

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, March 22, 2017 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. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Russell, Interim Business Manager.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Public Comment**

Laurie Tuttle, chairman of Durham's Board of Finance, mentioned that they had some conversation and a couple of handouts that they'd like to distribute during section 8A of the agenda.

Donia Viola stated that she had reviewed approved minutes from February 8, 2017 and February 22, 2017 and would like a few corrections noted. Mrs. Viola stated that, in the February 8 minutes, Mr. Hicks had stated that the transportation for the magnet schools was reimbursed by the State and Dr. Veronesi had sent a letter on January 27, 2017 stating that \$6,500 was anticipated for reimbursement while the actual cost is \$36,901.80 for this year. At the February 22, 2017 meeting, Mrs. Viola had stated that 70 students would be needed for the before- and after-school program in order to break even, but according to Mr. Brough, it would take 90 students. Mrs. Viola also wanted the public to be aware that the District spent quite a bit of money moving Deborah Stone to Memorial School while Kevin Brough was still on board.

**Next Board Meetings - March 23, 2017 and March 27, 2017 in the CRHS Library****Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Hicks made a motion to add a new item 7, Discussion of Field House, to the agenda and approve the agenda as amended. Mrs. Flanagan seconded the motion.

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

**Approval of Minutes – March 8, 2017**

The minutes were not available at this time.

**Board of Education Recognition**

Dr. Veronesi explained that March is Board of Education Appreciation month and she thanked the Board for their commitment and unwavering dedication, on behalf of the staff and students of District 13.

Dr. Veronesi asked for a five-minute recess for everyone to have a cup of coffee and an exceptional dessert that had been prepared by Donna Sperl, a staff member in the District.

**Discussion of Field House**

Dr. Veronesi explained that the Discussion of the Field House had originally been on the agenda for the March 8, 2017 meeting and then again for tomorrow night's meeting. She explained that they learned just this morning that the time line for the field house is different than the time line for the budget. If the Board votes to move this issue to a public hearing, it would need to be held next Thursday, March 30, 2017, due to statute requirements. If those time lines can be met, the vote can be on the same day as the referendum for the budget.

Dr. Veronesi explained that they have confirmed with Shipman, the attorneys that the field house project would be a prevailing wage job and an adjustment was made to the construction costs. Day Pitney is working on a bond resolution.

Mr. Russell reviewed that they had received bids from the architect as well as a general contractor. The quote, with prevailing wage rates, is \$600,000 for general construction with a contingency up to \$100,000. There would be additional permits which could be as high as \$70,000, bond counsel of \$15,000 and a financial advisor, all of which are required. This brings the total projected cost to \$800,000.

Mr. Russell explained the two different bonding alternatives, over a 10-year period or a 20-year period. Principal payments under a 10-year plan would be \$80,000 a year for 10 years and the interest payments would be from \$20,000 a year down to \$2,000, assuming a financing rate of 2.5 percent. Looking at bonding over 20 years, the principal payments would be \$40,000 per year for 20 years and the interest payments would be from \$24,000 a year down to \$1,200, assuming a rate of 2 percent, however the Federal Reserve is looking at three interest rate hikes this year. Mr. Russell also mentioned that bank financing could be done, but that traditionally only goes out 10 years.

Mr. Moore mentioned that this will be on the agenda for final discussion and a vote at tomorrow night's meeting. This proposal is just for bathrooms in the field house.

**Before- and After-School Program Update**

Dr. Veronesi clarified that this is not a specific budget item, but she would like to recommend that the Board decide this issue in April. In April, she will reach out to the 95 people who had previously responded to see if they would make a commitment. Some adjustments have been made to the original proposal. An adjustment was made to have a staggered start for the assistants and a few were needed for benefits. A significant reduction was made in the supply area by using equipment and materials that can be repurposed. They also looked specifically at possible revenue and now have a projected surplus of \$14,000. Drop-in options were looked at and parents would be asked to pay a registration fee and indicate the days they need at least two weeks beforehand.

