham, is quite impressed with the Devil's Advocate newspaper and shows that students are doing very well in writing. The article about the CIAC rules caught her attention as did the column about teaching the students to ignore the comments from the stands. Mrs. Viola feels that the intramural program at Strong School is a good idea and felt that students might get more out of it without the competition. Mrs. Viola also thought that the turf would have been warranted and would have lasted quite a few years. She felt that \$189,500 was a lot of money. Mrs. Viola added that she felt that the preschool program that is in place would be sufficient at this time and thought that parents could possibly "pay to play." She felt that this is a role that is not a responsibility of the schools and also felt that the parents would need to pick up the tab for before- and after-school programs as well.

Jen Schulten, a parent of two high-schoolers, hoped to have the conversation about intramurals at another time, but reiterated what Nancy Heckler had said about keeping up what's good in order to not lose achievement. Sports has been done at Strong School for many, many years and while intramurals has a profound function of getting everybody involved, Mrs. Schulten was not sure that enough research has been done. She would like to see a little bit more homework done before deciding to replace the interscholastic program. Mrs. Schulten felt that there was some good discussion at the prior meeting and felt that pay-to-play should be on the table. She also felt that that should be applicable to the arts as well. Mrs. Schulten also felt that the district should talk to the CIAC about the multiple rules and also with other schools to possibly reduce the number of events. Mrs. Schulten stated that she has run GoFar for almost 12 years and has run the programs on just small donations from the community. She would like to see the district do both interscholastic and intramurals and hopes the Board continues the conversation.

Next Board Meeting - March 15, 2017 in the CRHS Library

This meeting will also be a joint meeting with the Boards of Finance from both Durham and Middlefield.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Veronesi suggested that the agenda be amended to move Athletics/Intramurals up to 7A. Mrs. Boyle made a motion to move Athletics/Intramurals to Item 7A. Mr. Renninghoff seconded the motion.

In favor of amending the agenda as above: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed.

Mr. Renninghoff made a motion to approve the agenda, as amended, seconded by Mrs. Boyle.

In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes – February 22, 2017

Mr. Moore reported that an addendum to the minutes had been included in the Board's packets that was a list of names of everyone who emailed or communicated in some way, the GoFar Board of Directors and a petition.

Mr. Renninghoff made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Flanagan, to approve the minutes of February 22, 2017 as amended. Mr. Moore did mention that he thought there were a couple of misspelled names in the minutes.

In favor of approving the minutes of February 22, 2017: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Dr. Taylor. Mr. Hicks abstained. Motion passed.

2017-2018 Regional School District 13 Budget Discussion

A. Athletics/Intramurals

Dr. Veronesi commented that it is never easy to slash any programs and the administrative team had looked across all areas and had to make some very difficult decisions. She felt that they have done their research and they do know what impacts student achievement. Physical activity impacts well-being, but does not have as strong an impact on student achievement as the most highly-qualified teacher and a strong and rigorous curriculum. The team prioritized and made decisions on how to best meet the district's goals.

Dr. Veronesi recognizes that this decision is unpopular for a lot of people, but it doesn't mean that it's not a worthy decision to consider. The Board and the community had asked what other schools have "pay-to-participate" and the administrative team looked at schools in the DRG as well as schools in the Shoreline Conference. There were approximately seven schools that have "pay-to-participate." The other question was what kind of revenue would be generated with "pay-to-participate" and Dr. Veronesi had a spreadsheet prepared with that information.

Dr. Veronesi reminded everyone that in last year's budget presentation, they had proposed that the \$45 participation rate be raised to \$75 and the Board decided to eliminate the participation fee altogether. The spreadsheet shows the total cost of each sport divided by the number of participants as well as a rough comparison between intramurals and interscholastic sports. The spreadsheet contains information for Strong School as well as the high school.

Dr. Veronesi mentioned that there may be students who would not be able to pay the full rate and the Board would have to determine how to handle that. Some other schools have a family cap. Some schools have a flat rate and others have a rate per sport. There would also be bookkeeping and management responsibilities that go along with collecting a fee. They also looked at the number of students who participate in one sport, two sports or three sports.

Nick Barbieri commented that East Hampton's participation fee (\$100 per middle school sport, \$175 per high school sport, with a \$500 family cap) seemed very reasonable to try to offset the expense of the

programs at Strong which is about \$16,000. He also commented that Spring sports sign-ups are happening now at Strong, so the number for that is not definite. Dr. Veronesi also commented that she has spoken to a couple of superintendents who have a participation fee and some people feel that their rate may go even higher because of the state funding cuts.

