

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, February 14, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Board members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

Board members absent: None.

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Business Manager.

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Hicks took a moment to speak about the school shooting in Parkland, Florida that occurred this afternoon. He asked for a moment of silence for the grieving families, the victims and for the people of the United States that have to endure yet another school shooting.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Public Comment

Tina McGoldrick has two daughters at John Lyman and wanted to learn more information about decisions that will be made and asked that the parents be involved. Mr. Moore explained that the Utilization Committee is working on some public outreach regarding discussions on the future of the five schools in the District.

Administrator Welcome

Tom Ford, principal at John Lyman School, echoed Mr. Hicks' sentiments about what happened in Florida today. He acknowledged the outstanding work of the teachers and staff. This year, Mr. Ford has been able to visit other schools in the District and has seen great things happening. He believes that common thread that makes the District special is the quality of the teachers and staff.

CRHS Reporters - Colleen Coogan, Demarie Del Vecchio, Daniel Turecek

Daniel Turecek reported that the physics class is currently working on a roller coaster project and the National Honor Society hosted a breakfast recognizing students for leadership qualities and character. He also reported about the assembly that was held on Monday morning which was a one-man show about suicide prevention.

Colleen Coogan reported that the Jazz Band recently went to Berkeley in Boston and competed and came in 4th Honorable Mention which was the highest that Coginchaug has ever finished. Three students in the Choral department were accepted into the All-State Chorus in April. The track team competed in Shorelines and the boys got second and the girls got eighth and Colleen highlighted students that got All-Shoreline honors.

Demarie Del Vecchio reported that the girls basketball team had senior night on Monday and the injured seniors were able to participate. The boys basketball team will have their senior night on Friday. The cheer team competed in Shorelines and placed second by just .65 points. The graphic design class recently held a logo contest and Durham Market picked the one they liked the best which was Demarie's logo. Demarie then gave all the Board members Valentines.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Special Session Meeting - December 21, 2017

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Special Session meeting on December 21, 2017, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of December 21, 2017 as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

B. Board of Education Regular Session Meeting - January 10, 2018

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of Board of Education Regular Session Meeting on January 10, 2018, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of January 10, 2018 as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

C. Board of Education Special Meeting/Retreat - January 27, 2018

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to approve the minutes of Board of Education Special Session Meeting/Retreat on January 27, 2018, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of January 27, 2018 as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

Next Board Meeting - February 28, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School

Presentation - 2018-2019 Regional School District 13 Budget

Dr. Veronesi summarized the theme for next year is that it is important to stay the course. Teachers are saying that they want to continue to strengthen the things that they are doing, particularly in the areas of curriculum and instruction without beginning new initiatives. Dr. Veronesi explained that it is deep commitment and enduring loyalty that results in a budget that supports the goals and visions and the mission of the District. She also wanted to publicly acknowledge the outstanding administrative team and the efforts of Mrs. Neubig and Tippi Popp. Dr. Veronesi also acknowledged the support and dedication of the Board of Education. She also acknowledged Ed Bailey, Laura Francis, Al Rusilowicz and Ron Melnik for their help in understanding the local and state backdrop that impacts the school budget.

Dr. Veronesi went on to explain that the priorities are in the areas of student achievement, well-being and engagement. There are strategic action plans in all three areas.

The Superintendent's proposed budget illustrates a 0 percent change this year. Expenditures are projected to be at a negative because revenues are lower going into next year resulting in an overall budget increase of 0 percent. Dr. Veronesi explained that people in the community can submit questions or comments through the website this year. She also explained that she plans to answer any questions about capital, curriculum and technology at the next meeting on February 28th.

Dr. Veronesi explained that salaries and benefits make up 75 percent of the budget and there is a decrease of nearly half a million dollars. The bargaining units have increases, based on their contracts, that range from 1.5 percent to 3 percent. With changes in staffing, the total salary line decreased by \$205,000. In benefits, Blue Cross came in at 5 percent and there have also been decreases in CIRMA, Worker's comp and other funding as well.