There had also been a question about students with special needs and what accommodations would be necessary, but the requirements are slightly different in a before- and after-school program. Staff members with the necessary training would be provided.

Dr. Veronesi reported that the principals are getting questions from parents about when this would be available, so she would like the Board to continue the conversation and hopefully decide in April.

Dr. Taylor asked if the plan is to have budget neutrality or surplus and what would happen if the budget would need to go up due to a need for more staffing. He asked if the fees would be increased. Dr. Veronesi explained that when she looked at the total percentage of students with special needs in the District, the highest percentage in the program would be perhaps nine students. She does not project that the level of services would be the same in an after-care program as it is in the school day. Dr. Veronesi confirmed that they certainly do not want it to cost the District money and would like to see a profit.

Mr. Russell explained that similar programs in other districts have been very lucrative and he has never seen one go in the "red". Some districts make \$200,000 to \$300,000 with very low prices to the parents. Mr. Russell was confident in predicting this would be a surplus operation.

Dr. Veronesi felt that they are at the point to reach out to parents for registration, but would need the Board's support. Mrs. Boyle commented that there is an existing before- and after-school program and she'd like to make sure that that's been well-vetted. Board members had received a letter from the BASREP board stating they were a viable option and would like to continue operating.

Mr. Yamartino felt that the 7.5 percent surplus is more like a contingency and he feels that might be light. Dr. Veronesi stated that the projections are on the lower side and there is room to take on more students. The maximum students with the projected staffing level would be 70 at each school. Mr. Russell also mentioned that staff can be decreased or increased, depending on the number of students. Mrs. Petrella asked how the bookkeeping will be handled and Dr. Veronesi explained that existing staff in the Central Office will be able to manage that. Mrs. Petrella also asked if the requirements for students with special needs are different in a program run by a school vs. a privately-run program and it was explained that they are different because they receive federal and state funding. This program would be considered a district-sponsored program and would be required to follow federal and state requirements for special needs students. Mrs. Petrella then asked if there was a plan for additional staff to be added if the program is highly successful and she assumed that the cost for that would come out of the program, not the school budget.

Mr. Renninghoff asked who would administer any necessary medication and it was explained that a person needs to be medication- and CPR-certified. Staff and administrators are trained in that and an RN would not be necessary.

### **2017-2018 Regional School District 13 Budget Discussion**

#### **A. Budget Discussion with Durham and Middlefield Boards of Finance**

Mr. Moore invited the members of the Boards of Finance to join the table. They then went around the table and introduced themselves.

Dr. Veronesi reviewed budget parameters and goals. She mentioned that there have been some cost savings since the last Board of Ed meeting on March 8, 2017 and will review them.

Dr. Veronesi reiterated that the salary line for certified staff is over budget this year, but the noncertified staff line item is under budget. Total number of certified staff went from 195.6 to 192.5. The District is currently in negotiations with the Nurses Union, Food Service is a 3 percent increase, Custodial is a 3 percent increase, Support Staff at 2.7 percent, Certified Staff at 3.07 percent increase and Administrators are at a 1.8 percent increase.

Renewal with Blue Cross/Blue Shield is at 7.99 right now. Last year, \$438,000 was saved by moving to HSAs and the total number of staff on an HSA is 263, total number of staff on a PPO is 25. Mr. Russell has found some areas where reductions can be made in benefits, including Unemployment.

A question was asked about why the Board of Ed and the towns don't work together on benefits, but Dr. Veronesi explained that they do and the insurance is managed through two different brokers, but all with Blue Cross/Blue Shield as part of the same group. The reason for two brokers is that the Board of Ed went out to bid and the current broker was selected from a competitive bid process.

Mr. Russell also mentioned that the Board of Ed was approached by ACES to join a cooperative, but the District decided not to do that because it would hurt the towns significantly.