Mr. Augur asked if paying to participate in things other than sports is common at other schools and Dr. Veronesi stated that that is not common. Mr. Augur did not feel it would be unreasonable. Mrs. Boyle stated that years ago, there was a \$45 participation fee at the high school which was applicable to any activity, be it a club or a sport. Mrs. Flanagan also commented that clubs are not nearly as heavy on the cost side as the sports are. Mrs. Boyle explained that the Board had done away with the activity fee for clubs and left it for just sports. The \$45 fee was for the full year, no matter how many sports the student played.

Mrs. Boyle also remembered that East Hampton's fee was \$150 per sport, per year and is now at \$175 per sport. She also reiterated that she would like to see interscholastic sports put back into the budget and possibly look at this in the future, after a survey is completed regarding "pay-to-play." She would like to get the community's feedback on that before moving forward on a participation fee and would like to see the issue be tabled in order to obtain it.

Dr. Veronesi agreed that a survey would be possible and felt that the removal of the fee last year was more to do with a philosophical belief that the District was taxing families twice rather than the parents' ability to pay a fee. Dr. Taylor summarized that the Board needs to make a decision about where they think the priorities should be. Mrs. Flanagan reminded the Board that the fees won't even come close to offsetting all of the sports in the high school though it may come close at Strong School.

Mr. Moore thought that the feeling last year was that the Board could save quite a bit of money because of reductions in insurance and Korn School and therefore did not have to include the activity fee. Dr. Veronesi agreed and reminded the Board that there has been a .4 budget increase average for the past three years and that is now impacting the budget this year. Dr. Veronesi felt that this year's budget is unprecedented and explained that the administrative team is always thinking about what is best for students. She felt that perhaps some offsetting could happen with the "play to participate" fee and reductions from somewhere else and explained that is easier to take a \$20,000 reduction from somewhere else than a \$68,000 reduction.

Mrs. Flanagan agreed with Dr. Taylor that the Board really needs to consider the priorities. She recognized the administration's hard work on this budget proposal, but acknowledged that it was a higher increase than has been seen for a while. Mrs. Flanagan also mentioned that the extended preschool program was proposed in the budget as well and summarized that there are multiple things on the table at this point. From a student achievement standpoint, not having a math interventionist in each elementary school is very much a concern for Mrs. Flanagan. She encouraged the Board to consider all of the things that were removed from the budget in order to get to the current number and decide what the priorities are. Mrs. Flanagan feels that math is a big priority and, from a student achievement standpoint, should be a high priority for the Board.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that a request was included for one additional math interventionist, but the original request had been for three. The improvement in mathematics is a multifaceted approach and the coaching model is just one part of that. Those coaches are now wearing multiple hats, including direct

intervention with students. Mrs. Flanagan wanted to make sure that the Board does not lose sight of everything on the table.

Mr. Renninghoff felt that sports are important, but there are a lot of other things that need to be dealt with as well. Dr. Friedrich pointed out that when the Board talks about math intervention and teaching the teachers, Common Core has made math education a completely different game from what it was 10 years ago, with a different landscape and different goals.

Mrs. Boyle understands that academics are the priority in this district, but the kids who have a love of sport are inspired to do well in the classroom every day and it does balance their learning and academic enthusiasm. Mrs. Boyle also stated that the kids are inspired by the coaches who check their academic performance as well and she requested that the Board not lose that aspect of the value of sports.

Mrs. Petrella commented that, as a retired educator, she is going to look at the academic piece and agrees that sports are very important, but was surprised to see how many line items in the budget were related to sports expenditures. She would like to see the Board try to maintain what exists without making it any bigger than it already is. Mrs. Petrella felt that the “pay-for-play” would at least provide a little income and perhaps might be a way to preserve programs.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that the District is going to have a high school with 420 students in it which will have an impact on the sports teams. She felt that there will probably be a strategic plan needed to cope with that and will report on a co-op opportunity that the District is looking at for football.

The Board took a short break at this point.

B. Technology

Ken Pietrasko, the new IT director for the District, commented that he had the fortunate pleasure to know most of the staff at the District before he took the position. He commented about the staff and what an asset they are to the District.

Mr. Pietrasko reported that the District had purchased 100 HP laptops with the capability of wirelessly casting. Fifty new Epson interactive projectors were installed this year. The District also purchased and deployed 125 new Chromebooks for students in ninth grade and repaired, updated and redeployed almost all of the Chromebooks for the tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders as well as brought Memorial School to a one-to-one program through Chromebook Carts. They also updated and redeployed over 75 iPads.