Moving to purchased services, there is a \$162,000 increase which includes work in curriculum and instruction. The workshop model will continue at the elementary level in reading, writing and math.

Next generation science standards, STEAM programming, interdisciplinary courses at the high school and an expansion of the career center are all parts of this. Planning and development of STEAM programming will continue with courses at the high school. Dr. Veronesi also explained that the District needs to purchase new accounting software for approximately \$76,000. There is also approximately \$50,000 for architectural and engineering studies for the utilization work. Money has also been included to continue work on a consultant to help with strategic visioning. There has also been talk about an international partnership with the high school and \$20,000 has been identified for that purpose.

There is a slight increase in buildings and grounds, due to leases for Chromebooks. Under Operating Services, there is a decrease in transportation of \$157,000, in part due to fewer students needed outplacement settings.

There is an increase in capital of \$235,000 to fund at a level of \$400,000 to continue to contribute to the capital reserve items, i.e. track, turf and generator replacement. In terms of debt service, the current debt is \$1.6 million but drops off next year. Dr. Veronesi and Mrs. Neubig have suggested that the Board might want to continue level funding the debt, but it was decided to reduce that funding from the current year by \$100,000.

Dr. Veronesi reviewed supplies and reported that she encouraged people to look carefully at what is on hand and not order supplies unless they are absolutely necessary. Mrs. Neubig also reported that heating oil is included in that number and that has gone from \$1.97 to \$2.29, so the decrease in classroom supplies was offset by the increase in heating oil.

Moving to revenue, Dr. Veronesi reported that interest income and transportation grants have decreased. Going into this year, the fund balance was \$884,000 and will be \$521,000 going into next year. Mrs. Neubig explained that the \$300,000 deduction in the fund balance was balanced by cutting expenditures this year.

Dr. Veronesi reported that over the course of the past 10 years, the District has seen a decrease in enrollment of approximately 450 students. The projected enrollment for the next five years will be a decrease of another 200 students. Declining enrollment will be felt most significantly at the middle and high school levels in the coming years. Dr. Veronesi assured parents that class size will not be increased as enrollment declines and reported that, next year, class sizes remain within the Board of Education recommended class sizes. At the middle school, there has been shifting of the distribution of students in the two programs and Mr. Sadinsky has done scheduling to allow for cross-teaming. Next year, there is a more significant shift in seventh grade with students in the ID program shifting to the Contemporary program.

Looking at staffing, some cuts were made based on declining enrollment and the belief that the District can continue to meet its goals with this staffing level. The reductions are primarily at the high school level. There is a reduction in language arts at Strong School of 3.4 classroom teachers based on the declining enrollment, and a reading interventionist, a math interventionist and a literacy coach have been added. There is also a decrease in ABA therapists of two positions but those positions are currently not filled at this time. There is also a decrease of one FTE of support staff or teaching assistant. An increase of time of .4 for the career counselor has been added at the high school which was presented in last year's budget.

The capital plan looks at the top projects as well as proposed projects, including ADA issues which must be addressed.

The Middlesex Transition Academy (MTA) services students with special needs aged 18 to 21 and it is projected that the District will have six students attending next year. The tuition this year is \$50,000 per year from students from other districts and that will increase by \$1,393 next year. Students will also begin to be charged for summer programming at a fee of \$2,000. Because of the fund balance that MTA has, \$150,000 was able to be put towards the District's operating budget and \$200,000 is projected next year to put towards that.

Dr. Veronesi asked Mrs. Neubig to talk about changes in ECS funding and to comment on projections in the upcoming years. She also asked Mrs. Neubig to talk about MBR and its implications as well as the per pupil expenditure and how that is determined.

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that ECS was reduced by 5 percent in the budget that was passed, but the Governor has issued hold backs since then further reducing that amount. The funding formula will be changed beginning in 2019 and not to the District's benefit. Mrs. Neubig reviewed that minimum budget requirement (MBR) forbids towns from budgeting less for education services than they did the prior year, however budgets can be reduced by the amount of the ECS appropriations. The hold back amounts are not to be used in the MBR calculations. The most that the District could cut from the budget is \$299,000, even though the towns have been cut a total of \$785,000. In response to a question from Mr. Yamartino, Mrs. Neubig explained that MBR is based on net of revenue and not just expense.