Dr. Veronesi continued with Buildings and Grounds and Operating Services. Transportation is up \$182,000 due to contractual payments to Dattco. The possibility of eliminating a bus was looked at. The bus company felt that would be impossible and the District ended up at the same conclusion. Dr. Veronesi reviewed special transportation rates and explained that they are at approximately \$280 a day.

Operating Services also includes fuel and leases, including technology. Property insurance is up and communication costs are down. Tuition at magnet schools is up for next year, but that can fluctuate depending on enrollment. Supplies is only 2 percent of the budget, but significant cuts were made to that area. Textbooks have also been reduced by \$30,000. There is a \$20,000 increase due to the proposed pre-K programming and the pole vaulting system that's needed at the high school.

Capital Expenses includes different capital programs and technology and is up 80 percent at Cuginchaug due to the several items which have been covered by a grant in the past and the fact that Brewster needs a new PA system. Dues and Fees are up due to a \$4,000 correction due to entry fees for sporting events that had been allocated incorrectly. Debt Services is up \$65,000 due to the Brewster roof and the interest will go down next year, but the principal is going up. The payment is actually \$124,000 less than was anticipated due to an error from the bank.

Receipts have declined in all areas, mostly due to State reimbursement. Buildings and Grounds would decrease approximately \$12,000 for the year if BASREP were to no longer rent (they pay \$1,000 per month) however that would be offset by the District's before- and after-care program. Interest income has decreased due to the fund balance decrease. The MTA program is very beneficial for students and tuition-paying students from other districts pay from \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year.

Dr. Veronesi also explained that the Board of Ed decided to eliminate the Activity Fee last year and is not included in this budget. There were various other receipt items that Dr. Veronesi reviewed as well.

Chuck Stengel stated that Mr. Yamartino had made a suggestion in the past to use a portion of the fund balance for accommodation of breakage and Mr. Yamartino explained that they had actually reduced the salary line item in anticipation of "breakage". Mr. Yamartino stated that one year, a large chunk of the fund balance was paid back to the communities. Currently, the residual automatically gets rolled over.

Mrs. Flanagan stated that this is her eleventh year on the Board and there has never been a year that the audited excess budget has not been credited to the subsequent year's revenue. There is a one-year lag on this audited excess and this year is projected to be approximately \$300,000.

Dr. Veronesi finished up with State receipts and Building Grants or Building Interest. Transportation is because of the percentage of reimbursement from the State. The only increase is in Special Education Excess Cost which is because the District has more students who will be receiving Special Education services. There have been no assurances made as to where that money will be paid and there are no certainties with the Governor's budget at this time.

Jim Irish commented that Middlefield's Finance Director had asked CCM about the Special Education Excess Cost and Special Ed revenues that towns are supposed to get for the loss in ECS and CCM indicated that perhaps the Special Ed revenue will come directly to the school districts. Mr. Irish felt that the revenue side of the school budget is up in the air and perhaps they should concentrate on the spending side of things for now. Dr. Veronesi felt that the District benefits from a collegial and supportive relationship from the communities and may have to revisit budget items in the Fall with the state budget is finalized.

Laura Francis commented that there have been conflicting messages about the amount of money being allocated to each town and that it should be a number the towns can count on. This should be an ongoing conversation as it could have an exponential effect on the municipal budgets. Ed Bailey commented that the amount is \$470,000 for Middlefield and \$1.12 million for Durham.

Mr. Yamartino reminded the Board that a few years back, the State paid money to the towns rather than the school district and suggested that the two Finance Directors agree on a course of action here. Mr. Moore stated that hopefully, with enough pressure from the towns, the State will move the budget forward in May instead of later.