The decision was made to go to a Chrome basis to replace Brewster’s Mac lab last year as they are about half the price of a Mac and have the same Chrome operating system as the Chromebooks that the rest of the students are getting access to. The high school got an updated communications lab with iMacs which is still one the better technologies for video production. A replacement content filter, iBoss, was installed and CEN, the internet provider, is supply iBoss for minimal content filtering. Additional security cameras have been installed and all administrators and front offices have viewing stations.

With Korn School closing, all the Chromebook carts and SmartBoards, projectors, computers, etc. have been redistributed throughout the District. Ziggi HD document cameras have begun to be deployed as well. The Epson interactive projectors were chosen because they are more cost effective than SmartBoards, with a SmartBoard being approximately \$1,600 with a \$200 and \$400 ceiling-mounted

projector. The Epson interactive projectors are approximately \$1,500 with the Microsoft wireless adapter and are an all-in-one unit. There is a lot of software used across the District to help facilitate active learning.

While the iMacs may not be viable much longer in the elementary schools, the iPads are. They are a great portable learning device and showed the Board several examples.

There are a lot of Chrome products throughout the District. The Chromebooks come with all the Google apps built in and can connect to the District's secure wireless. The Chromebooks are at a one-to-one basis at the high school and in the form of carts at Memorial. Strong, Brewster and Lyman all have several shared carts at each school. Chromebases took over the Brewster lab and are lot easier for the kindergarten students to use. Each Chromebase is approximately \$600 and a new Mac is about \$1,300.

Chromebits are very new and is a tiny device that has the Chrome operating system built into it and can work with a USB wireless keyboard and mouse to turn any HDMI TV or monitor into a Chromebase. They can be remotely updated and the information is pushed out on an hourly basis.

The District is in its second year with Google for Education which is available at no cost. Teachers are becoming more collaborative with it and create assignments, grade, and have discussions through Google Classroom. Google Drive provides unlimited file storage and secure email and spam filtering. Every student and employee has a gmail account, from fifth grade and up. Google Hangouts provides chat capabilities and shared presentations.

Mr. Pietrasko stated that the elimination of in-house servers has increased internet traffic by using the Google platform. The wireless infrastructure is strained with the increase of the Chromebooks across the District. Each access point can connect 110 devices, but many more are required. With the addition of increased security cameras, one physical camera can be seen as 11 different cameras by the system. A recording server was installed that was supposed to be able to handle the high school, Brewster, Lyman and Memorial's traffic, but that was easily filled and everything slowed throughout the classrooms. An older server was installed at Memorial to free up some of the space so that all of the cameras could work.

The IT department's goals for this year are to free up some of the restraints on the wireless by purchasing several new access points. New ones can go up to 256 connected devices which would allow for a lot more coverage. They would like to continue the one-to-one programs and extend that to Strong School. They would like to continue with the interactive projector implementation and would like to keep that going at the high school and Memorial. Lyman's lab is up for replacement this year and they would like to continue with Chromebase. They propose to repurpose the current Coginchaug recording server to Memorial so there is a server that will last. The server at the high school would be replaced with a newer, higher capacity server as the high school is the central hub for all internet traffic.

Upgrades to Windows 10 have been done and have shown great improvement. In order to extend the life of the available technology, the District will be investing in Windows 10 licenses. Across the District, they would like to replace laptops and docking stations for four staff members at Central Office and five academic interventionists are due for laptops as well as more security cameras at the high school. The music lab and photo lab at the high school are due for replacement this year. Computers at Strong and Coginchaug are due for replacement and Windows 10 licensing will help to extend those labs for another year or two.

The District needs to start to replace iPads and the older styles will not be able to be updated with the latest IOS and won't be able to use the newer apps. Mr. Pietrasko summarized that they anticipate \$174,890 in the lease this year which would be \$38,000+ per year for five years. That number is a little under the projection for the five-year leases across the District. Mr. Pietrasko feels that this number will allow them to provide the proper computer technology tools to the students and the staff.

Mr. Pietrasko stated that the department prefers to receive trouble tickets from around the District about any issues. On average, there are just under 2,000 trouble tickets a year and there have been 1,200 tickets as of yesterday. There have also been 62 walk-ins for various problems with the one-to-one program at the high school. There are also a lot more end-user devices now. The switch to laptops from desktops for staff has increased the wear and tear on the equipment. New threats are constantly being found on the internet and they are constantly updating the iBoss web filter. They also do a lot of in-house desktop, laptop and Chromebook repair which takes a lot of time. Mr. Pietrasko then provided information about how trouble tickets are handled.

The District decided to bring in an in-house computer technician in July, 2011 and there were no Chromebooks in the District. In February, 2014, the District acquired a network specialist. Currently, there are 1,200+ Chromebooks with another 300 more anticipated.