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that the per pupil expenditure formula divides the net current expenditures of the District by the average daily enrollment. As enrollment declines, per pupil expenditure goes up. Other factors are added in, such as preschool, summer school and going 182 days. From 2015/2016 final number to 2016/2017 unaudited numbers, the District experienced a drop of \$507 per pupil as a result of closing Korn School. Looking at the forecasted numbers for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019,

there is quite an increase in the next few years because the District is going to lose 70 and 25 students, respectively.

Mrs. Neubig explained that if the Board were to cut 1 percent of the expenditures in the budget, the net current expenditures per pupil would still be \$20,217. If the budget were cut 5 percent, the NCEP would go down by \$1,000. The District is not far off from other districts in the DRG.

Explaining more about the minimum budget requirement, Mrs. Neubig reiterated that the State says the District cannot fund less this year than last year except for a significant decline in enrollment or reduction in ECS funding. She explained that that was taken into account when building the budget and they were still able to come in at a 0 percent increase.

Dr. Veronesi reviewed that the highlights of the budget are usually presented at one meeting and the next meeting is used to discuss Board questions. The Boards of Selectmen and Boards of Finance members will be invited to meet on March 7th. Dr. Veronesi reiterated that a lot of attention was paid to the details of the budget as well as the strategic visioning for the District.

Mr. Moore thanked all of the administrators for their efforts and Mrs. Boyle asked that the per pupil expenditure information be on the website as well.

Committee Reports

A. Utilization Committee Meeting - January 25, 2018

Mr. Augur reported that Utilization met on January 25th and had a two-hour meeting. He encouraged everyone to read the minutes from that meeting as it shows that the Utilization Committee is striving to leave no stones unturned. The mission of the Utilization Committee is to maximize the efficient use of resources, including flexible space, while meeting the programmatic needs as determined by the administration. They have asked Silver Petrucelli to summarize those options and they will review everything available.

They will meet again on February 22nd to discuss the next steps and create a succinct summary of those options. They are hoping to have information sessions in March for the public. The Ed Specs need to be submitted to the State in May if the District wants to apply for any funding.

Dr. Taylor also explained that they are continuing to deal with the decline in student enrollment and the reduction in State funding. At some point, programmatic decision will have to be made. They are attempting to increase the operational efficiency of the District and maximize building structures while preserving the core programmatic components. Dr. Taylor knows that people have heard that

John Lyman School may be the school to close and explained that that is based on general building size and age, but also infrastructure projects that would be necessary to continue Lyman. He encouraged everyone to attend the next Utilization meeting to see all of the available options.

Dr. Friedrich also pointed out that they are discussing closing a building, not closing a school. Decisions about programs are separate from that. He also reiterated the lists of items that need to be done at each of the schools and the costs associated with that.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that a draft of a one-page flyer has been done and shared with the Board. Dr. Veronesi also stated that the Board has not made any decisions at this point and all information is public. She reiterated that the Board is carefully looking at programming and administration continues to work with staff and listen to parents to make a recommendation regarding education approach and what's best for students.

Mr. Augur also mentioned the difference in room sizes at the schools and reiterated that they are going through a lot of detail.

B. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - January 29, 2018

Mrs. Petrella reported that they had a presentation from Data Dashboard which can take all of the available data and put it into one document, with the ability to make all kinds of comparisons. This data can examine student performance and student performance over time to help drive the instructional strategies and programming. It would not entail a lot of effort to input the data and the set-up is \$5,000, with \$500 per day if they need to come in to do something.

Mrs. Petrella also reported that Mr. Falcone talked about some of the course changes at the high school, including some interdisciplinary courses and hands-on, including robotics and coding and family and consumer science. He is also proposing a senior field experience which would include exploring teaching and learning, emerging business leaders, making a difference through community outreach, campus unification, athlete leadership and career exploration. They are also looking at the number of required community service hours and that may increase.