Laurie Tuttle distributed a handout showing two proposals. Taking out the \$300,000, Durham's current mill rate of 35.31 would actually go down. When adding in the District's expenses and the ECS decrease, the mill rate starts to creep up. If they include the Teachers' Pension portion that the towns are potentially being stuck with, the mill rate jumps about 6 mills. Looking on the left side, the first half is the same as on the right side, with the mill rate going from 35.31 to 34.7. Ms. Tuttle asked for the \$1.12 million in Special Education revenue to be included, but the mill rate would still jump 5 mills. She had two requests: to keep the Special Education revenue in and to look at decreasing the RSD13 expenses. Finally, she showed the increase to an average Durham house (value of \$350,000) would be approximately \$1,200 per year on top of the average \$8,000 to \$9,000 range that currently exists. Ms. Tuttle summarized that there is a significant issue with the State and the School budgets at the moment and they are hoping that more fine-tuning can be done.

Mr. Stengel reviewed some of the cuts that Durham has made to their budget, including remaining at one State Trooper, one Town ambulance, delaying a huge expenditure on radios and pagers as well as communications equipment. Ms. Tuttle explained that their fear is that if the budget goes to referendum and is passed without the Excess Costs being in there, the Towns will be required to pay their portion to the Board of Ed and if the State gives the additional Special Education revenue, the District is getting the money twice and they are not sure that's appropriate.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that, in terms of Middlefield's budget, they actually returned money as revenue to the town which offset the taxes by that amount and they are preparing for the shortfall. Mrs. Flanagan commented that only expenditures are included as part of the referendum so there is complete flexibility to react to whatever the State does on the revenue side up until the mill rate is set.

Mr. Bailey felt that the budgeting process was a little bit different than in Durham. Mr. Bailey submitted a complete budget to the Board of Finance on March 1<sup>st</sup> and they are working their way through that budget now. The budget Mr. Bailey proposed had a 1 percent reduction in total municipal expenses, not including the school district or the teacher pension contributions. Those numbers were included in the bottom line and resulted in a 3.25 percent increase, or a mill rate increase of 3.89 mills. For the average homeowner, that works out to a \$489 increase (\$161,000 assessed value). Mr. Bailey related that, for many people, that is a take-home paycheck per week.

Mr. Irish distributed another handout showing information from recent BOE meetings and budget. He highlighted a list of programs that could have an impact on the budget. He offered this list as a checklist for Board of Ed members as they look at potential places for opportunities to save. Staffing: at .5 percent, the savings would be \$82,000. Before and After program, this could be potentially neutral or a positive revenue source. Increase in pre-K hours, shows an increase of \$34,000 in supplies plus a .6 staff person and added staff hours. Pay-to-play was discussed and a \$100 fee could potentially raise revenue by \$53,000. Raising school lunch prices by 75 cents could potentially raise revenue by \$72,000. The co-op football program could potentially raise revenue. As far as the disposition of Korn School, the one-time transition costs could be reduced and potentially save \$80,000. Moth-balling the school for a year raises that significantly, with those two items totaling \$170,000. The savings from going to intramural sports at Strong School are currently projected to be \$61,000 and going back to interscholastics would be to incur that cost. Other items include the Career Center and health insurance.

Mr. Irish summarized that the Governor's budget proposes \$3.5 million in education cuts to the towns and that the education budget is 75 percent of the total budget of each town. Mr. Irish challenged the Board of Ed, on behalf of Middlefield taxpayers, to look at reducing the expenditure increase down to roughly 1 percent. That equates to about half a million dollars which is only 15 percent of the \$3.5 million. Mr. Irish felt that that would be a good way to demonstrate to the taxpayers that the Board of Ed is serious. Mr. Yamartino commented that he wears both hats and the primary drivers of the increase to the towns has to do with Teachers Pension. The only two items on the chart that are controllable by the town are Other Municipal Spending and CNR fund, both of which are down. He also mentioned that Mr. Bailey had offered to try to cut back services, if that was necessary. Mr. Yamartino did not feel it was incumbent upon the Board of Finance to cut the town's services to offset increases in the school budget. It is also not incumbent on the Board of Finance to reduce town's services because of the state mandates. It is also not incumbent upon the Board of Education to reduce their budget strictly to help offset the state challenges. Mr. Yamartino felt that what Dr. Friedrich said at the last meeting was absolutely right, as enrollment declines and expenses increase, the Board will need to start looking at prioritization of what services are going to be offered and how they will be offered. Mr. Yamartino felt it was time for the Board of Ed to roll up their sleeves and make some decisions that need to be made.