Mr. Pietrasko would like to get additional support in the IT department and feels that they would benefit greatly from a person for 20 hours per week. This new person would report directly to the Network Specialist and would be responsible for all end-user devices. This would help to resolve issues and employ new technology faster as well as enable the technicians to spend more time with staff and repair more technology in-house. There is currently an outside tech that comes in once a week to check backup health and help with switches and identifying problems. If a new person could be hired, the Network Specialist would be freed up to take on a lot of those responsibilities.

Mr. Renninghoff asked why the Central Office staff needs laptops and Mr. Pietrasko reported that several of the office staff that would be getting the laptops are mobile and visit all the different schools. Mrs. Boyle was in awe of the technology and was thankful that the equipment can be leased. She also asked if spending could be reduced since enrollment is dropping but technology is growing. Mrs. Boyle congratulated Mr. Pietrasko on his presentation on being very thorough.

Mr. Russell commented that if the District had to replace the old classrooms with the newer technology, the budget would be doubled. This is the first district that Mr. Russell has had the pleasure of working with that does in-house repair and it's to save money. He is very impressed with the IT department at the district. Mr. Pietrasko commented that it would be roughly \$32,500 to replace the Lyman lab with Macs and they can do it for \$15,000 with Chromebases.

Mr. Pietrasko also reported that a lot of the old SmartBoards have been repurposed throughout the district and are still in use. If they are not able to be repaired, they are typically left in the room to use as a white board.

Dr. Veronesi stated that they did look at how to save money in this area, but technology changes so quickly that it's hard to keep up. Dr. Veronesi also feels that the IT department really understands what the District is trying to do with student learning. Dr. Veronesi also acknowledged the outstanding job that Mr. Pietrasko is doing.

Dr. Taylor asked if the IT department gets feedback from the end users on the trouble tickets. Mr. Pietrasko stated that they do not track completion time, but it is something that could be added to the current software.

Mrs. Flanagan reminded the Board that the IT plan had been structured to take on leases to be able to upgrade and rotate through so that as one lease completed, another could be taken on. The line item has been around \$250,000 for several years now and she asked if that is planned to be carried out into the future and if that original plan still viable. Mr. Pietrasko stated that he believes it's a great way to do it and intends to continue it.

Mr. Renninghoff asked if the students get access to replacement hardware if theirs is being repaired and Mr. Pietrasko stated that a loaner would be given, if one is available. They can also sign a Chromebook out for a day from the library.

Dr. Taylor also asked if there were any opportunities for students to work with the IT department in repairing computers and Mr. Pietrasko stated that the department typically has more time to teach in the summertime. During the school year, the department is spread too thin to take the time to properly teach somebody. Mr. Moore felt that would be a great STEM course. Mr. Pietrasko reported that there were two former students who interned last summer and a former technology integrator comes in and helps out on a contracted basis. One contractor from Advanced Office Systems comes in once or twice a week during the school year.

C. Grants

Dr. Veronesi reported that the District is using the Title I Part A to pay for .6 of a reading interventionist and .5 literacy tutor. Title I Part D (2017 and 2016) is simply the fiscal agent for the grant and is not money the District benefits from. Title II funds are used to pay for .4 of the reading instructional coach. Title III funds have been received from ACES as part of a consortium and are used to support English Language Learner students (five in the District). School readiness is a way to help support and work with some of the pre-Ks in the community to help prepare children for kindergarten. IDEA is a two-year grant that has been used to fund an equivalent of 7.1 FTEs which includes ABA, teaching assistants, speech, social workers, psychologists and special ed teachers. Some of those funds are also used for PD and purchased services as well as supplies and technology. IDEA part B, section 619, is focused on special education and preschool and was used to pay for .3 preschool teaching assistant, supplies for the preschool program, PD, technology and purchased services.

Mr. Moore asked if the District applies for these grants every year and Dr. Veronesi explained that they roll over. They have also looked into other grants and additional funding. Mr. Russell explained that Hartford is getting \$50 million this year for Title I and we get \$56,000. Hartford is about 18 times bigger than our District but is getting about 1,000 times more money. Small districts get very little. Mr. Russell did explain that they are working with Eversource for a grant for possibly more solar panels or other energy-efficient programs that won't cost the District anything. Mr. Russell explained that the grant funds do not appear anywhere in the budget as a revenue source.

D. Staffing

Dr. Veronesi received a request to revisit the staffing changes and reminded the Board that there has been a cumulative reduction of 22 FTEs in the past three years with the biggest cut going into this year, which

was 13.8. The administrative team is consistently looking at staffing numbers and the Board-recommended class sizes. There are enrollment reductions in kindergarten, second grade, fourth grade, sixth grade and eighth grade with increases in first and fifth grades. Staff are moved and shifted with these changes. The administrative team has talked to the union reps and individuals who may be impacted by any changes.