C. Educational Resources Committee Meeting - February 14, 2018

Mr. Moore reported that this committee met earlier this evening and talked about investment strategies with Morgan Stanley and the possibility of changing some of the managers. They also talked about the capital budget and some other minor changes as well as the Finance Committee.

D. Policy Committee

First read of the following policies: Wellness; Title 1 and Parent Involvement and Student Data Privacy.

Mr. Hicks reviewed that the three policies had been included in the Board's information. He suggested the Board members review those and they will be on the agenda to discuss at the next meeting.

Mr. Hicks also asked to schedule another meeting for the Policy Committee.

Communications

Mr. Moore reported that he had received many emails about Lyman School and Mrs. Boyle stated that they had received very passionate pleas from parents and reiterated how important it is for the Board members to hear from parents. She read the names into the record: Janina Eddinger, Jennifer Jones, Cindy Dobrowski, Colby Frachilla, Sandy Goodyear, Emily DelGrego, Misty Charles, Susan Oakley, Melissa DiPietro, Jenna Driscoll, Steven Reynolds, Melissa Hill, Mary Bachinsky, Stacey Allen, Kate Farnsworth, John Farnsworth, Kelly Engworth, Christina Collin, Kiersten Olszewski and Pam Ventolla. Mr. Augur added Christina and Alex Murrow as well.

Mr. Moore also received a letter from Laura Lynn Vynalek concerning the schedule and early release days. Dr. Veronesi explained that Ms. Vynalek had suggested that teacher professional development be held during the summer months in order to not disrupt student learning. Dr. Veronesi invited her in for a discussion regarding teacher contracts and the importance of professional development being dispersed throughout the year.

Mr. Moore also received a letter from Michelle DiMauro, the co-president of the Blue Devils Diamond Club baseball and softball booster group. They would like the Board to consider increasing the athletic fee to help increase the athletic budget. They feel the athletic programs are essential to the school community and 61 percent of the student population participates.

Mr. Moore also received a communication from Ed Bailey, First Selectman in Middlefield, about the appointment of Jim Irish and Marie Benedetto to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Hicks also mentioned that everyone had received a thank you note from Judy Camp about recognizing the Benchwarmers at the gym at Strong School.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned the letter from several teachers and staff members at Lyman School and Mr. Moore stated that he had received a paper copy that was signed by 26 teachers. He will make a copy and send it out to the other Board members. Dr. Veronesi summarized that it was communicating the same sentiment that was shared with the Board on behalf of parents.

Superintendent's Report: Progress Towards Strategic Coherence Goals

Dr. Veronesi reviewed the improvement strategies in the area of student achievement and reported that the most recent assessment results were received last week and indicated that both Lyman and Brewster have scored a 1 (schools of distinction) which is the highest rating that a school can achieve. These results will be presented to the Student Achievement Committee next week.

The administrative team is continuing to work on enhancing their understanding of critical thinking by reviewing the resources, looking at specific rubrics. The instructional rounds process is a way to look at patterns of instruction and student engagement. The areas of student collaboration and questioning have been identified as the next level of work at Strong School. Approximately 50 teachers are piloting I-Ready, an online formative assessment system. This is an alternative to STAR and will provides "real time" information about students.

Dr. Veronesi reviewed that she has started the facilitation of a team of approximately 20 teachers about strengths in the District and what the hopes and dreams are for the future. The next meeting will be open to the public and will be held on February 27th at 3:15 pm in the Cuginchaug High School Library.

There is a Wellness Committee being chaired by Maryellen Manning and is moving along. Members of the committee are looking at practices in each of the building and are engaged in various efforts to make sure that everyone is paying attention to well-being. Partnering has begun with Durham and Middlefield Local Wellness Coalition and they will work on a mission statement and an action plan. Dr. Veronesi encouraged the Board to watch Bob Nemphos' well-being briefs.