Mr. Yamartino also explained that Middlefield is showing a 7.6 percent increase and the only reason for that is because 95 percent of the school budget increase has gone to Durham due to enrollment. Mr. Yamartino also thanked everyone for their hard work.

Dr. Veronesi reminded everyone that the priority is to offer the very best education to the children of the District and her team has looked hard at the priorities. Comparing the District to the DRG (demographic reference group), we are close to the bottom for academic performance and, in some places, are moving up towards the middle. She feels that a half a million dollar cut will keep the District standing still.

Going through the handout from the Board of Ed, Mr. Moore presented a history of the allocation between Durham and Middlefield based on changes in enrollment.

A member of the public commented that everyone is familiar with the fiscal problems of the state and federal government, but the average citizen of Middlefield and Durham is not. There are less people with children in the school system than there was in the past and this year, both towns are being hit. She also felt that the Board should concentrate on what's necessary and not what's wanted.

Mrs. Petrella commented that she and her husband are both retired teachers and they did not get a raise last year. This year, their increase is .3 percent which gives them about \$10 a month between the two of them.

It was generally agreed that the state has a large budget problem which will be an ongoing economic reality for a couple more years.

Mr. Russell commented that this is not the teachers' fault; it's the legislature who funded the pension.

Dr. Veronesi reviewed the list of cuts that have been made to the budget. Mr. Russell explained that the bank that holds the serial bond told the District that we owed \$439,000 for the last payment. Mr. Russell felt that that didn't make sense and contacted the bank and was told that it is \$314,000. The budget was able to be cut by \$125,000 by that item alone.

Dr. Veronesi pointed out the reduction of \$110,000 in health benefits after reviewing current employees. Unemployment benefits can be reduced by \$5,000. They also looked at the pre-K programs in the DRG, with the majority of them offering pre-K and the majority of those charging tuition. She suggested that the District make the pre-K for typical peers a tuition-based program and reviewed preliminary revenue.

Dr. Veronesi also explained that there has been quite a bit of discussion about Strong School athletics and pointed out that she is not making a decision for the Board, but did show a \$62,567 addition, bringing the increase from 2.63 to 2.81. They could reduce the intramurals budget if interscholastic sports were put back. There have been unanticipated increases in some information systems as well as some licensing fees. If pay-to-participate is incorporated with an average of \$100 per year for 498 participants, it would create revenue of \$49,800, bringing the total increase from 3.43 to 2.66 net. The \$100 pay-to-participate fee would be charged to students participating in athletics at both Strong and the high school.

Mr. Moore thanked the Boards of Finance for their input and explained that the Board of Ed certainly heard the issues.

The Board took a short break at this point.

Mr. Moore offered to take any comments regarding the budget from Board members who will not be at the meeting tomorrow. Mr. Yamartino is supportive of the pre-K program and feels that potentially charging tuition is a good thing. Mr. Yamartino agreed with Dr. Friedrich about really having to prioritize. He did ask how many students would be involved in the pre-K program and Dr. Veronesi explained that there are approximately 17 in the three-year-old program right now and would be up to a total of 40, if the program were increased. Dr. Veronesi also reiterated that early intervention makes a potential impact so that services will not be required later. She also explained that far more is expected from kindergartner students than ever before. Mr. Yamartino confirmed that he would be in favor of that program and hoped the Board would move forward on that.