One question that has come up focuses on the reduction of a .5 music teacher. Dr. Veronesi explained that the District has eight full-time music teachers in five schools and they are recommending a reduction in one of those positions by .5. The high quality, high level music program will not be affected by a .5 cut. The .5 position will cover fourth grade instrumental music lessons and fourth grade chorus between schools.

Another question has to do with the technology integration specialist. Dr. Veronesi explained that there are two people in that position, one at the elementary level and one at the secondary level. With the STEM programming at Strong and talks about STEAM, a big change has been made as to how the District will address that type of instruction at Strong School. Implementing that at the high school and middle school is a priority, but a planned priority. This includes digital literacy, how kids are learning and how staff is being used. While in the planning process, the team felt that one staff member could be diminished and the programming would not be significantly impacted. Another area that is being looked at is art, music, library, technology and phys. ed. in the elementary schools which are separate and isolated experiences. The District would like to begin to explore how these can be integrated into a more multidisciplinary experience.

The team feels that the math interventionist is very important. Grant funding for the literacy tutor has ended, so it needs to be put into the operating budget.

Mrs. Petrella asked how many math interventionists there will be in total and where they will be. Dr. Veronesi stated that, with the addition of this math interventionist, there will be .5 at Brewster and .5 at Lyman. There are currently three coaches and part-time tutors, but this will be the only interventionist.

Mrs. Flanagan asked how many interventionists were proposed by the principals and Dr. Veronesi stated that three had been proposed so that each elementary school could have one and there could be an interventionist at Strong as well. Mr. Sadinsky looked at how to use an existing math teacher who can provide intervention for students in her schedule. Their preference would be to have a full-time math interventionist at both elementary schools, but the proposal of the overall budget was scaled back to include one.

E. Cost per Student

Dr. Veronesi explained that the finalized cost per student for 2016-2017 is still forecasted at \$19,453 and it won't be until the next school year before the State has that number finalized. The cost per student is going to be projected at over \$20,000 for next year.

With the declining enrollment and without significant decreases to the overall operating budget, there will not be decreases in the per pupil expenditure.

Mrs. Boyle commented that even though the District is down 80 students (\$160,000) and Dr. Veronesi explained that even with the school closing (approximately \$500,000), that does not move that amount

down in any significant way. Dr. Taylor felt that it was the purpose of the Board to educate members of the community that unless operational efficiencies are increased, enrollment will continue to drop and there is not going to be a significant change in that line until a decision is made about closing schools and improving those efficiencies. Mrs. Flanagan commented that with an \$800,000 reduction in the budget last year, the cost per student was barely kept flat.

Dr. Friedrich commented that as the District's number of students declines, the number of classes can be reduced to keep the cost per student even but there are expenditures which are not by student and that is especially true in non-academic activities. There are costs for music programs and sports programs that don't change as the number of participants changes. As the number of students drop, the District will have to look at cooperative programs or trimming the number of offerings. Mr. Moore commented that the number of buildings can also be reduced.

Dr. Veronesi reminded the Board that they have been exploring cooperative services with insurance and she has been meeting with the First Selectmen from both towns about possible shared services. They have explored ways to spread the District's debt and explained that they have looked at every area of the budget.

Dr. Friedrich commented that an intramural sports program does not depend on the number of athletes and is a fixed cost in the budget. He believes that hard choices will come in the future if the District wants to contain the cost per student. Dr. Friedrich reminded the Board that this will be true also for music and other non-athletic programs. Mr. Moore mentioned that the other option would be to increase revenue somehow. Mr. Renninghoff commented that he feels that there is no revenue problem in this state and way too much money is being spent. Mr. Renninghoff made additional comments about the governor and the state legislature and felt it was a shame that the State is cutting the ECS and moving the teacher pension contributions to the towns.

F. Updates

- Insurance

Dr. Veronesi reported that Mr. Russell and Tippi Popp went to ACES to learn more about the insurance cooperative and got far more specific information in terms of how it would impact the District. Because both towns are part of the group, the risk is far too great for the District to consider and would have a very significant negative impact on the towns. They continue to work with the broker and hope to have a finalized number within two weeks. They are hoping to get a renewal rate at 5.5 percent. At the end of last year, the District was at about an 83 percent loss ratio and is there already this year.

Mr. Russell commented that the District is at almost 100 percent and because we're fully insured, if the District goes to 130 percent it doesn't cost any more. If we were self-insured, we would have to pay the difference. The consortium would be self-insured and would include only three towns. Mr. Hicks stated that only one town has signed on as of now.