In the area of community engagement, a community survey has been sent out and mentioned that Chromebooks are set up in the back of the room for anyone to take tonight. They are trying to find the best way to reach the community with information. Central Office is expanding their use of social media as a form of communication. Dr. Veronesi also reported that the Finance Committee will come to fruition this evening and it is another way of engaging the community.

Dr. Veronesi also stated that a one-page communication has been created to share with the community that should be finalized at the Utilization Committee with dates for a community information session and a timeline for projected next steps for Utilization.

Mrs. Boyle encouraged the public be involved in the meeting at Strong School on February 27th and Dr. Veronesi stated that the meeting will also be recorded. She will remind parents of that meeting, but also mentioned that it may need to be moved to the Coginchaug library due to recording issues.

Business Manager's Report

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that there is nothing out of the ordinary to report. She reported that \$150,000 was transferred from the MTA tuition into the general fund in January. She is looking at a surplus in MTA at the end of the year of about \$67,000, depending on everything staying the same. The District may see a surplus due to staffing and legal expenses as well as a decrease in the worker's comp rate and the unions. The soft freeze earlier in the year may also help with a potential surplus. This surplus will help balance the coming year's budget and hopefully soften the blow of ECS cuts.

Mrs. Neubig also reported that she found out today that the District has been awarded a small security grant of \$22,000. This is reimbursement for work that was done back as far as 2013. She also thanked the administrators and Tippy Popp as well as all of the Central Office staff for their help with the budget.

New Business

A. 2018-2019 District Calendar

Dr. Veronesi reported that she received no feedback about holding school on Veterans Day and there had been a question about holding professional development on Election Day. She had emailed the Board members an update about those.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the 2018-2019 District Calendar as presented.

In favor of approving the 2018-2019 District Calendar as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Mr. Moore summarized that school starts on August 29, 2018 and ends on June 12, 2019. It had also been agreed that a veterans program will be held on Veterans Day.

B. Finance Committee Overview and Member Appointment

Mr. Moore reported that the Town of Durham has appointed Chuck Stengel and Teresa Opalacz and Middlefield has appointed Marie Benedetto and Jim Irish. Mrs. Geraci and Mr. Augur agreed to serve on the Finance Committee. Mr. Moore introduced David Booth, a nurse practitioner living in Durham, has two daughters who attend John Lyman. He served on the board of the Middlefield Children's Center and the Coginchaug Soccer Club. Mr. Moore also introduced Nema Patel, from Middlefield, who has a Bachelor's in accounting and an MBA in finance and management as well as her CPA. She has spent 18 years in the retirement division of Prudential Financial. She has two children, in grades 6 and 8. Both Mr. Booth and Ms. Patel have agreed to serve on the Finance Committee.

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to accept the above-listed appointments to the Finance Committee.

Mrs. Boyle also thanked all of the people for volunteering to serve on the Finance Committee. Mr. Yamartino asked if Mr. Moore has selected a chairman and Mr. Moore explained that he will do that once the committee members are appointed.

In favor of accepting the appointments to the Finance Committee: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Mr. Moore then stated that he has appointed Mr. Augur as the chair of the Finance Committee and Mr. Augur will put together a meeting schedule and agenda. Mrs. Neubig will serve on the committee as well and any other Board member is invited to attend the meetings as well.

Mrs. Boyle noted that the Finance Committee meetings will need to be legally noticed in both towns.

Public Comment

Oanh Stephan, from Durham, asked about the half-time positions that were cut at Coginchaug and in the music department.

Alexander Stephan, from Durham, wanted to report that he will be attending Boston University to study music education and was awarded their Presidential Scholarship of \$20,000 per year based on his grades. He stated that it was the support of the music department that got him to where he is today and also mentioned that the Jazz Band placed fourth out of 20 at the music festival in Boston. He commended the amazing music teachers in the District. He is depressed that cuts to the music

department are even being considered and asked that the Board keep music a part of the students' lives here in the District. He challenged the Board to support it even more, reject the proposal and put music as a key part in all of education.

Adjournment

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First