Mr. Yamartino also commented on the intramural program vs. interscholastic sports and felt that the people in the community are in favor of interscholastics. He would have personally gone with the intramural program, but felt that the Board should consider interscholastics. He would want to be sure to understand the systems that are in place for those in the community who cannot afford pay-to-play, tuition for the pre-K and tuition for the before- and after-care program. He would also want to know how many students wouldn't be able to pay so that the numbers in the budget are adjusted. Dr. Veronesi explained that there would be a sliding scale in all of those areas and the projections do include that (based on free and reduced lunch numbers).

Dr. Taylor didn't understand why the Board would not ask for full tuition for students in the pre-K program as it is a choice to attend. He also felt that it prioritizes special education students when there is a significant budget already dedicated to that group of students. Dr. Taylor felt that they should be looking for special education cuts in some other part of the budget to do this.

Dr. Veronesi did not agree that the District is prioritizing a certain cohort of students over others, and the District has an obligation to provide the services that students need. Significant cuts have been made in special education in the past few years, from staffing to programming as well as administrative staff, and they continue to look at the area.

Dr. Taylor agreed that spending the money up-front is the most efficient way to spend it, but the expansion of the pre-K is a choice, not a mandate. He felt that by choosing to offer this program, they are prioritizing that program over something else that could be offered within the budget. Dr. Veronesi felt it was one of the best investments that the District could make. Dr. Taylor would prefer to do the pre-K program if cuts can be made somewhere else within the special education budget.

Dr. Veronesi then commented that sports do not have a statistically significant impact on student achievement, though she does feel that sports is great for students. It does not have as much impact as a great teacher or a strong curriculum; however the Board saw what happened when that cut was proposed. Dr. Friedrich felt that the big decisions the Board has to face are whether money to fund new programs, such as the pre-K, should be taken from other parts of the academic program or from non-academic activities.

Mr. Hicks will also not be at the meeting tomorrow night and commented that, looking at page 13 in the budget book, his eye is always drawn to Strong Middle School. Looking at the class sizes at Memorial, they are under the target but close to it and Lyman has one class over the target. However, there is a huge difference at Strong School with every class size being way under. He asked if maybe the Board should think about merging the two programs at Strong School. Mr. Hicks did not suggest that the programs be merged at the other schools, but just Strong School. He thought that the best of both programs could be combined into a singular program that would perhaps produce a headcount reduction and bring the class size levels up.

Mr. Hicks also commented that he will not be here for the next three weeks and is hopeful that the Board will discuss his proposal in detail. Dr. Veronesi explained that the pages in Mr. Hick's book may be wrong and the number of teachers should be 5, 3, 4, 3 and class size should be 17.8, 20, 20.5 and 17.3. Dr. Veronesi also explained that she actually has parents calling in support of merging the programs at Strong School. The administrative team is beginning to hold weekly meetings to talk about buildings and the programming of the future for the District. She felt that this thought process should be part of the Strategic Planning Committee. Dr. Veronesi thanked Mr. Hicks for bringing this issue out publicly.



Mr. Augur referred to page 12 of the budget book and mentioned that in 2008-2009, grades 7 and 8 were 350 students. In the projection for 2021-2022, grades 6, 7 and 8 will only be 345. Mr. Augur supports Mr. Hicks' idea of taking the best of both programs for those grades.

Dr. Taylor felt that there is significant resistance within the ID community about breaking up the 5/6 current structure. A lot of people feel that the students need the two years with a single teacher, especially at that level.

Mrs. Petrella stated that, as a former teacher, she was hard-pressed to tell the difference between the programs. She felt that the programs are already merging and it would just be a matter of parents understanding. Mrs. Boyle appreciated Mr. Hicks bringing this thought forward but would like to move that discussion to next year's budget and get on with what is in front of them.

### **Communications**

Mr. Moore received a nice thank-you letter from the Boy Scouts and reported that he had a nice time meeting with them. He had also received several other letters that he will enter into the record.

Mrs. Boyle also reported that she had received a few emails from very passionate parents reaching out about football. Mrs. Boyle hoped that we could get into a co-op relationship program and continue to build the football program here. She would like the public to know that the Board is not cutting football and that they are looking into a co-op.