- Outstanding Questions

Dr. Veronesi felt that most of the questions that have been submitted have been answered as of this point. Mr. Renninghoff asked if anyone had seen his question about the food service health insurance. The health insurance for the cafeteria staff is paid for out of the general fund and is not part of

the cafeteria fund or paid out of the costs of the meals. Therefore, it is not entirely a self-funding operation and the taxpayers are subsidizing it. Mr. Renninghoff felt that this doesn't really show the true cost of the lunches without the health insurance included. The Board's contribution for the cafeteria staff who do get health insurance is \$242,000 and their contribution is \$38,000. Dr. Veronesi stated that there were 103,000 lunches served in the 2015-2016 school year at a price of \$3.25 per lunch. Mr. Renninghoff felt that if the price were increased and not as many lunches were being purchased, then staffing would need to be reduced. He also suggested outsourcing the operation. Mr. Augur felt that it should all be done at the same time; raise the price and reduce the staff. Dr. Veronesi stated that she wasn't sure outsourcing food service would be a cost saving endeavor.

Mr. Renninghoff also wondered why the District needs to provide everything for children, even when it's not educational. He knows that food service is nothing new, but he feels that it all comes back to what the parents would do if food service was not available.

Mr. Russell commented that out of the 160 towns in the state, 51 of them have outsourced food service providers and a study showed that it didn't matter whether you had it outsourced or in-house. Free and reduced lunches play into the equation of both operations and the District has about 11 percent. He felt that small districts generally lose money on food service.

Mrs. Boyle stated that she does not feel comfortable asking parents to pay another dollar for lunch and understands that Dr. Veronesi was not suggesting that, however Mrs. Boyle may consider adding something to the price of lunch. If the Board wanted to raise it more than 25 or 50 cents, she would like to get a sense of the community's opinion on that. Dr. Taylor suggested that the survey would have to be of both towns, not just parents, and that it will be hard to obtain the information. Dr. Taylor felt it was reasonable to shift a small portion of the cost away from the entire community and a bit more to the actual users. Dr. Veronesi thought that it might be a good idea to bring the food service budget to ERC.

Mrs. Boyle commented that she knew Mr. Renninghoff would not want to put \$68,000 back in the budget to bring interscholastic sports back to Strong School, but how can the Board balance the budget and where else can be cut or added. She felt that the Board needs to be creative. Mr. Moore explained that there are a few more weeks to do that and that they will be meeting with the Boards of Finance next week and hopefully they will have suggestions. We do know that there is almost a \$3.5 million impact based on the governor's proposals so far.

Mrs. Petrella asked about an increase in supplies for athletics at the high school that were previously paid out of gate receipts. Dr. Veronesi explained that the gate receipts should have gone into the general fund.

There were no new questions brought up at this time.

Communications

Mr. Moore reported that he has received a number of emails and letters about athletics and some on the preschool and before- and after-school care. The names will be added to the minutes. He thanked everyone for their time and effort.

Mrs. Petrella reported that she received a call from Jackie, with Boy Scout Troop 33, who explained that they are working on citizenship and community badges. They are looking for a Board member to speak to the boys on Saturday morning, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM, at the Community Center. They want to

talk about the sports process. Mrs. Petrella cannot attend, but asked if anyone else would be available. Mr. Moore agreed to go to the meeting.

Mr. Moore read at John Lyman School last week and was amazed at the questions the students asked. One of the questions was what does it cost for the schools and he explained that it was about \$36 million. The students asked, who pays for that, and he explained that their parents do.

Mrs. Petrella was emailed by the reading specialist at John Lyman to read to the combined first/second and third/fourth grade class. She too was very impressed at how well-behaved and attentive the children were.

Mr. Hicks mentioned that he went to a workshop last Friday and they talked about student expulsions after August 15th. There are some far-reaching implications that the District will have to adhere to. They also spoke about job applications and employee background checks. He also has some information on collective bargaining that he will pass along.

Business Manager's Report

Mr. Russell proposed providing a financial statement for the second meeting of the month on a regular basis. He also provided additional information on the Capital Reserve Fund that had been requested.

Mr. Russell also commented that there has been some discussion about financing. Webster Bank used to be the District's financial advisor but they have closed that operation and the District no longer has a financial advisor. They will be inviting three or four in to talk to.

Mr. Russell reminded Dr. Friedrich and Mr. Hicks that a section of the budget books has been changed and offered to update their books for them.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Veronesi reported that negotiations with the nurses began last night. There are five nurses in the District. They hope to complete the negotiation process rather quickly.

Dr. Veronesi wanted to again acknowledge the good work between the two First Selectmen and the District.

She also wanted to update the Board about the potential co-op with Hale Ray for football. Nick Barbieri attended an informational meeting in East Haddam and the athletic director there has met with parents and players and Mr. Barbieri will meet with them on March 25th. Last night, they had 21 interested families. At this time, we have approximately 18 to 20 returning football players and an unknown number coming up from Strong.

Dr. Veronesi also reported that the high school will be putting on Guys and Dolls and will be inviting senior citizens to come to a performance on Thursday, March 30th as well as Strong School and sixth graders from Memorial. The senior citizens will then have an opportunity to meet the cast and get autographs as well as have coffee and dessert. Dr. Veronesi extended the invitation to all of the Board members. The performance will begin at 9:00 AM.

Dr. Veronesi also invited the Board members to stop in on Friday to any of the professional development sessions.

Mrs. Boyle wanted to confirm that there are only 18 to 21 returning football players from grades 9 to 11 and asked how many are needed to field a team. Mr. Barbieri felt that 30 would be a good number to be able to hold good practices. Mrs. Boyle pointed out that the football program is in the budget based on last year's numbers and asked if the cost sharing for a co-op program is in the budget. Dr. Veronesi confirmed that it does not include cost sharing. Mrs. Boyle asked if finances have been discussed with East Haddam and what the dollar amount be would.

Mr. Barbieri explained that he met with community members in East Haddam and a lot of seventh and eighth graders are interested. With the CIAC, a co-op lasts for two years and then must be renewed. Currently in the Shoreline, not all 13 schools have a football program, with five or six being co-op. Mr. Barbieri felt that a co-op with East Haddam may bring a few upper classmen this year and next, but the program will really build in the long term.

Dr. Friedrich asked about the time frame and Mr. Barbieri explained that May 1st is the CIAC deadline for all sports co-ops and the program would begin with the next school year. Mr. Barbieri explained that we currently have co-op teams in hockey and swimming.

Mr. Barbieri reached out to other Pequot league schools to ask for examples of agreements and would be proposing a participation fee of \$650 per student from East Haddam. There would be definitive answer on the program until June 1st, so it will not have an impact on this budget.

Mrs. Boyle was concerned that the District would not have enough players to field a full team. She would be worried having freshmen and sophomores playing against seniors and juniors from other towns. While football is near and dear to her heart, Mrs. Boyle feels that if the District can't field a safe team, maybe it is time to take this out of the budget. She would like to know the number of kids who intend to play and cost-sharing numbers.

Mr. Barbieri stated that a survey is being done at Strong School to get a rough estimate of the number of students interested in playing football. Mrs. Boyle was totally shocked at the whole conversation.

Mrs. Petrella confirmed that moving forward; we would be fielding two teams, a JV and varsity, where we only field one varsity team now. Mr. Barbieri explained that both teams are included in the budget.

Mrs. Boyle summarized that if football costs the District \$60,000, with half of the team from another town, she would want the other town to contribute \$30,000. Mr. Barbieri will try to obtain some more information for next week's meeting and Dr. Veronesi will share the information as soon as she gets it.

Committee Reports

A. ERC Committee - February 27, 2017: Field House Discussion

Mr. Moore reported that the ERC Committee met last week and talked about the field house. They reviewed three different proposals that have been made and recommended to bring a proposal to the Board to go to referendum with the budget this year. This item would be for \$750,000 to build the field house with just bathrooms and no other amenities. Upon approval of the referendum, they would then

figure out financing over the next month or two and then go to bid. The first payment for the financing would be due in the 2018 budget.

Mr. Renninghoff explained that none of the proposals include prevailing wage and these projects are definitely subject to prevailing wage. He would like to see updated cost estimates because that will add a lot of money to the cost. Mr. Renninghoff explained that prevailing wage applies to any project done by the State or its subdivisions, regardless of how it's funded. Dr. Veronesi explained that they had reached out to Silver Petrucelli and were told that it would not be a prevailing wage project. Mrs. Flanagan suggested getting something in writing on this issue. Mrs. Petrella suggested raising the referendum number to \$800,000 to account for prevailing wage.

It was agreed to take no action on this item at this time.

New Business

A. Durham Sugarhouse Music Donation

Dr. Veronesi asked the Board to accept a donation of \$1,000 from the Durham Sugarhouse for the production of Guys and Dolls.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to accept the donation of \$1,000 from the Durham Sugarhouse for the production of Guys and Dolls.

In favor of accepting the donation from Durham Sugarhouse: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed.