Mr. Moore also stated that there is an invitation for Guys and Dolls at Cuginchaug included in the packet. Please just let them know what night you would like to attend. Dr. Veronesi also reminded the Board that the senior citizens have been invited on Thursday at 9 AM, with an opportunity for them to meet the cast and have a little reception at 11:30 AM. The students in the play will be making the desserts.

### **Business Manager's Report**

Mr. Russell reviewed that they have looked at the big expenses, including salaries, benefits, debt service and transportation. He feels that the current budget is very intact and correct. He also stated that the four items listed above represent over 90 percent of the budget. The goal was to continue to reduce the budget without hurting services.

Mr. Moore also reported that interviews have begun for a full-time business manager.

Mr. Russell stated that, last year, the Board had put in a \$200,000 number for breakage and the District ended up being \$140,000 in the hole. He also mentioned that the workforce had been reduced by 14 people which also helped with benefits. Mr. Yamartino asked for a recommendation on what kind of breakage should be included in the budget, but Mr. Russell stated that that would be hard to do since it's such a small district.

Mrs. Flanagan stated that the way salaries have been budgeted in the past three years has been much more precise and positions that tended not to be filled have been eliminated from the budget. Dr. Veronesi has tightened up the approach to how salaries are budgeted, with 13 positions being eliminated in special ed last year. Mrs. Flanagan felt that the room in that part of the budget is just not there anymore and felt that

it would be a disservice to the community to take a lump-sum non-designated reduction of the salary budget.

Dr. Friedrich stated that while the driving concern is the immediate budget, he believes that there is a question about whether breakage money ends up in the fund balance and wondered if it would be less of a concern if we could be sure that money remains in the pass-back. Mr. Yamartino felt that it always gets passed back and is in the revenue side. Dr. Friedrich wasn't sure why it would be a concern and Dr. Taylor stated that it was a bad accounting principle and you would be counting on money that might not necessarily be there. Mrs. Flanagan stated that there was a time when the Board could see that there was too much in the salary line; however that is not the case any longer. Mr. Yamartino explained that it is a concern for some because there is a good period of time when money has been taken out of the taxpayers' pockets and put it into a fund at the school that was not being used. Mr. Yamartino did agree that it is narrowing at this point.

**Committee Reports**

A. Utilization Committee - March 9, 2017

Mrs. Flanagan reported that the Utilization Committee met and went into executive session to discuss the disposition of Korn School and working through a proposal. She would like to go into executive session tonight to continue those negotiations.

B. Policy Committee - review policies

-Non-Discrimination

-Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-Free Workplace

Mr. Hicks stated that these two policies had already been reviewed and were basically statutory requirements.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Renninghoff, to approve the Non-Discrimination and the Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-Free Workplace policies as presented by the Policy Committee.

In favor of approving the Non-Discrimination and Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-Free Workplace policies as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

**New Business**

None.

**Public Comment**

Donia Viola thought it was a very good idea to have the Boards of Finance from the two towns and she appreciated their input as well as the discussion. It is a bit more alarming to hear the actual numbers of the budgets. Mrs. Viola also asked the Board to consider BASREP continuing and felt that the people are satisfied with that program. She does not feel the school should be expanded to that type of program and compete against private business. She remembered when technology was proposed and the thought was

to not spend a lot on personnel, but now it is up to five people and she finds that disconcerting. Mrs. Viola felt that once something is in place, it is never removed. She felt that the list provided by Middlefield's Board of Finance pointed out areas of concern and felt that the bus for Thomas Edison Magnet School could be eliminated as it is not mandated. Mrs. Viola also felt that the extension of the pre-K program is not necessary and the District should not have to pay extra costs affiliated with it. Mrs. Viola is not a fan of pay-to-play because she feels that if the District offers a program, it should be in place for everyone. Mrs. Viola also feels that the Career Center should be left off and not discussed further. She would like the Board to focus on the education, with more on academics than on sports, but sports round out a career for students. Mrs. Viola supports football and believes that intramurals would be enjoyed by the students at the middle school level. She would like to see a business manager hired before the budget is finalized.