B. Field Trip Request - CRHS

Dr. Veronesi reported that DECA would like to take a field trip to compete and be involved in leadership seminars.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Renninghoff, to approve the DECA field trip. Mr. Hicks would like to amend the motion that should actions by Homeland Security or any other agency of the government deem that it is unsafe to travel, this trip can be withdrawn with no notice. Dr. Friedrich accepted the amendment, as did Mr. Renninghoff.

Mr. Hicks also asked who pays for the subs when two teachers are out four school days and Dr. Veronesi explained that the District pays for the subs. Mr. Hicks thinks that four days is a lot of time out of school and that the Board should look into that issue.

In favor of approving the DECA field trip, with the amendment as above: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed.

Public Comment

Chuck Stengel, from Durham, commented on the cost of turf replacement and asked if that would be impacted by any decision on football. Mr. Moore explained that other sports are played on that field as

well. Mr. Stengel felt that turf replacement could be put off for many years if there is no football team. He also asked Dr. Veronesi about the cost per student and asked if the same information could be provided by school. Members of the Board were unsure as to how that information would be relevant and could be balanced with the educational needs. Mr. Stengel also asked about class size and asked if he could see class sizes through the high school. Dr. Veronesi agreed to send him that information. Mr. Stengel also commented that he is certainly willing to pay for the education of students in the District, but is not so sure he is willing to pay for someone else's child to eat lunch. He feels that it is appropriate to shift those costs to the kids who are actually eating the lunches. Lastly, he asked about the expenditures and the revenues from the grants and if they are actually included in the budget. Mr. Russell explained that they are in a separate bank account and are not included in the physical budget. Mr. Renninghoff mentioned that there has been no guidance from the State about where the Special Ed grant money will be going.

Donia Viola commented on outsourcing the lunch program and thought it had been done years back. Mrs. Viola thought that the Board should revisit the issue. Mrs. Viola would also like to know the specific savings for closing Korn School and doesn't feel we have recouped much money there. She also understands that Dr. Berry is retiring this year and asked if there was an expected replacement. Mrs. Viola also feels that the IT department has grown fast and asked if the cost for the new assistant would be comparative to the outsourcing that is currently done. Mrs. Viola does not feel it should be incumbent upon the parents to pay an increased cost for lunch as it is a basic necessity for the children. She thought that a savings might be possible by outsourcing and should be considered. Mrs. Viola has problems with the District continuing to hire even after closing a school and feels that the Board should take a real look at what's going on. With what's happening in the State, the towns will be really constrained with big tax increases.

Michael Doyle stated that his family had chosen not to have his son go to school in the District this year and he attends school at Haddam-Killingworth. In order to do that, he had to establish a legal residence in Haddam-Killingworth, but is also a property owner in Durham. Mr. Doyle made public comment at the last Board meeting. Subsequent to that meeting, he received a letter from the Superintendent of Schools of Regional School District 17 questioning his right to have his son attend school in Haddam-Killingworth. It was stated in that letter that it was based upon information that came to the Superintendent's attention. The Superintendent's assistant informed Mr. Doyle that the information received was that he had attended a public board meeting in Durham. Mr. Doyle has no idea who brought that information to District 17 or what their motives were, but his suspicion is that someone within the school district conveyed the information and that is troubling to him. He asked the Board to make sure that employees of the district did not feel it was necessary to create this issue.

Another member of the public was pleased to hear some Board members express that the curriculum should come first and feels that that begins in preschool. Her daughter spends approximately 40 minutes a day in the classroom as she doesn't talk or have the motor skills. She is concerned that there will be 19 kids in the preschool class by the end of the month and more than half of them are identified. She would like the Board to give a good look to the preschool. She also asked if the District analyzes the claims data for the health insurance and then goes back to negotiate further.

Jim Irish, from Middlefield, re-emphasized a comment that Mr. Moore made about the two towns looking at \$3.5 million of additional cost to the taxpayers for funding education from the towns directly, due to the State budget. This will have to be made up through property taxes. Mr. Irish felt that the Board has done a nice job of describing areas of financial sensitivity in the budget and, as a member of the

Middlefield Board of Finance; he is looking forward to meeting next week. The Board of Finance will encourage the Board of Education to continue to take costs out of the budget because anything will help move the mill rate down. He encouraged the Board to look at total costs of each program and asked Mr. Russell to put that information together so that the Board can consider them. Mr. Irish summarized that the Board of Finance will be asking the Board of Ed to bring the number down from the original proposal.

Elizabeth Dern was surprised to see the cost per student because children can attend private school for less than \$20,000 with far smaller class sizes. She also stated that both of her kids are in elementary school and play sports and is concerned about sports being removed from Strong School. She stated that their family pays for their kids' sports and would hate to see that removed from Strong School without looking at that. She also felt that the District could charge for intramural sports as well and put that money back into education.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First