Kim Johanson, from Durham, asked where the numbers were obtained from for the cost of preschool and Dr. Veronesi explained that they are school-based numbers. Ms. Johanson asked for the Board to look at tuition rates of the town's preschools because she feels that the fee that was proposed is drastically less. She suggested that the District come in in-between the two numbers. Ms. Johanson has a special needs child and she pays for him to attend private preschool as well as receive speech therapy so that tax dollars will not have to pay for services for him later. She believed a full-day preschool program would be a benefit to all and would be willing to pay for it.

David Booth, from Durham, stated that he hears a lot of cries of poverty from the towns and school district and questioned building the field house without having enough to support a football team that would be primarily using it. He felt that the public would probably not be able to use it because it will be locked. He was also concerned that no maintenance fees were added to go along with the field house. Mr. Booth also agreed that early intervention is key and the kindergartners need small class sizes. He does feel that sports has evidence in reducing teen pregnancy and drug use. Mr. Booth felt that people moving into town look at the school system first and people don't want to move to Durham as much as they used to. District 13 is competing with Mercy and Xavier and should be looking at what they are offering, as well as what H-K and other demographic areas are offering, and be comparable. Less kids and less people in town equal increased taxes.

Heather Parenti, from Durham, asked the Board to consider full-day preschool. She does not want the students with special needs to be shortchanged. Ms. Parenti does not want her son to be a burden on anybody and feels that he needs the support now to develop a good foundation. She does not feel that special needs students should be penalized for having special needs.

Teresa Opalacz, from Durham, supports interscholastic sports at Strong School and recognized that more money may have to be added to help those kids who cannot afford the pay-to-play fee. Ms. Opalacz agrees that the focus should be on basic education and is not a believer in the Career Center. She suggests that there might be an opportunity for a volunteer effort in that area. Ms. Opalacz believes that Lyman and Memorial need to be merged and get those kids on the same time frame so there can be one bus route. She was completely taken aback with the cost of busing and wondered how often the District goes back to Dattco to see if cuts can be made. Finally, she also believes that administration is something that should be looked at and cited various examples of new administrators with specific comments about the Director of Athletics.

Becky Finnerty, from Durham, explained that she had three children go through the preschool program as mentors and found it to be a phenomenal experience. She highly supports what has been put in place and feels that early intervention is the best thing for kids and the community as a whole. She also supports

parents paying for the program. She also thanked the Board for putting interscholastic sports back into the budget. She also proposed a way for a parent to offer a donation for the pay-to-play fee for kids who can't afford it and described how GoFar handles that.

Craig Bradanini, a taxpayer from Durham and a teacher in the District, expressed his frustration with the process. Every year, he has faith in the Board to present the bare minimum budget to have the least amount of impact in the classroom. He felt that last year's budget wasn't enough and they had to take more away from the classroom. The books he uses had an on-line version, but that went away with budget cuts. This year, the budget was cut and a better set of books that are closer aligned to the Common Core will not be available. Mr. Bradanini does believe that the administration tries to have the least amount of impact on the kids, but he is afraid of what more cuts will look like in his classroom. He felt that his hands are being tied and he can't use everything available to teach his kids. Mr. Bradanini also has three kids of his own in the District and is concerned. He felt that you cannot continue to take things away and yet still expect performance from the teachers.

### **Anticipated Executive Session**

Mr. Renninghoff made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hicks, to move into Executive Session at 10:45 PM.

In favor of moving into Executive Session: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 11:45 PM.

Mr. Renninghoff made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to authorize Mrs. Flanagan to execute a counter offer to the Town of Durham for the transfer of Korn School.

In favor of authorizing Mrs. Flanagan to execute a counter offer to the Town of Durham for the transfer of Korn School: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Renninghoff 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, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First